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Forward

Author unknown

Lord, help me live from day to day
In such a self-forgetful way
That even when I kneel to pray
My prayer shall be for—Others.

Refrain

Others, Lord, yes others.
Let this my motto be,
Help me to live for others,
That I may live like Thee.

Help me in all the work I do
To ever be sincere and true
And know that all I'd do for You
Must needs be done for—Others.

Refrain

Let "Self" be crucified and slain
And buried deep: and all in vain
May efforts be to rise again.
Unless to live for—others.

Refrain

And when my work on earth is done,
And my new work in Heav'n's begun,
May I forget the crown I've won,
While thinking still of—Others.

Chapter 1



Forgiving Others

Ephesians 4:32 This is Christ's law of forgiveness as taught in the Gospels. We also see it in the Lord's Prayer—"Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

God does not forgive us *because* we forgive others, but solely because of his great mercy. As we come to understand his mercy, however, we will want to be like him. Having received forgiveness, we will pass it on to others.

Those who are unwilling to forgive have not become one with Christ, who was willing to forgive even those who crucified him (Luke 23:34).

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Mark 11:25 - And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

Jesus, our example for prayer, prayed, “Everything is possible for you. Yet not what I will, but what you will” (Mark 14:36). Our own interests and desires often motivate our prayers. We like to hear that we can have anything.

But Jesus prayed with *God’s* interests in mind. When we pray, we should express our desires, but want his will above ours. Check yourself to see if your prayers focus on your interests or God’s.

Luke 17:3-4 - Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.

To rebuke does not mean to point out every sin we see; it means to bring sin to a person’s attention with the purpose of restoring him or her to God and to fellow humans.

When you feel you must rebuke another Christian for a sin, check your attitudes before you speak. Do you love the person? Are you willing to forgive? Unless rebuke is tied to forgiveness, it will not help the sinning person.

Colossians 3:13 - Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man has a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do you.

The key to forgiving others is remembering how much God has forgiven you. Is it difficult for you to forgive someone who has wronged you a little when God has forgiven you so much? Realizing God’s infinite love and forgiveness can help you love and forgive others.

Luke 6:37 - Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

A forgiving spirit demonstrates that a person has received God's forgiveness. Jesus uses the picture of measuring grain in a basket to ensure the full amount. If we are critical rather than compassionate, we will also receive criticism.

If we treat others generously, graciously, and compassionately, however, these qualities will come back to us in full measure. We are to love others, not judge them.

Matthew 18:21-22 - Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him, till seven times?

The rabbis taught that people should forgive those who offend them—but only three times.

Peter, trying to be especially generous, asked Jesus if seven (the “perfect” number) was enough times to forgive someone. But Jesus answered, “Seventy-seven times,” meaning that we shouldn't even keep track of how many times we forgive someone.

We should always forgive those who are truly repentant, no matter how many times they ask.

1 Peter 3:9 - Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

In our fallen world, it is often deemed acceptable by some to tear people down verbally or to get back at them if we feel hurt.

Peter, remembering Jesus' teaching to turn the other cheek (Matthew 5:39), encourages his readers to pay back wrongs by praying for the offenders.

In God's kingdom, revenge is unacceptable behavior, as is insulting a person, no matter how indirectly it is done. Rise above getting back at those who hurt you. Instead of reacting angrily to these people, pray for them.

Proverbs 15:1 - A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.

Have you ever tried to argue in a whisper? It is equally hard to argue with someone who insists on answering gently. On the other hand, a rising voice and harsh words almost always trigger an angry response. To turn away wrath and seek peace, choose gentle words.

James 5:16 - Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

Christ has made it possible for us to go directly to God for forgiveness. But confessing our sins to each other still has an important place in the life of the church.

- (1) If we have sinned against an individual, we must ask him or her to forgive us.
- (2) If our sin has affected the church, we must confess it publicly.
- (3) If we need loving support as we struggle with a sin, we should confess that sin to those who are able to provide that support.

If, after confessing a private sin to God, we still don't feel his forgiveness, we may wish to confess that sin to a fellow believer and hear him or her assure us of God's pardon.

Chapter 2



Blessing Others

Matthew 5:16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Can you hide a city that is sitting on top of a hill? Its light at night can be seen for miles.

If we live for Christ, we will glow like lights, showing others what Christ is like.

We hide our light by

- (1) Being quiet when we should speak,
- (2) Going along with the crowd,
- (3) Denying the light,
- (4) Letting sin dim our light,
- (5) Not explaining our light to others, or
- (6) Ignoring the needs of others.

Be a beacon of truth—don't shut your light off from the rest of the world.

