

“GETTING FIT” WEEK FOUR

Serving with Christ



IT'S TIME TO BE HIS HANDS AND FEET!

SCRIPTURE STUDY

Philippians 2:1-4
Galatians 6:2
Ephesians 4:32
Colossians 3:12-14
Galatians 5:13

PRAYER FOCUS

Dear Jesus,
I want to serve you better. Help me to be kind, compassionate and other-centered. Give me wisdom to know how I may best serve others.
In Jesus' Name,
Amen

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-4

“If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.” NIV

The marker passage for servanthood is found in Paul's letter to the Philippians. In Philippians 2:1-11, Paul paints the descent of Christ as eternal Creator-God to crucified sin-bearing Savior. In verses 9-11, we see Christ's exaltation from resurrected King to Lord of Heaven and Earth. However, along the way, Paul teaches that we can emulate the servanthood of Jesus.

The rich gifts, the resources given us as believers, are mentioned in verse one. Because Jesus lives in us, we are encouraged, comforted, filled with the Holy Spirit, receiving God's tenderness and compassion. We do not have access to these wonderful blessings alone. Paul tells us that we can come together with the rest of the Body of Christ, sharing God's mind and heart, following the Holy Spirit, and focusing on a singular purpose. There is incredible power and effectiveness in service as the Body of Christ comes together to serve.

The result of such blessing from God and connectedness to His People is the ability to look not to our own interests, but to the interests of others. What does being “other-focused” look like? Paul tells us in verses six through eight. Christ humbled himself and He “took the form of a man.” He expressed the ultimate form of empathy. He laid aside divinity and walked in human shoes. He hurt like we hurt. He was tempted as we are. He was rejected, criticized and isolated as we have been. And He experienced death as all men will.

The essence of servanthood is to walk in another man or woman's shoes. We bear their burdens. And we do it gladly.

Let's explore a few key words in this passage. In verse one, the Greek word for encouragement, *parakaleo* (called *alongside*) is actually the same word used for the Comforter, Counselor, Exhorter, Encourager, the Holy Spirit. In its verbal form it means to *invite, invoke, intreat, desire or pray*.

- Why is the Holy Spirit an integral part of encouraging and what would that look like? Meditate upon the above verbs. How would such encouragement and support be expressed?

The second picture includes two images—comfort, *paramuthia*, comfort or consolation, and *splagchnon*, bowels or tender, gentle *oiktirmon* mercies. People in the ancient world believed that emotions originated in the lower digestive system. Certainly, the image would imply that to serve others would require genuine empathy, compassion and caring. We actually experience the emotions they feel. “Bear one another’s burdens and so fulfill the Law of Christ.” Galatians 6:2 NIV

- How often do you find yourself “walking in someone else’s shoes?” Do you notice the facial expressions and body language of your near ones? Do you listen to their stories with interest? Do you anticipate their needs? Do you remember their special events, tastes and preferences? Why or why not? What are some hindrances to taking the time to serve others? How can you make adjustments to be available to serve others in the near future?

With your child:

- Read *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein with your child. Talk about how the Giving Tree felt about the little boy. Was it hard for the Giving Tree to sacrifice his branches for the boy he loved? If you do not have the book, simply read and explain Ephesians 4:32. Tell them about a time when someone was kind to you. Ask him/her to look around and find someone that would enjoy their kindness. Perhaps it would be a note colored and mailed to a grandparent. Perhaps it would be helping a brother or sister with their chores. Perhaps it would be a visit to a lonely person in a nursing home. Perhaps it would be a phone call or card to a playmate or classmate who is ill. Have your make a list of “kind things” to do.

With your teen:

- Read Colossians 3:12-14. List various day to day situations they face and ask the question: what would “being kind” or “being a servant” look like in this situation?

For example: encountering a mentally or physically challenged student at school, diffusing a disagreement with a brother or sister, volunteering for a menial or messy job that no one else wants to do, spending time with an elderly relative, engaging someone in conversation whom others ignore, etc. Have them choose one or two of these things that they will try to do in the upcoming week.

With a spouse or close friend:

- Read Galatians 5:13 together. Talk about a person in your life who best demonstrates having “a servant’s heart.” Describe him or her. What do you notice about how they treat others? Make a list of specific ways you have watched them demonstrate encouragement, kindness, compassion and helpfulness. Talk about how you can better emulate these qualities in your daily walk with Christ. Pray together and ask God to send you people this very week who need your kindness and compassion. Serve them joyfully. Report what happened next week as you get together.

Get involved in a service project or mission trip with your Adult Bible Fellowship.