

Seven Practical Issues in Serving One Another

by Devern Fromke

The sermon emphasizes the importance of consecration and availability to God, rather than just relying on our talents, and encourages listeners to understand the principles behind God's design for relationships.

Duration: 1:19:49

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 1:1

Topics: "Serving One Another"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker encourages the audience to recognize the principles behind their actions and decisions. They pray for the audience to move beyond simply having gifts and talents, but to also allow brokenness and consecration in their lives. The speaker shares a story about counseling a troubled senior boy who had a difficult relationship with his father. They emphasize the importance of serving God and seeking direction in life. The sermon also mentions the impact of a woman named Daisy who expressed her burden for America and her willingness to give her life for revival.

Transcript

I want to thank you again, the joy that has been mine and my wife to be with you these days. I have thanked you again and again for your praying for our physical needs. I can't remember through the years of having to battle as many days, but we've been sensing the strength and support, the supply of all of you.

I want to thank you for that so much. What I wanted to share this evening, I could put several different titles to it. Thought maybe I'd talk about wisdom hath builded her house.

She hath hewn out seven pillars. Then you'd want me to drill or draw a house of seven pillars, so I can't do that. But I would like to talk to you at least about seven very practical issues in serving one another.

I think the further along I go, I become keenly aware of the need for the practical, aggressive action of God's people in dealing with issues as we see them. I've always tended to say, well, I'll pray about it. And then the Holy Spirit begins to say, but you could do something, you know what to do.

So tonight I'm going to deal with some questions that I like to ask. They will be very revealing, some things that maybe can help us as parents, as individuals, to really know how to serve and help one another to bring a little more effectiveness in our walk with the Lord. I think I'll just put some of the issues here on the

board that you can follow along with me.

The concern I have is that we will recognize the imperative necessity of being very practical and down to earth when it comes to certain issues. What do you mean by that? Well, let me deal first of all the difference between talent and consecration. I'm increasingly aware in the religious scenery today that's all about us, there's an awful lot of individuals who have talents, giftings, abilities, and they really want to serve the Lord.

I'm so grateful for that because I believe that the work of the Lord requires folk who have some skills, some gifting, and some ability. And yet the problem that I run into is that there's so many folk who are coming along and they're saying, oh, I'd like to serve the Lord with my music. I remember, for example, after the Second World War, the dozens, probably hundreds of pilots who had flown in the service, now they're coming back.

Many of them really met the Lord in a very wonderful way and they want to give themselves to the Lord. I don't know how many young men, pilots, came to me and said, I'd like to dedicate my ability to fly a plane to the Lord. Of course, you know, Missionary Aviation Fellowship, all the different groups that were developed to be able to use up some of this help.

Well, there's nothing wrong with wanting to fly a plane for the Lord, but I found myself asking this question on a number of occasions. What if God doesn't need any more pilots? There's already a big waiting line, individuals who would like to have their particular ability or skill used for God. And I don't like to be negative, but I know there are times when you have to deal very critically with the issue at stake, because I don't read any place where it says that I dedicate or give my music ability, or my speaking ability, or my plane flying ability, or any of these talents that I have to the Lord.

I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your instrument, your service, your, no, your body. One summer, I had the privilege of being the music director at a large camp in Oregon. For ten weeks, there was each week a different flow of people, different speakers.

And I was privileged to not only lead, but to also find special help, special music for the meetings. One of the things that I cannot forget to this day, a certain sister who had been invited to come out from Portland to the camp where we were to sing, and that particular night she stood with something of the glory of the Lord and the overflow of life. I was so impressed, I sat there and I wept.

I looked around and I saw many other people weeping. Well, I thought, this is wonderful, the presence of the Lord. Surely she has a lovely voice.

Fact is, she came out the next three or four weeks, and each time I would ask her to sing. And each time, the same sense of God singing through her. I went to her after about the third or fourth time, and I said, there's something very different about your singing.

Could you, would you tell me what has really happened in your life? Then she explained, she said, for a number of years I was in opera. I found the Lord. I began to sing in churches, choirs all over Portland, Oregon, and was in much demand and enjoyed all of it.

She said, there came a crisis in my life. Suddenly I lost my voice, and I couldn't even croak. It was so bad, I could not, I could not speak.