Philippians 2:3-4 Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Selfish ambition can ruin a church, but genuine humility can build it. Being humble involves having a true perspective about ourselves (see Romans 12:3).

It does not mean that we should put ourselves down. Before God, we are sinners, saved only by God's grace, but we *are* saved and therefore have great worth in God's kingdom. We are to lay aside selfishness and treat others with respect and common courtesy.

Considering others' interests as more important than our own links us with Christ, who was a true example of humility.

Philippi was a cosmopolitan city. The composition of the church reflected great diversity, with people from a variety of backgrounds and walks of life. Acts 16 gives us some indication of the diverse makeup of this church.

The church included Lydia, a Jewish convert from Asia and a wealthy businesswoman (Acts 16:14); the slave girl (Acts 16:16-17), probably a native Greek; and the jailer serving this colony of the empire, probably a Roman (Acts 16:25-36). With so many different backgrounds among the members, unity must have been difficult to maintain.

Although there is no evidence of division in the church, its unity had to be safeguarded (Phil. 3:2; Phil. 4:2). Paul encourages us to guard against any selfishness, prejudice, or jealousy that might lead to dissension. Showing genuine interest in others is a positive step forward in maintaining unity among believers.

Luke 6:31 And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.

The Jews despised the Romans because they oppressed God's people, but Jesus told the people to love these enemies. Such words turned many away from Christ. But Jesus wasn't talking about having affection for enemies; he was talking about an act of the will. You can't "fall into" this kind of love—it takes conscious effort. Loving our enemies means acting in their best interests. We can pray for them, and we can think of ways to help them. Jesus loved the whole world, even though the world was in rebellion against God. Jesus asks us to follow his example by loving our enemies. Grant your enemies the same respect and rights as you desire for yourself.

2 Corinthians 9:8-11 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. As it is written, "He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever."

He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.

People may hesitate to give generously to God if they worry about having enough money left over to meet their own needs. Paul assured the Corinthians that God was able to meet their needs. The person who gives only a little will receive only a little in return. Don't let a lack of faith keep you from giving freely and generously.

Our attitude when we give is more important than the amount we give. We don't have to be embarrassed if we can give only a small gift.

God is concerned about *how* we give from the resources we have (see Mark 12:41-44). According to that standard, the giving of the Macedonian churches would be difficult to match (2 Cor. 8:3).

Genesis 12:1-20 Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

God promised to bless Abram and make him great, but there was one condition. Abram had to do what God wanted him to do. This meant leaving his home and friends and traveling to a new land where God promised to build a great nation from Abram’s family.

Abram obeyed, walking away from his home for God’s promise of even greater blessings in the future. God may be trying to lead you to a place of greater service and usefulness for him. Don’t let the comfort and security of your present position make you miss God’s plan for you.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

While no action or work we do can help us obtain salvation, God’s intention is that our salvation will result in acts of service. We are not saved merely for our own benefit but to serve Christ and build up the church (Ephes. 4:12).

Chapter 3



Judging others

Philippians 2:1-30 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others

Before God, we are sinners, saved only by God's grace, but we *are* saved and therefore have great worth in God's kingdom. We are to lay aside selfishness and treat others with respect and common courtesy. Considering others' interests as more important than our own links us with Christ, who was a true example of humility.

Luke 6:31 And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.

Love means action. One way to put love to work is to take the initiative in meeting specific needs. This is easy to do with people who love us,

people whom we trust; but love means doing this even to those who dislike us or plan to hurt us.

The money we give others should be considered a gift, not a high-interest loan that will help us more than them. Give as though you are giving to God.

Matthew 7:1-2 "Stop judging others, and you will not be judged. For others will treat you as you treat them. Whatever measure you use in judging others, it will be used to measure how you are judged.

Jesus tells us to examine our own motives and conduct instead of judging others. The traits that bother us in others are often the habits we dislike in ourselves.

Our untamed bad habits and behavior patterns are the very ones that we most want to change in others. If you are ready to criticize someone, check to see if you deserve the same criticism. Judge yourself first, and then lovingly forgive and help your neighbor.

Jesus' statement, "Do not judge," is against the kind of hypocritical, judgmental attitude that tears others down in order to build oneself up. It is not a blanket statement against all critical thinking, but a call to be *discerning* rather than negative.

Jesus said to expose false teachers (Matthew 7:15-23), and Paul taught that we should exercise church discipline (1 Cor. 5:1-2) and trust God to be the final Judge (1 Cor. 4:3-5).

Matthew 7:12 "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

This is commonly known as the Golden Rule. In many religions it is stated negatively: “Don’t do to others what you don’t want done to you.”

