

# Life of the Servant #1 'Serving With Body, Soul and Spirit'

by A.W. Tozer

---

*The key to true service is serving in the will of God, and this is essential to leaving a lasting legacy and putting something back into the world.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 25:40, Mark 10:45, Acts 13:36, Romans 12:1-2, 1 Corinthians 15:58, Galatians 5:13, Ephesians 2:10, Philippians 2:5-7, Colossians 3:23-24, 1 Peter 4:10

**Topics:** "Servanthood", "Living in God's Will"

---

## Description

A.W. Tozer emphasizes the life of a servant, illustrating how both individuals and the church serve through body, soul, and spirit. He reflects on David's life, noting that he served his generation by the will of God and highlights the importance of living a life that contributes positively to the world. Tozer argues that true service is not merely religious activity but must be aligned with God's will, and he warns against living a life of mere consumption without giving back. He encourages believers to serve joyfully and willingly, ensuring they leave a legacy of service that impacts future generations. Ultimately, Tozer calls the church to embody the servant spirit of Christ, who came to serve rather than to be served.

---

## Transcript

Message 1 of 3 on The Life of the Servant by A.W. Tozer

"Serving with Body, Soul and Spirit" - January 18, 1959

I want to talk on the servant, the life of the servant. And I want to talk about a serving man and a serving group of men called a church. And I want to show you how a man is divided into body, soul and spirit. And the church is divided into body, soul and spirit and that it's through our body, soul and spirit that we serve. I take a text this morning, a text that I have referred to and used very often because it happens to be one of my favorites. This will be rather an illustration than anything else to get us further into the messages I want to give.

In the 13th of Acts, the 36th verse "for David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God fell on sleep. Now those words you've heard me quote often because they are beautiful words. And they illustrate so many things. Now, I personally think that there never was, either in the Bible or out of it, a biography quite as beautiful as this one. David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God

fell on sleep. That is not a complete biography certainly, but it is a very significant one.

When we write on the lives of men, we start with their grandparents, their national source, origins, lineage, who their parents were, where they were born, when, where they studied, how they grew up and married. And we put a lot of details in and there are more details than this in the Bible about David certainly. But I think that here when we reach the glory, and look on the face of God, we know as we're known, the details of our lives will be found to be less important than we thought they were.

He served his generation. He served his generation in the will of God. Then because it was true, we did the only thing possible left for him to do, he went to sleep and he is now with his Lord. Not in the state of perfection, but waiting for that hour when His greater Son, Jesus Christ, shall bring about the consummation of all things.

I say there are many chapters written about David in the Old Testament. But here is about all that really matters. And it's very lovely to me. It's lovely, because it's brief. It's lovely, because it's highly condensed, symmetrical and you have a feeling when you read these words, that you have read all that matters really about the man. I suppose actually that there is not much more really important but this. I think that you and I could relax and be more restful if we knew how few things were important. There are not very many things that are important to us at all even though we, down here in this busy wild, crazy world, imagine things are important that aren't important at all.

A woman will spend more time over the length of a curtain or something else than the President spends on how many millions we're going to give to Yugoslavia. Everything is relative, you know, on all matters. And all of this stuff is really relative.

I had a son once, we have him still of course, but he's married and gone. But he had one suit and two ties. And he would get up before he went to church Sunday morning and stand before the mirror putting one tie up against the suit and then putting the other tie. It was a question of choosing which of the two, but it bothered him a lot. And being like his father, he tended to fuss about things a lot. And it was rather amusing. He just had two. It was just a question of which one, but really didn't matter. Honestly, it didn't matter.

If you managed to get off to church this morning brother with a tie that doesn't match, 100 years from now, it will matter. Oh no, it won't matter at all. And then, if there's a little fray appearing around the arm, around anywhere about that coat sister, it won't matter few years from now. It just won't matter. And there are a lot of things here that don't matter.