I just lost my voice. And in that period of several months, she said, I began to cry out, oh God, what has happened? She looked at me and she said, you know, I made the discovery that God wanted me wholly consecrated to Him, broken before Him, that He might use my voice in His own way. She said, up to this time, I always enjoyed picking the songs that would show off my qualities.

Songs that were a little more entertaining. Songs that had, you know, more appeal. She said, I made this promise to the Lord.

From this moment on, I would ask Him to make the choice, the content of the word, everything that I did. She said, I kept praying, oh God, through this brokenness that you brought into my life, would you release life to others? That was probably 55 years ago, but it's as real to me tonight as the night she stood and said, I no longer sing what I want to sing, but I want to be an expression of His life. Now, I'm saying this because we all have talent.

We all have enablements. We've developed skills, and thank God for all of that. But there comes a moment in which God needs to break through and help us to realize that it isn't our talent, it's our availability.

Is anybody following what I'm trying to say tonight? I don't want to just have a little private barking tree all on my own and say, well, God isn't interested in our talents. No. The issue is this.

Has He ever taken us through the cross, through the dealing, saying that everyone goes through what my sister went through? But more and more, I've become convinced of the fact that all the talent we want to present to Him, He sort of ignores and He says, I just want you. It isn't selective service with us. I present myself, and I said to many of these, what if the mission failed, that you're flying planes? What if suddenly God wants you to be a missionary, not a pilot? So the concern I have tonight is basically that when we come so often, it's a selective service.

I know God wants me to be a musician for Him. Well, what if He doesn't? I mean, what if your music ability is not the thing God's after for you? He wants you as an individual. And as an individual, then He can use you and maybe lay you aside for a while, whichever He chooses to do.

I never forget being in a, I guess I'd have to call it a hippie commune, in the northwest many years ago, seated on the floor with about 50, 60 young people, real precious kids. And secondly, I heard one of the young men sitting there cry out, Oh Lord, help Brother Vern to die to his ministry and never preach again if you want to close him up. I thought, well, here's a 20-year-old fellow who's suddenly gotten a revelation from the Lord.

And I, you know, felt like the body of Christ would be kind of hurt if I wasn't on the road. But you know, I never got away from that fact. God spoke to me that evening as I sat there and said, Lord, really be a loss to the body, but would you do this? What I'm wanting to say to us tonight is this.

I believe there comes a time in our life when we begin to recognize that it's the brokenness, the availability, it is God having a vessel that he can use in his own way, not the way I choose to serve. Well, we've got seven, better get on a little bit or we'll not get through very far. The thing that really burdens me is that in the practical issues of our serving then, we're giving some talent, something else, we're giving ourselves to the Lord and he chooses how and when and where.

I remember when certain mission fields were closed, they couldn't get back to the area they had been. And the struggle with these missionaries waiting to get open doors and so forth. And it was at that point my wife came along.

I remember saying to one of them, I went to India and spent five and a half years there serving the Lord. And when I had to come home because of illness, she said, I discovered I couldn't get back. The door was closed.

And she said, suddenly the Lord said, I didn't call you just basically to India. I called you to walk and serve me wherever I want you to be. Our choosing on the basis, well, God's called, that may be involved, but the first calling of God, the first issue with each of us is, Lord, am I yours available to you wherever you choose to send me? And it was a real struggle when she finally discovered she wouldn't be going back at all, but marrying somebody who would be with her for 44 years and then take her home.

So we're saying tonight that in the process of discovering the wisdom and the ways of the Lord, it is not our talents we present. I actually believe that when we see ourselves nailed to the cross with Jesus Christ, buried in the tomb with him, we come into resurrection life. The anointing of God only comes upon resurrection ground.

So much attempt today to get the anointing, the blessing upon the flesh. God is very jealous for what he anoints. That which comes through the grave and onto resurrection ground, it is there the dove descends.

It is there the Holy Spirit comes to anoint. So a real consecration then is that which comes on resurrection ground. Well, let's move on to another.

In this process, this course of practical issues, I've discovered how easy it is to miss helping people to come into their own walk individually with the Lord. I like to call this one here assignment with accountability. Let me illustrate it this way.

When people come to me with a real problem, I've been discovering they can be like leeches that sap your strength and just drain and next week they'll be back and back and over again. And maybe it's just me, but the Lord's beginning to say, you give them some little assignment to see how much they want to really walk with me and come through the issues. And so I begin to say, I think God has a special chapter in this book of the Bible that would be a real blessing to you.