By stating it positively, Jesus made it more significant. It is not very hard to refrain from harming others; it is much more difficult to take the initiative in doing something good for them. The Golden Rule as Jesus formulated it is the foundation of active goodness and mercy—the kind of love God shows to us every day.

Think of a good and merciful action you can take today.

3 John 1:11 Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God.

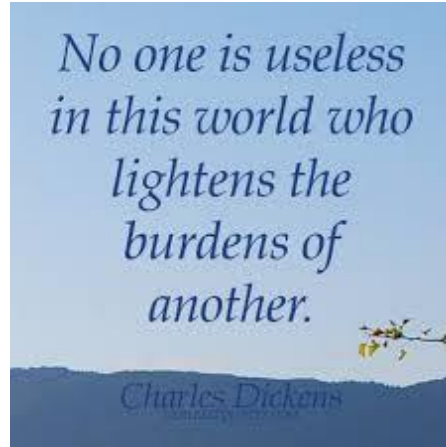
Romans 8:28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

God works in “all things”—not just isolated incidents—for our good. This does not mean that all that happens to us is good.

Evil is prevalent in our fallen world, but God is able to turn every circumstance around for our long-range good. Note that God is not working to make us happy, but to fulfill his purpose.

Note also that this promise is not for everybody. Only those who love God and are called according to his purpose can claim it. Those who are “called” are those the Holy Spirit convinces and enables to receive Christ. Such people have a new perspective, a new mind-set on life. They trust in God, not life’s treasures; they look for their security in heaven, not on earth; they learn to accept, not resent, pain and persecution because God is with them. Bottom of Form

Chapter 4



Helping others

Helping Others Shown in Moses' Time

Exodus 17:12 But Moses' hands grew weary, so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it, while Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side. So his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.

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Aaron and Hur stood by Moses' side and held up his arms to ensure victory against Amalek. We need to “lift up the hands” of our spiritual leaders as well. Shouldering some responsibility, lending a word of encouragement, or offering a prayer are ways of refreshing spiritual leaders in their work.

Deuteronomy 15:11 For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, 'you shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land'

God told the Israelites to help the poor among them when they arrived in the Promised Land. This was an important part of possessing the

land. Many people conclude that people are poor through some fault of their own. This kind of reasoning makes it easy to close their hearts and hands to the needy.

But we are not to invent reasons for ignoring the poor. We are to respond to their needs no matter who or what was responsible for their condition. Who are the poor in your community? How could your church help them? If your church does not have a program to identify the poor and assist in fulfilling their needs, why not help start one? What can you do to help someone in need?

Galatians 6:2 Share each other's troubles and problems, and in this way obey the law of Christ.

No Christian should ever think that he or she is totally independent and doesn't need help from others, and no one should feel excused from the task of helping others. The body of Christ—the church—functions only when the members work together for the common good.

Matthew 5:42 Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

Jesus suggested a new, radical response to injustice: instead of demanding rights, give them up freely! According to Jesus, it is more important to *give* justice and mercy than to receive it.

By telling us not to retaliate, Jesus keeps us from taking the law into our own hands. By loving and praying for our enemies, we can overcome evil with good.

Matthew 10:8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay.

Jesus gave the disciples a principle to guide their actions as they ministered to others: “Freely you have received, freely give.” Because God has showered us with his blessings, we should give generously to others of our time, love, and possessions.

Matthew 25:35-40 For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’

Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’

God will separate his obedient followers from pretenders and unbelievers. The real evidence of our belief is the way we act. To treat all persons we encounter as if they are Jesus is no easy task. What we do for others demonstrates what we really think about Jesus’ words to us—feed the hungry, give the homeless a place to stay, look after the sick. How well do your actions separate you from pretenders and unbelievers?

Jesus used sheep and goats to picture the division between believers and unbelievers. Sheep and goats often grazed together but were separated when it came time to shear the sheep. Ezekiel 34:17-24 also refers to the separation of sheep and goats.

This parable describes acts of mercy we all can do every day. These acts do not depend on wealth, ability, or intelligence; they are simple acts freely given and freely received. We have no excuse to neglect those who have deep needs, and we cannot hand over this responsibility to the church or government. Jesus demands our personal involvement in caring for others' needs (Isaiah 58:7).

Luke 3:10-11 And the crowds asked him, "What then shall we do?" And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise."

John's message demanded at least three specific responses:

- (1) Share what you have with those who need it,
- (2) Whatever your job is, do it well and with fairness, and
- (3) Be content with what you're earning.

John had no time to address comforting messages to those who lived careless or selfish lives—he was calling the people to right living. What changes can you make in sharing what you have, doing your work honestly and well, and being content?