But there's three things that David did. He served and he served in the will of God until he was through and then died. Now that's, that's beautiful, really, I think, I think that's beautiful. To serve, and then to serve in the will of God. And then when you're finished, and know what to do, and be able to do it. And be able to do it without remorse, without regret. To do it properly, and rightly and appropriately.

Most people when they die, don't die appropriately, because they haven't lived appropriately. They haven't lived so that their lives can be appropriate, their death. But this man lived so, even though he made mistakes and sinned. Somebody who wants to run holding up David's sin and say, this cancels out everything that David said, and everything that David wrote. Now, if David had been in heaven, I'd agree with them. Because in heaven, they are sinless up there.

David was in a sick world. You see, this world we live in a sick world. We're not only bad intentionally, we're sick, we're depraved and sick. And for a man who is sick and trying to get well, and visiting the best doctor in the world to have a little relapse, for that to happen to a man, you don't cancel that man out and say, well just throw him in the dump because he had relapsed. David had a relapse. David was a sick man morally sick, spiritually sick. And he relapsed into sin. Nobody's excusing it and certainly the ages have not excused it. Certainly, David didn't. If you think he did, read the 51st Psalm. He didn't and God didn't and Nathan didn't. And the ages haven't, but at least we can understand it if we can excuse it. So let's not say this mars the beauty of the story of David. It doesn't if you understand it in its proper, what the preachers call, its proper context, understanding everything else around about it.

Now, David served. There is a word and a word that's much abused. When I was a young fellow growing up, the churches were going out for what they called social service. Everybody was taking a cup of water to everybody else that didn't need it. And they were doing what they did in Washington during the time of the New Deal when one fellow suggested that we ought to give a glass of milk to everybody in the world. Somebody else who had been in the Far East came back and said, you take milk to some nationalities in the Far East and they'd throw it back at you. Nobody would drink milk over there. They considered it terrible. But he wanted to drink milk.

And another fellow suggested that in order to save wear and tear on the horse's shoes that when we put them to bed at night we ought to take them off. It's an effort to serve but not a very intelligent effort to serve. Social Service they said.

David served in the will of God. And I want you to know that though this word has been much abused, I want to remind you most solemnly, that the Lord of Glory said, I am among you as one that serveth. Now I do not know about the service in heaven. I suppose they also serve yonder in the presence of the Eternal Light. No doubt they do serve yonder. No doubt they that cry day and night, holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, are serving and we do read in Ezekiel chapter one of those creatures with the six wings and with two they covered their face with two they covered their feet and with two they did fly. And they went straight forward, then they ran to do the will of God. And we read about in the 104th Psalm, of the angels that are strong to do the will of God. So they serve up there, but I'm sure they don't serve in the same way. I'm sure that in the presence of the Eternal Light, there is another kind of service required. But if you and I could always keep it in mind that we're in an abnormal world. These are emergency times in which we live in.

They started when Adam sinned and they will not finish until the King comes down like rain on the mowed grass and like showers that water the earth. In the meantime, we live in emergency times. This is a state of extreme emergency. It's a sick world. And those who are able must be serving those who are less able. Nobody's entirely well. But just as when the great influenza epidemics have gone through the world, whole families would go down. But perhaps the mother or the father or one of the family should be less ill, and thus would become a kind of a nurse for the ones who are sicker than he or she was. So it is in a world like ours.

David wasn't absolutely holy, but he was a good man and he was after God's heart in that he was aimed in the right direction. And he served God. He served God in God's will. He served the people. He served God by serving the people, he served his generation. And he did it joyously and he did it willingly. He didn't do it as perfectly as if he had been an angel and had not been himself infected with the same disease the others had.

David was being cured by the grace of God, moving on toward a state of greater health and greater spiritual robustness, and therefore David could serve. And he served and the Lord of Glory when He came down served. He came down to a sick world. And he could serve perfectly because he had none of the disease. He was not Himself a sick man. The Scripture says, tempted in all points, yet without sin. It says, higher than the highest heaven, separated from sinners so that Christ did not have the depravity. He was a servant down here. And no matter what we may do, or how religious we may feel, if we do not serve, then we're parasites and we're sterile, and we do not leave anything behind us.