Fact is, I'd like to give you an assignment this week, all week long to read that chapter over and over before the Lord and then call me next Saturday and we'll get together and let's see what God might have said to you. I'm utterly amazed how many people actually discover they don't want to put much participation into. They want to just draw from you.

I call this giving assignment and then developing accountability. I learned this from one of the brothers who has been gripped by the larger window of our book. He says, I keep a whole stack of them here on the shelf.

And when someone comes with a particular problem or need, he said, I remember a page so and so, here's a story, a short story. And I look at them and I say, you know, I have a story that I believe would help you tremendously. Would you take this book home and read the story? He said, I don't give books to anybody anymore.

He said, just moves from their shelf to my from my shelf to their shelf. But I encourage them to read this three or four times and then call me. He says, utterly amazing how the Holy Spirit can work through this little assignment.

But they're becoming accountable. Accountable, they call back and invariably they will say, I read the next story and the next. Could I buy one of those books? Of course, that's what we're after, you understand.

But it's the principle of developing some assignment. I've been doing this now with some of the men we're working with, and I begin to realize that individuals just like to chat about problems. How many folk want to come and just, you know, drain, sap your strength.

And if you'll discover, I'm talking about practical issues of wisdom now, you discover a little assignment that you can give them and then hold some accountability. Well, I just come to sense that what it really often amounts to is if God is speaking in a heart to a life and there's a real issue at stake, we don't want to get in between. We want to bring them to the place where they're, shout it to the Lord.

And they begin daily to say, oh God, you can speak to me. Otherwise, they'll be back to you again and again. And we want to get out of the middle.

We've been used to bring them to this place. When I read a brother saying one day, you don't have to be able to answer all the questions that people have. You don't have to be able to fix all of their problems.

But you do have the need to bring them to the fixer and to make sure that he and they come into some kind of an awareness that he is their supply. So I just share this with you because some of you have such a desire to help in a very practical way. Learn to bring people into, I like to say, accountability to the Lord and probably to you for the moment to make sure whether they mean business or they're just wasting your time.

Well, let's move on. Now, here's a principle that I often spend a whole hour with, but let's see if we can get through in five minutes tonight. I've often asked individuals, do you know the difference between a principle and a rule? Do you know the difference between a principle and a rule? Well, there are folk who've already discovered that a rule is an outward thing that literally grows out of a principle.

For example, when you go to the highway to get your testing or get your driver's license, there's what we call the basic rule, the basic principle of the highway, to always drive your car, to keep it under control so it will hurt no one, including yourself. That's the basic principle. Always keep your car under control.

And out of that basic principle, there are all the signs, the rules, the things that go with it. These rules flow out of what we call the basic inward principle, the way a thing is built. I like to take all the things that God has built into the fabric of the universe and then see why rules issue out of it.

Rules change. Just reading some of the notes this afternoon, and I remembered that in Topeka, Kansas, way back when the car was first introduced, you had to put a notice in the paper you were going to drive through Main Street two days ahead of time. Now you laugh at that.

But the rules that issue out of a principle, highway safety. One of the problems we have today is that so often we give individuals the rule without giving them the principle or the inward issue back of it. I've said to parents so often, you tell your child what, and you expect him to obey.

Good. It often helps to get back at the what and tell them the why. The what is important.

Oh, I could give a number of illustrations. Let me say to some of you fathers for a moment. When you're trying to help your daughter dress in a big coming way before the Lord, I've asked daughters occasionally just this question.

Does dad ever question you about the garment you're wearing when you're going out? They always say, oh, does he? Too short, too this, too that. I say, what does he say? The problem so often is we give individuals the what, but we do not bother to give them the principle back of it. Back through the years, I've just been amazed how many times when word gets out on the campus that we're dealing with rules and principles to be invited into a girl's dormitory.

Here's 40, 50, maybe young ladies saying, we really want to walk with the Lord. We really want to serve the Lord. How can we do this in the most honorable and appropriate way? So I go into this little principle of the way God has uniquely designed the male and the female, a lot of them totally in the dark.

What do you mean the way God has uniquely designed the male and the female? When your dad says you're going out on a date at night, now be careful, be careful. Don't let that young man paw all over you. And they used to use different terminologies.