Luke 12:33-34 Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Money seen as an end in itself quickly traps us and cuts us off from both God and the needy. The key to using money wisely is to see how much we can use for God's purposes, not how much we can accumulate for ourselves. Does God's love touch your wallet.

If your financial goals and possessions hinder you from giving generously, loving others, or serving God, sell what you must to bring your life into perspective.

If you concentrate your money in your business, your thoughts will center on making the business profitable. If you direct it toward other people, you will become concerned with their welfare. Where do you put your time, money, and energy? What do you think about most? How should you change the way you use your resources in order to reflect kingdom values more accurately?

John 15:12 “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you...”

We are to love each other as Jesus loved us, and he loved us enough to give his life for us. We may not have to die for someone, but there are other ways to practice sacrificial love: listening, helping, encouraging, giving. Think of someone in particular who needs this kind of love today. Give all the love you can, and then try to give a little more.

Apostles Preached and Wrote About Helping Others

James 1:17 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

The Bible often compares goodness with light and evil with darkness. For other passages where God is pictured as light, see Psalm 27:1, Isaiah 60:19-22, John 1:1-14.

Chapter 5



Encouraging others

1 Thessalonians 5:11 - Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

As you near the end of a long race, your legs ache, your throat burns, and your whole body cries out for you to stop. This is when friends and fans are most valuable. Their encouragement helps you push through the pain to the finish line.

In the same way, Christians are to encourage one another. A word of encouragement offered at the right moment can be the difference between finishing well and collapsing along the way. Look around you. Be sensitive to others' need for encouragement, and offer supportive words or actions.

Ephesians 4:29 - Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

We can grieve the Holy Spirit by the way we live. Paul warns us against unwholesome language, bitterness, and improper use of anger,

brawling, slander, and bad attitudes toward others. Instead of acting that way, we should be forgiving, just as God has forgiven us. Act in love toward your brothers and sisters in Christ, just as God acted in love by sending his Son to die for your sins.

Hebrews 10:24-25 - And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.

We have significant privileges associated with our new life in Christ:

- (1) We have personal access to God through Christ and can draw near to him without an elaborate system (Hebrews 10:22);
- (2) We may grow in faith, overcome doubts and questions, and deepen our relationship with God (Hebrews 10:23);
- (3) We may enjoy encouragement from one another (Hebrews 10:24);
- (4) We may worship together (Hebrews 10:25).

To neglect Christian meetings is to give up the encouragement and help of other Christians. We gather together to share our faith and to strengthen one another in the Lord.

As we get closer to the “Day” when Christ will return, we will face many spiritual struggles, and even times of persecution. Anti-Christian forces will grow in strength. Difficulties should never be excuses for missing church services. Rather, as difficulties arise, we should make an even greater effort to be faithful in attendance.

Proverbs 12:25 - Heaviness in the heart of man make it stoop: but a good word make it glad.

The diligent make wise use of their possessions and resources; the lazy waste them. Waste has become a way of life for many who live in a land of plenty. Waste is poor stewardship. Make good use of everything God has given you, and prize it.

Philippians 4:8 - Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things [are] honest, whatsoever things [are] just, whatsoever things [are] pure, whatsoever things [are] lovely, whatsoever things [are] of good report; if [there be] any virtue, and if [there be] any praise, think on these things.

What we put into our minds determines what comes out in our words and actions. Paul tells us to program our minds with thoughts that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy. Do you have problems with impure thoughts and daydreams? Examine what you are putting into your mind through television, books, conversations, movies, and magazines. Replace harmful input with wholesome material. Above all, read God's Word and pray. Ask God to help you focus your mind on what is good and pure. It takes practice, but it can be done.

1 Thessalonians 4:18 - Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Because Jesus Christ came back to life, so will all believers. All Christians, including those living when Christ returns, will live with Christ forever. Therefore, we need not despair when loved ones die or world events take a tragic turn. God will turn our tragedies to triumphs, our poverty to riches, our pain to glory, and our defeat to victory. All believers throughout history will stand reunited in God's very presence, safe and secure. As Paul comforted the Thessalonians with the promise

of the resurrection, so we should comfort and reassure each other with this great hope.

Romans 15:13 - Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

Paul reminds his readers that for thousands of years the law had not yet been explicitly given, and yet people died. The law was added, he explains in Romans 5:20, to help people see their sinfulness, to show them the seriousness of their offenses, and to drive them to God for mercy and pardon. This was true in Moses' day, and it is still true today. Sin is a deep discrepancy between who we are and who we were created to be. The law points out our sin and places the responsibility for it squarely on our shoulders. But the law offers no remedy. When we are convicted of sin, we must turn to Jesus Christ for healing.