Well, he not only served and you notice, serve here isn't a command. To command and to serve are two different things. There's the servant and the master. And our Lord who was the universal master became the servant of his servants. This I say my friends, is wonderful to read, that Jesus Christ our Lord came and became servant of those who were created to be His servants. He humbled Himself and considered not the holding on to His visible evidences of His Godhead something to be treasured, but gave it up, and came down and became a man and humbled Himself and went down and served his generation. And the Church of Christ is called to do this.

The Church of Christ is called to serve. And she's called now not to control but to serve. The church is getting quite these days the notion that when we meet we've got to send telegrams to Congress and to the President and tell them what to do. We're not lords over the government, and we're not lords over society. We're servants of man. We're here to serve. The servant doesn't tell the master what to do. He serves his generation rather than commands it.

Well then, he served in the will of God. And I want you to know that it's possible to serve in the church and labor and work for a lifetime and not have anything to show for it because we're not serving in the will of God. It's entirely possible to have a church, to have it financed, to have it organized, to have regular order of service, to have a fellowship, to have the people meet, to have a fine buildings and need larger buildings. It's entirely possible to have all the outer evidences of being at church. And yet because of the absence of certain vital, necessary qualities within that church, it's not a church at all, but something else.

I came out of a church when I was a young fellow, where the women Sunday afternoons used to meet down in beautiful parlors, we now call basements, but they didn't. They called them church parlors. And there they met, and they made sandwiches and had pies and stuff. You go around, and you will see, what do they call them, rummage sales? Rummage sales.

A woman says, John, I don't know. I can't wear that coat any longer. Look at this thing. You don't want me to look like a tramp do you? No, he said, Honey go get yourself another. So, she gets herself another one and gives that one to God. And they rent a storeroom and have a rummage sale. And all the other people that decided they couldn't wear the old junk anymore, and that piece, that statuary, or that old chair, that was old fashioned and terrible and they were weary of seeing it around. Give it to the church. Let them sell it. So somebody comes along and buys it. I never had been able to understand who did the buying. I can understand the backslidden carnality of the ones who do the giving, but I can't understand how anyone would want to buy it. I go to the 10 cent store and get something good. But they run their churches on that anyway. And thus I don't believe they're serving God at all.

David one time said, God forbid that I should offer to the Lord that which costs me nothing. And that old battered coat of yours doesn't cost you anything. And you've had out of it plenty of wear and you might as well give it away, so you give it to the Lord. I don't think you do, but other churches do. And the result is

there's a lot of service burning up a lot of energy in the consuming of a lot of time. But nobody's being served, because we're not serving in the will of God. Religious activity is mistaken for spiritual service. The two are not the same.

Spiritual service is religious activity, but religious activity isn't necessarily spiritual service. David served his generation by the will of God and in the will of God. And thus he sent his labors on a head for God to preserve. And when David finally laid down and went to sleep, David's labors were over there waiting for him. And Jesus said, Send your treasures on the head. And Paul said, send your treasures on ahead. And we have that right unto God to do it, to send our labors on ahead and thus avoid the tragedy of wasted toil.

Then it says here, that after David had served his generation, by the will of God, he fell on sleep. Now, I have said this before, but I repeat it here now because it properly fits into the topic. This man had earned his right to sleep. He had earned his right. I heard of the man who went to a doctor. He said that he couldn't sleep. He said he had difficulty. And the doctor said, well tell me about it. Well, he said I do all right at night. I sleep pretty well at night. And he said in the mornings I can sleep pretty well. But in the afternoons I just roll and toss. That man hadn't earned any right to sleep. He slept all night, part of the day, but he had trouble in the afternoon. And that's just a story, but that just illustrates something that a lot of God's people, they sleep all the time. They haven't right to fall on sleep because they never woke up. They haven't come out of it. They're still there, but this man earned his right.