The issue is giving a rule or getting at the principle back of it. And when I've been able to explain to them that God has wired the female in a certain way so that generally by touch, there's arousal, there's excitement, they begin to realize not just the what, but the why. Then I speak to the fellows and I say, you know, it's very interesting the way God wired you, designed your whole makeup.

Did you ever see them try to sell Buicks with an ugly old man standing representing it? What are you getting at? I'd like for you to write someplace in the margin of your Bible tonight a little word called defraud. When I can explain that word defraud to a young fellow or to a young lady, suddenly they begin to realize the difference between a rule and a principle. Had a mother come to me one day and she said, you know, we've got a lot of young people in our church and our fellowship.

But she said, it seems like all the nice boys are other places, but it's the fellows that are not too fond of who keep coming after my daughter. She said, why don't some of the nice boys come? And I spent a little time to explain, mother, I believe you love the Lord and I know your family loves the Lord. But, you know, it's possible for folk who would never violate and never break a rule to violate a principle.

And I think I've observed your daughter violating some principles by the way she exposes herself. What do you mean? Before we got through, she was utterly amazed. Things that folk would call a rule and total violation of a principle.

Let me illustrate what I mean. It's out in Missouri. Used to go by the highway.

There's a big church on the hill. Had a great big billboard out there for several months. Flee this wicked adulterous world with all the pictures of sin around it.

The centerpiece of the thing was a girl in a bikini. And I thought to myself, how dumb can people be? Am I meddling tonight? I'm trying to say to us, it is very possible. Young men, we were walking around the lake this morning.

He was really burned when he said, because he's working with high schoolers, he said, why is it there is such among our high school, so many of them, they get tripped up and they have the difficulty of problems with sex. And I keep saying, oh, Lord, help us to recognize that this church meant well. They're talking about things that would be rules and the legalist way one wouldn't do.

But right there in the middle of the billboard was a very violating, a violation of a principle. Why? Because the male eye is always caught, always grabbed. And only God can help the male eye.

Remember how much of a blessing it was as a young man when a brother came to me and said, remember, Job said, I made a covenant with mine eye. Why then should I think upon a maid? The eye sees the lust of the heart, the mind reaches up and lust takes hold. What are you saying this evening? I'm saying, folk, there's some practical issues that an awful lot of God's children violate.

They wouldn't break a rule, but we violate principles. And so you see, if there is a young man petting, going through all that's involved, arousing, stimulating a young lady, to defraud is to somehow arouse and stimulate and not be able to righteously fulfill. I've often wondered why Corinthians said it's good for man not to touch.

Well, they get very legalistic about that because I, well, I've seen individuals say, oh, no touch, no more shaking hands, no more. That's not what we're after. It's the principle involved.

And so I'm saying to us tonight, if God once begins to get a hold of this issue of outward rules, but inward principles, hundreds of situations, I believe that when God made us, designed us, He built into the very fabric of the way we function that we need a day of rest. I know the Jewish Sabbath, Friday night to Saturday night, God had built it in. It was a time for them to get apart, be occupied with the Lord, rest.

Now, we do know that Jesus said, Matthew 11, 28, come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. And all of this back here that God had given the way of outward rule, all of it finds its reality and its fulfillment in Him. But I like the words of old Dr. Behan, who used to say, wouldn't it be wonderful if God's people would really rest on Saturday, so when they came to church on Sunday morning, they'd be alive to the Lord.

Back in South Carolina, several years ago, we went to church and then were invited to go out to eat at noon. Golden Corral, lovely place. We stood in line, and to my utter amazement, I heard the people in the staff saying, the Christians are coming.

The Methodists will be first because they have a 20 minute message. The Baptists will be next, theirs is 40. And the Pentecostals will be last, theirs is an hour and a half.

Now, what do you think? I'm not being critical. It's just that I've heard them say, and they're going to ask us why we're not in church. Are you there? They're going to ask us why we're not in church.

And they sort of sassily say, so we can stay here and serve you. Now, I'm not legalistic. I'm not a Sabbatarian.

But I do believe God has built into the fabric of the universe, the fabric of things, the need for an individual to be governed by the principle of time to rest. And my wife, I've just been so grateful for her having the same weight length. You know, every now and then you get caught in a situation where you're with people and you go out to eat.