Acts 20:35 - I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Hebrews 3:13 - But exhort one another daily, while it is called to day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Jeremiah 29:11 - For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

A leader who stirs us to move ahead, someone who believes we can do the task he has given and who will be with us all the way, encourages us all. God is that kind of leader.

Chapter 6



Serving Others

1 Peter 4:10 As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

Some people, well aware of their abilities, believe that they have the right to use their abilities as they please. Others feel that they have no special talents at all. Peter addresses both groups in these verses. Everyone has some gifts; find yours and use them. All our abilities should be used in serving others; none are for our own exclusive enjoyment.

How is God praised when we use our abilities? When we use them as he directs, to help others, they will see Jesus in us and praise him for the help they have received. Peter may have been thinking of Jesus' words,

Hebrews 13:16 And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

Since these Jewish Christians, because of their witness to the Messiah, no longer worshiped with other Jews, they should consider praise and acts of service their sacrifices—ones they could offer anywhere, anytime. This must have reminded them of the prophet Hosea's words, "Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips" (Hosea 14:2).

A “sacrifice of praise” today would include thanking Christ for his sacrifice on the cross and telling others about it. Acts of kindness and sharing are particularly pleasing to God, even when they go unnoticed by others.

Galatians 5:13-14 For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."

Paul distinguishes between freedom to sin and freedom to serve. Freedom or license to sin is no freedom at all, because it enslaves you to Satan, others, or your own sinful nature. Christians, by contrast, should not be slaves to sin, because they are free to do right and to glorify God through loving service to others.

When we are not motivated by love, we become critical of others. We stop looking for good in them and see only their faults. Soon the unity of believers is broken. Have you talked behind someone’s back? Have you focused on others’ shortcomings instead of their strengths?

Remind yourself of Jesus’ command to love others as you love yourself (Matthew 22:39). When you begin to feel critical of someone, make a list of that person’s positive qualities. If there are problems that need to be addressed, it is better to confront in love than to gossip.

Matthew 20:28

Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

A ransom was the price paid to release a slave from bondage. Jesus often told his disciples that he must die, but here he told them why—to redeem all people from the bondage of sin and death. The disciples thought that as long as Jesus was alive, he could save them. But Jesus revealed that only his death would save them and the world.

Mark 9:35 Sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."

The disciples, caught up in their constant struggle for personal success, were embarrassed to answer Jesus' question. It is always painful to compare our motives with Christ's. It is not wrong for believers to be industrious or ambitious.

But when ambition pushes obedience and service to one side, it becomes sin. Pride or insecurity can cause us to overvalue position and prestige. In God's kingdom, such motives are destructive. The only safe ambition is directed toward Christ's kingdom, not our own advancement.

Genesis 27:29 Many peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you; Be master of your brothers, And may your mother's sons bow down to you Cursed be those who curse you, And blessed be those who bless you."

Although Jacob got the blessing he wanted, deceiving his father cost him dearly. These are some of the consequences of that deceit:

- (1) He never saw his mother again;
- (2) His brother wanted to kill him;
- (3) He was deceived by his uncle, Laban;
- (4) His family became torn by strife;

- (5) Esau became the founder of an enemy nation;
- (6) He was exiled from his family for years.

Ironically, Jacob would have received the birthright and blessing anyway (Genesis 25:23). Imagine how different his life would have been had he and his mother waited for God to work his way, in his time!

Luke 16:13 "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

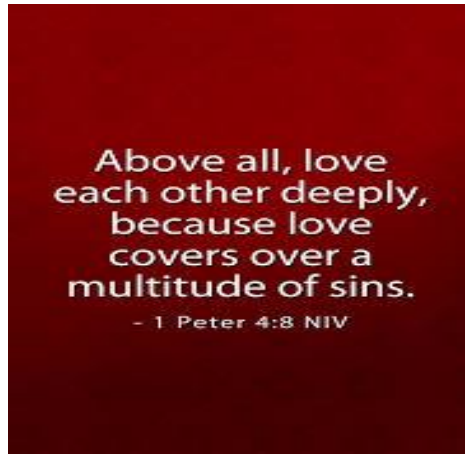
Money is a hard master and a deceptive one. Wealth promises power and control, but often it cannot deliver. Great fortunes can be made—and lost—overnight, and no amount of money can provide health, happiness, or eternal life. How much better it is to let God be your Master. His servants have peace of mind and security, both now and forever.

Luke 22:27 "For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves."

