

A Spiritually Happy Man Serves

By: Mike Sandlin, WBA Men's Ministry/Discipleship Coach

Think for a moment of the best gift you received as a child. Say in your elementary years of your life. You got it? I got mine. I was in the first grade, and I got an electric race car set for Christmas. But what made it so special is that I remember my older brother – who is several years older – playing with me practically all day.

You see, my brother is 14 years older, which would have made him about 20 years old at the time. Probably home for Christmas from the Air Force and a few months before he shipped out to Japan for two years. But his gift to me of getting on the floor and playing with me is a special memory to me. He probably doesn't even remember it. But to me, it was special.

As we continue in the third installment of the habits of a spiritual happy man we are going to look at serving - going out of your way to minister to others, not the easy stuff but the hard.

Let's begin by looking at 1 Peter 4:10-11 _ *As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies – in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever.*

The gospel is about transformation. I know of a church that states its purpose is "To join God in His work to transform lives." Romans 12:2 tells us, "*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.*" When we come to Christ we are not to continue in the behavior and customs of this world. But we are to allow the Holy Spirit to transform our lives. 2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us, "*If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*"

But our refusal to conform to this world's values must go even deeper, it must be firmly planted in our mind. The New Living Testament translates Romans 12:2 this way, "*Let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.*" It is possible to avoid most worldly customs and still be proud, covetous, selfish, stubborn, and arrogant. It is only when the Holy Spirit renews, reeducates, and redirects our mind are we truly transformed. Romans 8:5 lets us know that, "*For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.*" Men who are growing spiritually will see that their mindset is changed.

We need to understand that God supplies the strength for us to serve. Look at verse 11 of 1 Peter, "*One who serves by the strength that God supplies.*" Maybe God has something else in mind here than just doing work. It doesn't take much strength to give money to the Salvation Army as you walk by the bell ringers at Christmas time. It doesn't take much strength to participate at a church's clean-up day or tell someone that you will pray for them. Though these are good and I would encourage you to do all, I think Peter was speaking of something much

deeper here. Peter was encouraging us to get deeply involved in someone's life – with people who are truly hurting.

Sometimes getting involved with people who are hurting will get messy and be inconvenient. Jesus didn't tell us to pick up our cross to get up early to read and study the Bible. He didn't tell us to pick up your cross and take people supper when they are sick; no, he told us to pick up our cross and follow Him. What did He do when He picked up His cross – he went to die for you and me for the redemption of our sins. Yes, we need to read and study our Bibles. Yes, we should be willing to take supper to those who are sick. But we need to be willing to die to our needs for the needs of others.

Even Jesus on the night before His crucifixion asked the Father to *"let this cup pass from me"* (Matt.26:39). Yet, He didn't let His desire prevent Him from doing that which the Father desired. We need to be willing to take up our cross and follow Jesus even when it is inconvenient, uncomfortable, and difficult. Sometimes this will make us feel inadequate but that is when we will see the strength God will supply.

God has given each of us a gift to serve and He expects us to use that gift to serve others. Look at verse 10 of 1 Peter 4; *"each has received a gift, use it to serve one another."* Not to serve yourself but someone else. We need to be oriented to serving others. A self-oriented life always leaves us as a shell of the man we should be in God. Are you using your gift for the good of others? We do not need to be self-centered but others-centered.

Our abilities should be faithfully used in serving others; none of our gifts are for our exclusive enjoyment. Some people, aware of their abilities, believe 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 gifts; find yours and use them. Peter mentions speaking and serving. Paul lists these and other abilities in Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:8-11; and Ephesians 4:11. Even as you seek to discover your gifts, if you see a need in the church, seek to meet it. You may find gifts in areas you might not have guessed!

Then we see in verse 11 that we do this *"in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ."* How is God glorified when we use our abilities? When we use them as He directs, to help others, they will see Jesus in us and glorify Him for the help they have received. Peter may have been thinking of Jesus' word *"Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven"* (Matt 5:16).

As a Follower of Christ, we need to serve others beyond ourselves. You need to have a deep, intentional, spiritual impact in one person's life. When you do, you will love it and God will get the glory. So, to be a spiritual happy man, discover your gifts and use them to impact others; but more importantly, To Glorify God.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is quoted from English Standard Version.