But our hard working man, I talked to a bus driver yesterday. We're driving along and I was the only passenger and so I went up front where I could talk to him and I began with that most serviceable of all topics, the weather. I said, nice day. Yes, but it's pretty bad when you have snow. Oh, he said it's terrible. He said, barreling these big things around when you can't control them, he said it's terrible. He said one of our fellows the other day got in his bus to drive off, bend over the wheel and died. He said we've lost six of them like that. He said we've lost six of them to bad weather. And he said some of them have had nervous breakdowns. He said the responsibility of handling your big bus over the slippery traffic, he said it's terrible. Well, I've often gone out to 95th street with him. And he said, we're only going to Vincence. It's as far as I want to go, so I chat with him. I say, is your time over. Yes, I was driving all night. Glad to be over. A fellow that drives a bus all night, he's got a right to go home and go to sleep. Now don't ask me. He has a right to go home and go to sleep. But if he's done nothing but loaf, he hasn't any right to sleep. Nobody has any right to sleep till he's worn himself down, so he has a right to sleep.

And David did that very thing. He served his generation in the will of God. And then when God said, David, you're a tired boy, and you're old and cold, you can get no heat. And he didn't have electric blankets, David, poor fellow, he was tired. He was really tired. He served his generation. And no man has any right to die until he is found his place in the will of God. To die out of the will of God and to live out of the will of God and die out of the will of God and to die never sure that you've ever found the will of God is a tragic and terrible thing.

No man has any right to die until he's put more into the world than he's taken out of it. You've taken a lot out of the world. Don't forget that. Years ago I gave a sermon which I told about it and Sid Harris had it in him the other day. Not my sermon, but he happened to be thinking on the same lines. So, he sends his children to schools he didn't build. They walk on sidewalks they didn't lay. He went on and I've been thinking about that and preaching it for years that you and I are in debt to society. We're in debt to the world. That flag that flies over the White House and keeps America free. I didn't make that flag. And all this network of great highways. I didn't build those highways. I admit maybe they tax me to get the money, but

that's about all I did, pay reluctantly.

That I grew up and had all the privileges of American civilization and I didn't put a thing into it. My little old hard-working mother knew I was on the way and when I arrived there, sure enough, there was a place for me. My father, hard, bony, calloused hands, worked to bring me up. I owe a lot to the world. I go in for one dollar and a half or two dollars I buy a book that costs man as Milton said, the lifeblood of a master spirit. And I get education out of a book somebody else sweat over. I read some of the works of Milton and I remember that writing it drove him blind. But it cost me nothing. A couple of dollars.

You and I get a lot out of the world, my friend. But we're not ready to die till we put more and then we took out. Somebody is putting it in. Somebody is doing it. We walk around, over the shores, up and down across the America we love and we forget, we forget that over there in France, just to name one area, there are little white crosses as regularly and carefully laid out as these seats. Look down this way and they fall into a pattern. Look straight ahead, they fall into a pattern. Look that way they fall into a pattern. And that cost those fellas their all. Nobody has any right to die until he's put something back in to a land that gave him so much. And nobody has any right to die until he's put something back into the church. Look what I got out of the church. Look, I got Bibles, translations of the Scriptures. They didn't cost me anything except to go down to buy them. The labor and what cost me nothing. I have hymns to sing, a long tradition of Christianity and righteousness and godly service in the churches. We got all that free of charge. People prayed for me long before I ever turned to God.

My friends, we owe it to the church to put something back in, something back in there. I've often thought to write a hymn that would live. Write a hymn that somebody would be singing long after you have turned to dust. That would be worth something, wouldn't it? Moody had a more practical notion. He said, I want no monument, except two legged monuments going about praising God.

To live in the world, and to go out of it and to have done nothing for it, in my mind, it's a moral tragedy. And to be a part of a church, "the" church and to receive, always receive, always receive and never hurt ourselves in any way, never sacrifice anything, give a time, but who wouldn't. And never hurt ourselves. Ask for service and get nobody to reply. Ask, could you help, but nobody wants to. They want to receive but not give. I don't say that's true of you, but I say that's true of so many Christians that it lies upon us like a black smog all over the church of Christ, ready to take out, ready to always take out, but never to put in.