The Pharisees considered wealth to be a proof of a person's righteousness. Jesus startled them with this story where a diseased beggar is rewarded and a rich man is punished.

The rich man did not go to hell because of his wealth but because he was selfish, refusing to feed Lazarus, take him in, or care for him. The rich man was hardhearted in spite of his great blessings. The amount of money we have is not as important as the way we use it. What is your attitude toward your money and possessions? Do you hoard them selfishly, or do you use them to help others?

Chapter 7



Loving Others

1 John 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

Everyone believes that love is important, but love is usually thought of as a feeling. In reality, love is a choice and an action, as 1 Cor. 13:4-7 shows. God is the source of our love: he loved us enough to sacrifice his Son for us. Jesus is our example of what it means to love; everything he did in life and death was supremely loving.

The Holy Spirit gives us the power to love; he lives in our hearts and makes us more and more like Christ. God's love always involves a choice and an action, and our love should be like his. How well do you display your love for God in the choices you make and the actions you take?

1 John 4:21 And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

It is easy to say we love God when that love doesn't cost us anything more than weekly attendance at religious services. But the real test of our love for God is how we treat the people right in front of us—our family members and fellow believers. We cannot truly love God while neglecting to love those who are created in his image.

John 13:34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

To love others was not a new commandment (see Leviticus 19:18), but to love others as much as Christ loved others was revolutionary. Now we are to love others based on Jesus' sacrificial love for us. Such love will not only bring unbelievers to Christ; it will also keep believers strong and united in a world hostile to God.

Jesus was a living example of God's love, as we are to be living examples of Jesus' love.

Jesus says that our Christ like love will show we are his disciples. Do people see petty bickering, jealousy, and division in your church? Or do they know you are Jesus' followers by your love for one another?

Love is more than simply warm feelings; it is an attitude that reveals itself in action. How can we love others as Jesus loves us? By helping when it's not convenient, by giving when it hurts, by devoting energy to others' welfare rather than our own, by absorbing hurts from others without complaining or fighting back.

This kind of loving is hard to do. That is why people notice when you do it and know you are empowered by a supernatural source. The Bible has another beautiful description of love in 1 Cor. 13.

John 15:12 "This is my commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.

We are to love each other as Jesus loved us, and he loved us enough to give his life for us. We may not have to die for someone, but there are other ways to practice sacrificial love: listening, helping, encouraging, and giving.

Think of someone in particular who needs this kind of love today. Give all the love you can, and then try to give a little more.

1 John 3:23 This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.

In the Bible, a person's name stands for his or her character. It represents who he or she really is. We are to believe not only in Jesus' words, but also in his very person as the Son of God. Moreover, to believe "in the name" means to pattern your life after Christ's, to become more like him by uniting yourself with him. And if we are living like Christ, we will "love one another.

Ephesians 5:2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

Just as children imitate their parents, we should imitate Christ. His great love for us led him to sacrifice himself so that we might live. Our love for others should be of the same kind—a love that goes beyond affection to self-sacrificing service.

1 Thessalonians 4:9 Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write near you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;

There is more to Christian living than simply loving other Christians. We must be responsible in all areas of life. Some of the Thessalonian Christians had adopted a life of idleness, depending on others for handouts. Some Greeks looked down on manual labor.

So Paul told the Thessalonians to work hard and live a quiet life. You can't be effective in sharing your faith with others if they don't respect you. Whatever you do, do it faithfully and be a positive force in society.

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

The fruit of the Spirit is the spontaneous work of the Holy Spirit in us. The Spirit produces these character traits that are found in the nature of Christ. They are the by-products of Christ's control—we can't obtain them by *trying* to get them without his help.

If we want the fruit of the Spirit to grow in us, we must join our lives to his (see John 15:4-5). We must know him, love him, remember him, and imitate him. As a result, we will fulfill the intended purpose of the law—to love God and our neighbors. Which of these qualities do you want the Spirit to produce in you?

Colossians 1:8 And he also informed us of your love in the Spirit.

Because of their love for one another, Christians can have an impact that goes far beyond their neighborhoods and communities. Christian love comes from the Holy Spirit (see Galatians 5:22).

The Bible speaks of it as an action and attitude, not just an emotion. Love is a by-product of our new life in Christ (see Romans 5:5; 1 Cor. 13). Christians have no excuse for not loving, because Christian love is a decision to *act* in the best interests of others.

Chapter 8



Giving unto others

2 Corinthians 9:7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

People may hesitate to give generously to God if they worry about having enough money left over to meet their own needs. Paul assured the Corinthians that God was able to meet their needs. The person who gives only a little will receive only a little in return. Don't let a lack of faith keep you from giving freely and generously.

