

## **Growing Deeper – Part Two**

### *The Nine Paths: Finding Your Unique Approach to Growth, Relationships and Spirituality*

#### **Week Four: The Path of Service**

*Acts 17:24-25*

#### **Spend FIFTEEN – Day One**

1. Read John 13:1-17. Whom do you identify most with in this story? Do you identify with Jesus doing the washing, with Peter feeling apprehensive of Jesus washing his feet, or one of the other disciples who quietly lets Jesus wash his feet? Explain your answer.
2. Focusing especially on John 13:12-17, what are the reasons that Jesus washed the disciples' feet?
3. Jesus came to serve (Mark 10:45), and we are striving to be like Jesus by serving others. Who are people or groups of people that you are active in serving?
4. What are the good things that you are able to provide for friends or family when you are actively serving others?
5. One of the ways you can grow in your service of others is to think about the reasons that you serve. As you spend some time thinking about who you serve, also spend some time thinking about why you serve people. Try to honestly list out selfless as well as selfish reasons that you serve.
6. The danger of service is the temptation to serve "with strings attached." Spend the rest of your FIFTEEN minutes writing a prayer to God asking for a heart that is able to serve others without expectations of receiving something in return.

#### **Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two**

7. Read 1 Samuel 13:8-10. Why would a typical person make burnt offerings (sacrificing a living animal) to the Lord as Saul did in this passage?
8. According to 1 Samuel 13:8, the reason for Saul's sacrifice was not an overwhelming appreciation for God's provision, but a reaction to Saul's men beginning to scatter. Was Saul's act of worship for the benefit of God or for the benefit of himself?
9. Read 1 Samuel 13:11-15. How did Saul's empty act of worship turn out for him?
10. David was probably familiar with this story when he contemplated his own mistakes. Read Psalm 51:16-17. What is the type of sacrifice that pleases God?

11. What are some of the things that you do for God, some of the ways that you serve him daily, weekly or yearly?
12. What are the temptations of serving God for you? Are there ways that those acts of service can also be self-serving?
13. End your FIFTEEN by contemplating the ways God would want you to serve him, ways that you set aside any self-serving actions and serve Him with a pure heart. Write down what he reveals to you in this time.

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three**

14. Read Matthew 6:1-4. In verse 1, of what is Jesus asking his followers to be careful?
15. Today people do not use trumpets, but they may put their name on a building or foundation in order to honor themselves as much as the people they are helping. Where do you think this type of giving is dangerous in our current times?
16. Turn one chapter back and read Matthew 5:43-48. How would you connect “service to the needy” to “loving your enemies” (or at least loving people other than “the people that love you back”)?
17. What are some charities or groups of unfortunate people that you support?
18. How can you check yourself and know that you are serving unfortunate people for the right reasons?
19. Spend the rest of your FIFTEEN by contemplating ways that you can anonymously help someone who needs it this week in a way that truly benefits your heart but not your ego (your vision of yourself). Then ask God in prayer to help you accomplish this goal.

**Spend FIFTEEN - Day Four**

20. Jesus is the fulfillment of each of the nine paths that we talk about in this series. He personifies the good qualities of each path without being entangled by the pitfalls associated with each path. Spend some time thinking about the ways Jesus was able to serve others with a pure heart. (If you are not able to think of many stories, you could start with Matthew 8 and read until you have a picture of Jesus’ heart of service.)
21. On Monday, we referenced Mark 10:45. Read this passage again and list how Jesus was a servant in this way.
22. The StrengthsFinder 2.0 assessment and other studies have found that your greatest weaknesses are not strengths that others have, but rather the dark side of the strength that you do have. Jesus has all the strengths of the nine paths but shows ways to avoid the dark sides. How did Jesus serve with “no strings attached”?

23. People with a strong gift to serve often become dependent on the response they get from serving others. What would enable you to serve without the need to receive that response from the people whom you serve?
24. Those who have been given an extra measure of “the gift to serve” find that they thrive with a healthy balance between serving (an external focus) and serving with unique qualities (an internal focus). How can you focus on your own gifts (in a healthy way) in order to benefit the people around you and *truly* serve them?
25. Conclude your FIFTEEN in prayer by asking God to help you recognize when you stray into an unhealthy balance of serving for the sake of your own needs.

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five**

26. Read Acts 17:24-25, as well as some of the context around those verses if that is helpful to you. What do you think caused Paul to say these things to the people of Athens?
27. Christians may fall into the trap of thinking that they “serve God” and are able to further the work God is doing in the world. While he does call us into this, Acts 17 reminds us that we are not necessary to his plan or work. How does hearing that scare you? How does hearing that give you freedom?
28. Those who serve well often feel like they are dependent on other people around them, especially those in leadership positions. How is God calling you to serve those in leadership around you? How is God calling you to be a leader yourself?
29. Often those who spend a lot of time caring about the needs of others tend to ignore the needs that they have themselves. What are things that restore you so that you can be a blessing, and not a burden, to others?
30. Remembering that God continually provides for all of us is reassuring, that he gives everyone life and breath and everything else. What can you stop and thank God for today?
31. Those who have a gift to serve will usually find themselves energized by being around other people. However, going against that tendency can be a life-giving opportunity to grow. Solitude is a spiritual discipline, whether it is a three-day retreat in the mountains or a short ride in the car with no phone or radio or other distractions. How can you let God fill you up through the practice of solitude this week?
32. Finish your FIFTEEN in quiet solitude enjoying God’s presence without any expectation of action on your part.