David didn't do it. David fell on sleep only after he had put his generation deeply in debt to him. And I beg you to think about yourself. I guess I'm only going to get through the introduction this morning, because this is all introductory. I want to talk about the church as a trinity and man as a trinity. And I'll talk about that next Sunday.

Now I want to close by asking you if you ever saw a lovelier picture than this one. A great man, a man without any of the modern conveniences. A man that never saw an automobile, never saw a Sputnik, never heard a radio and never looked at it television, never saw anything made out of plastic, never talk to anybody on a telephone. never rode in a train or on a bus or in an elevator, never flew in an airplane. never ate frozen food, thank God, and never had any of this that you and I have. No Oxford then, no Harvard then, no University of Glasgow then, no Chicago University then, just a farm boy brought up among the sheep. And he had a habit of looking toward the sky at night, seeing the stars, and he said, oh when I consider thy heavens, the work of thy hands. What is man and from there on he went on trusting God. And when the bear came up, in the name of Jehovah he slew it. And the lion, he slew it and went on

to be king in Israel. But that wasn't his biggest job. In fact, that wasn't a big job at all. His biggest job was when he reached into his own heart and dipped his pen into his own life blood and wrote his songs.

The world has been a sweeter place to live in, even the unsaved world, even the lost world. Even the world that doesn't care is a better place to live in because David dipped his pen in his heart and wrote his songs. Even because David made his homemade harp and put it in the window of the church and in the synagogue for the winds of heaven to blow through, there's been music there wouldn't otherwise have been in the world. There have been Of course multiplied millions who have found God through the Psalms of David. Thank God for that man. What he had, nothing. What did he start with? Nothing! A farm boy out on the hill watching the sheep with not much education if any. Perhaps his father saw that he had a little and he certainly had some. But God had gifted him and moved him by the Holy Ghost and so he gave to us. And isn't it wonderful here friends? I said he served his generation, but he served all the generations from his on. Because he served his generation. He couldn't have served the next generation if he hadn't served the generation that was his own.

You may serve day after tomorrow, if you served today. But if you don't serve the day, you can't serve the tomorrows. You may serve the generation yet unborn, if you serve this generation by the will of God. We've sent missionaries out from this church to all parts of the world. You could draw a picture of this church and put beams of light or as they do on the map, and you'd find they go to many parts of the world. They have gone out there and serve that generation. Some of them sleep. But those that they won to Christ are still over there. And they and others and the devil can't take that away. They served this generation and in doing it served all the generations to come. So did David. It's wonderful to be a worshipping church.

It's wonderful to be a serving church that worships and serves. Some worship only and sit around and admire each other. The idea they're here to serve never occurs to them. Others serve only and never think of worshipping. They run on tea as a Ford runs on gasoline and on coffee and their banquets and their times of getting together. They have to keep them always recurring in order that they might not run down. Just as you have to pull into Standard or Shell and gas up. A church runs like that, but there's no worship there. No worship, no sense of the fiery presence of the bush. Nothing, but just serve. They're the first ones to be out on the corner with a box to take dimes for the needy and that's all right. I believe in that and that's part of serving maybe. But remember that serving that doesn't have worship in it is lost, for it's not in the will of God.

Worship that doesn't have service in it, it is religion in theory. It's a selfish, self-admiration. But to worship and serve and to serve and worship, to worship God in the will of God and to serve your generation For God's dear sake. That's what David did and that's what the church has done down the years. And that's what this church is called to do. That's what you and I are called to do. I hope that we'll hear God's voice and not fail Him and go to the end and sleep before it's time. Before we put the world in debt to us and put more into the church than we took out of it. Amen.

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/aw-tozer/life-of-the-servant-1-serving-with-body-soul-and-spirit/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**