Luke 6:38 Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you."

A forgiving spirit demonstrates that a person has received God's forgiveness. Jesus uses the picture of measuring grain in a basket to ensure the full amount. If we are critical rather than compassionate, we will also receive criticism. If we treat others generously, graciously, and compassionately, however, these qualities will come back to us in full measure. We are to love others, not judge them.

Matthew 6:1-4 “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. “Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that others may praise them.

Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

The term *hypocrites*, as used here, describes people who do good acts for appearances only—not out of compassion or other good motives. Their actions may be good, but their motives are hollow. These empty acts are their only reward, but God will reward those who are sincere in their faith.

When Jesus says not to let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, he is teaching that our motives for giving to God and to others must be pure. It is easy to give with mixed motives, to do something for someone if it will benefit us in return. But believers should avoid all scheming and give for the pleasure of giving and as a response to God’s love. Why do *you* give?

It’s easier to do what’s right when we gain recognition and praise. To be sure our motives are not selfish, we should do our good deeds quietly or in secret, with no thought of reward. Jesus says we should check our motives in three areas: generosity (Matthew 6:4), prayer (Matthew 6:6), and fasting (Matthew 6:18).

Those acts should not be self-centered, but God-centered, done not to make us look good but to make God look good. The reward God promises is not material, and it is never given to those who seek it.

Doing something only for ourselves is not a loving sacrifice. With your next good deed, ask, “Would I still do this if no one would ever know I did it?”

2 Corinthians 8:12

For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.

How do you decide how much to give? What about differences in the financial resources Christians have?

Paul gives the Corinthian church several principles to follow:

- (1) Each person should follow through on previous promises (2 Cor. 8:10-11; 2 Cor. 9:3);
- (2) Each person should give as much as he or she is able (2 Cor. 8:12; 2 Cor. 9:6);
- (3) Each person must make up his or her own mind how much to give (2 Cor. 9:7); and
- (4) Each person should give in proportion to what God has given him or her (2 Cor. 9:10).

God gives to us so that we can give to others.

Paul says that we should give of what we have, not what we don't have. Sacrificial giving must be responsible.

Paul wants believers to give generously, but not to the extent that those who depend on the givers (their families, for example) must go without having their basic needs met.

Give until it hurts, but don't give so that it hurts your family and/or relatives who need your financial support.

Matthew 6:20

But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Storing up treasures in heaven is not limited to tithing but is accomplished by all acts of obedience to God. There is a sense in which giving our money to God's work is like investing in heaven. But our intention should be to seek the fulfillment of God's purposes in all we do, not merely what we do with our money.

Mark 12:41-44

And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny.

And he called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

There were several boxes in the temple where money could be placed. Some were for collecting the temple tax from Jewish males; the others were for freewill offerings. These particular collection boxes were probably in the court of the women.

In the Lord's eyes, this poor widow gave more than all the others put together, though her gift was by far the smallest. The value of a gift is not determined by its amount, but by the spirit in which it is given. A gift given grudgingly or for recognition loses its value.

Chapter 9



Accepting Others

Exodus 23:9 "You shall not oppress a stranger, since you yourselves know the feelings of a stranger, for you also were strangers in the land of Egypt.

The thought of being kind to enemies was new and startling in a world where revenge was the common form of justice. God not only introduced this idea to the Israelites, he made it law! If a man found a lost animal owned by his enemy, he was to return it at once, even if his enemy might use it to harm him.

Jesus clearly taught in Luke 10:30-37 to reach out to all people in need, even our enemies. Following the laws of right living is hard enough with friends. When we apply God's laws of fairness and kindness to our enemies, we show how different we are from the world.

Hebrew 13:2 Don't forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it!

Three Old Testament people “entertained angels without knowing it”:

- (1) Abraham (Genesis 18:1ff),
- (2) Gideon (Judges 6:11ff), and
- (3) Manoah (Judges 13:2ff).

Some people say they cannot be hospitable because their homes are not large enough or nice enough.

But even if you have no more than a table and two chairs in a rented room, there are people who would be grateful to spend time in your home. Are there visitors to your church with whom you could share a meal?

Do you know single people who would enjoy an evening of conversation? Is there any way your home could meet the needs of traveling missionaries?

Hospitality simply means making other people feel comfortable and at home.

Romans 14:1-4 Accept Christians who are weak in faith, and don't argue with them about what they think is right or wrong.

For instance, one person believes it is all right to eat anything. But another believer who has a sensitive conscience will eat only vegetables.

