



REFLECTION AND STUDY

MONDAY | Read John 13:3-17

Albert Einstein, considered by many to be the most brilliant man since Jesus, is quoted as saying that "only a life lived for others is a life worthwhile." He learned in his old age that it is service, not science, which makes the difference in life. It's a basic truth about life, but it's one we so easily forget. As a follower of Jesus Christ, serving isn't really an option, it's essential. If we are ever to live life with a capital "L", we need to understand that true joy and fulfillment come only when we give out what we take in, and pass on to others what we have received.

Here are two things to consider:

- Jesus always demonstrates to us what it means to have arms of love and to be a servant.
- To be a disciple is to be one who empties himself through serving others.

Pray and ask God to help you to have arms of love and to be a servant like Jesus.

TUESDAY | Read 1 Corinthians 13:2 and Matthew 23:11

Serving others is an act of love. Paul writes that the church is best known by its ability to love, that the people of the church cannot be disciples unless their love is expressed unselfishly. Love is being self-sacrificial. We serve because we love; we cannot live into the likeness of Christ unless love is in us. This is not "charity," like doing a favor simply because we feel sorry for someone, but is unconditional and out of a natural love.

- Do you serve unselfishly, unconditionally, and out of natural love?

Pray about what your motivations for serving might be. Ask God to show you if you are serving for the wrong reasons.

WEDNESDAY | Read Matthew 6:19-21

The path of discipleship leads one to become mature in love. Serving God by loving and serving others carries eternal rewards. What we do in this life to serve Christ isn't just something we do for this life. It is something we do for eternity. All the time we spend trying to gain temporal things like cars, houses, clothes—all these pale in comparison to the time we spend serving in God's Kingdom. All material things ultimately depreciate, but the time we invest for God multiples upon itself. Ultimately, only the things that are done for Christ last.

- Where is God leading you?
- Where has God tugged on your heart to serve?
- Do you struggle with trying to gain temporal things instead of heavenly treasures?

Ask God to give you a heart to serve and make it clear where He is leading you to do so.

THURSDAY | Read 1 Samuel 12:24 and Mark 10:45

Jesus was a volunteer servant, one willing to do whatever it took to get the job done, including giving His own life. How often though, as members of the church, do we find ourselves asking "what's in it for me?" How often do we say and hear, "I just want to come to church to be fed?" Our physical bodies are meant to be filled and then

we expend that energy through work, service, and other opportunities—so too should the church body stay in good shape through being fed and expending what we’re learning and experiencing. We’re filled up so we can give to others out of the overflow.

- Have you ever thought “what’s in it for me” or come to church with the mentality that you are only there to be fed? If so, how did that mindset affect you?
- Think about instances when you were fed spiritually at the church and then gave back. How did those instances make you feel?

Ask God to help you expend your spiritual food and help others.

FRIDAY | Read John 13:14-17

When we serve others because we want to and not because we have to, it’s a whole different dynamic. It changes the way we see the people we serve. It also changes the way we relate to the people in our church leadership. When leadership has to go out and recruit parishioners to get tasks done, nobody wins, because it can become a form of “arm twisting.” That wasn’t how Jesus got things done. When Jesus wanted to teach something, He didn’t twist arms. Instead, Jesus bent His knee, picked up a towel and demonstrated what it means to pour yourself out in service to others, and when He did that, people looked up and took notice. The world is waiting for the church to show them what we’re made of and to see people really serving God. Amazing things can happen when we allow God to use us through service.

- Are you using the gifts God has given you—your skills, spiritual gifts, and your time—to serve God?
- Are you willing to step out and serve, allowing God to pick up any slack?

Ask God to use you and do amazing things through you!

SATURDAY | Read Matthew 5:33-37

Volunteering and serving through your local church is not like working at a job where you punch a time clock, but if you say you will do something, you’re not just promising the person to which you’re speaking --you’re also promising God. When you are involved as a servant of ministry you may think that the little part you do doesn’t really matter. You may think, “I’m just one person in the congregation and if I step out, someone else will just step in.” If you leave a hole somewhere, someone else ends up filling that gap and then it leaves a hole somewhere else, and so on and so forth. Being a real servant means taking commitment seriously. This is the ministry God has given to you, so it is important that whatever you do, you do it with all your heart.

Pray about staying true to your commitments to serve, asking God to help you fulfill your commitments to Him.

If you're interested in *Giving in Love* through service at St. Paul UMC, visit our website stpaulumc.org and fill out our online form to let us know what ministries you'd like to serve. You can also visit our Connection Center and speak with someone about our opportunities to serve Him and Give in Love.

SUNDAY

Today is your "Sabbath" and a time for reflection. How has God been speaking to you over the week? Use what the Lord has said to you to remold and reshape your life. If you are having trouble hearing God’s voice, slow down or even stop what you are doing so that the busyness of life’s demands do not squelch the whispers of God’s language of love upon your heart.