Those who think it is all right to eat anything must not look down on those who won't. And those who won't eat certain foods must not condemn those who do, for God has accepted them. Who are you to condemn God's servants?

They are responsible to the Lord, so let him tell them whether they are right or wrong. The Lord's power will help them do, as they should.

Who is weak in faith and who is strong? We are all weak in some areas and strong in others. Our faith is strong in an area if we can survive contact with sinners without falling into their patterns.

It is weak in an area if we must avoid certain activities, people, or places in order to protect our spiritual life. It is important to take a self-inventory in order to find out our strengths and weaknesses. Whenever in doubt, we should ask, “Can I do that without sinning? Can I influence others for good, rather than being influenced by them?”

In areas of strength, we should not fear being defiled by the world; rather we should go and serve God. In areas of weakness, we need to be cautious. If we have a strong faith but shelter it, we are not doing Christ’s work in the world. If we have a weak faith but expose it, we are being extremely foolish.

This verse assumes there will be differences of opinion in the church (disputable matters). Paul says we are not to quarrel about issues that are matters of opinion. Differences should not be feared or avoided, but accepted and handled with love.

Don’t expect everyone, even in the best possible church, to agree on every subject. Through sharing ideas we can come to a fuller understanding of what the Bible teaches.

Accept, listen to, and respect others. Differences of opinion need not cause division. They can be a source of learning and richness in our relationships. What is weak faith? Paul is speaking about immature faith that has not yet developed the muscle it needs to stand against external pressures.

For example, if a person who once worshiped idols were to become a Christian, he might understand perfectly well that Christ saved him through faith and that idols have no real power.

Still, because of his past associations, he might be badly shaken if he knowingly ate meat that had been used in idol worship as part of a pagan ritual. If a person who once worshiped God on the required Jewish holy days were to become a Christian, he might well know that Christ saved him through faith, not through his keeping of the law.

Still, when the feast days came, he might feel empty and unfaithful if he didn't dedicate those days to God.

Paul responds to both weak brothers in love. Both are acting according to their consciences, but their honest scruples do not need to be made into rules for the church.

Certainly some issues are central to the faith and worth fighting for—but many are based on individual differences and should not be legislated. Our principle should be: In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in everything, love.

Romans 15:5-7 May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other—each with the attitude of Christ Jesus toward the other.

Then all of you can join together with one voice, giving praise and glory to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So accept each other just as Christ has accepted you; then God will be glorified.

Chapter 10



Caring for others

Philip. 2:4

Don't think only about your own affairs, but be interested in others, too, and what they are doing.

Philippi was a cosmopolitan city. The composition of the church reflected great diversity, with people from a variety of backgrounds and walks of life.

Acts 16 gives us some indication of the diverse makeup of this church. The church included Lydia, a Jewish convert from Asia and a wealthy businesswoman (Acts 16:14); the slave girl (Acts 16:16-17), probably a native Greek; and the jailer serving this colony of the empire, probably a Roman (Acts 16:25-36).

With so many different backgrounds among the members, unity must have been difficult to maintain. Although there is no evidence of division in the church, its unity had to be safeguarded (Phil. 3:2; Phil. 4:2). Paul encourages us to guard against any selfishness, prejudice, or jealousy that might lead to dissension.

Showing genuine interest in others is a positive step forward in maintaining unity among believers.

Galatians 6:2 Share each other's troubles and problems, and in this way obey the law of Christ.

No Christian should ever think that he or she is totally independent and doesn't need help from others, and no one should feel excused from the task of helping others. The body of Christ—the church—functions only when the members work together for the common good.

Do you know someone who needs help? Is there a Christian brother or sister who needs correction or encouragement? Humbly and gently reach out to that person (John 13:34-35).

Romans 2:10 But there will be glory and honor and peace from God for all who do good for the Jew first and also for the Gentile.

We are not saved by good deeds, but when we commit our lives fully to God, we want to please him and do his will. As such, our good deeds are a grateful *response* to what God has done, not a prerequisite to earning his grace.

Galatians 6:10 Whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone, especially to our Christian brothers and sisters.

It is discouraging to continue to do right and receive no word of thanks or see no tangible results. But Paul challenged the Galatians and he challenges us to keep on doing good and to trust God for the results. In due time, we will reap a harvest of blessing.

1 Tim. 5:8 But those who won't care for their own relatives, especially those living in the same household, have denied what we believe. Such people are worse than unbelievers.

Almost everyone has relatives, family of some kind. Family relationships are so important in God's eyes, Paul says, that a person who neglects his or her family responsibilities has denied the faith. Are you doing your part to meet the needs of those included in your family circle?

Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of God ad Father is to visit orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

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