But wouldn't it be something, a real testimony in a community if God's children would say to the folk in all the restaurants, we'd like to invite you to church and we're not going to take up your time. Are you following me? No, you're not. But that's all right.

I still believe that at some point, the outward rules that flow out of inward principles need to be better understood. The thing that I'll deal with next is what I call chasing a cause or enlightened conscience. Let's call it enlightened conviction.

We were driving the other day coming through West Virginia. Suddenly I looked up and then kind of drowsing, I saw a great big billboard that said, don't destroy my mountains underneath God. I looked back again, I thought, God, somebody really loves you and your world.

Don't destroy my mountains, God. Some environmentalist, somebody with a real burden to keep things in the natural state. And I have no problem with some of that, except that it gets to the point where if you're not careful, people begin to chase a cause.

People begin to chase some champion, some issue. And the real concern that I have is that the people who are chasing a cause, let me say this, I have chased causes as a young person. My mother used to meet me every time I'd come back after three or four months and say, what's the latest cause, son? I meant well, but I was always championing a burden about something.

She knew it would pass away because when you are really enlightened and something becomes a conviction, I often say, what would you die for? Is there anything you would die for? Any issue that's meaningful and significant enough that you would die for? Let me illustrate. We sat in a large banquet table next to me, happened to be one of our Indiana Senators. He was sitting at that table, I believe eight, my friends, and in the course of their fellowship that evening before he was to get up to speak, they were agitating and everyone were urging him to get school back in the prayer, prayer back in the schools, prayer back in the schools.

And he looked around, the seven or eight around the table, he said, how many of you have had prayer with your child this week? Not one of them. So he stands up before this group of maybe a thousand good Hoosiers and he says, I want to explain to you folk the difference between chasing a cause and having a deep conviction. And he looked down to that table, he said, appreciate all you men, but if you really had a deep conviction regarding prayer, you'd have it in the home, even though we need it in school, you'd have it.

Amen. What are you saying tonight? Just this. Oh, we get so caught up in championing issues and things and I'm for taking a stand.

But I'm talking about the inward principle, the inward reality, the real issues that I believe God is after. Well, several have come up to me this last couple of days and said, when are you going to talk about being offended right now? One of the messages, principles I'd like to deal with through the years is best illustrated by a little situation that took place years ago when I was in Maryland, ministering in a high school, the close of a morning chapel. I'd been speaking all week and the headmaster came and he said to me, Brother Byrne, we have a fine senior boy who has suddenly really disappointed us.

And we don't know what really is involved, but I've invited him to come into the office. And I wish maybe you'd come in and counsel and let's see if we can get at the root of his problem. His tall, senior, handsome

kid came in, slouched down.

You could tell by his body manner he was saying, well, I'm here, but I don't intend to talk. And he didn't for probably seven, eight minutes. He was just there.

The headmaster was trying to draw him out. Your attitude's been wrong. You were behind the buildings today smoking and you violated all these rules.

What's happened? Finally, he blurred out and he said, you'd be angry like I am if you had a father like mine. And then he would not explain. He said, you know, about two, three months ago, my dad shot all my pet pigeons.

This father had a boarding place for horses and all the hayloft was filled with choice hay. And the pigeons were messing up the hay. And he said, my dad shot them, didn't ask me, just shot them.

And he said, last week, my little dog walked down the aisle of the barn and vomited and he shot my dog. He said, I've got a right to be angry with a father like that. Well, I would have to be honest with you.

I wanted to shoot the father, but I listened the best I could for a moment and I saw the reasoning, the struggle that was going on within him. And I began to explain, I said, you know, you're confused like a lot of individuals. I'd like to just help you know the difference between a reason and a right.

A reason and a right. He's bewildered. He said, you know, I believe God has worked in your life.

I sense you love the Lord, but here you are in a bitterness and a confusion in your mind. And you think you have a right to be angry with the father who did this. We don't agree with what he did.

I don't think he should have done. He should have counseled with you. But I'd just like to have you consider for a moment the difference between a reasoning and a right.

And I drew this little picture that I've drawn so often. I explained to him, I said, you know, when you trust the Lord, you become as a tree planted. You belong to the Lord.

You're the planting of the Lord. And God has planned for your life to live by the supply of the grace of God. Now, you are telling me that you have a struggle because you think your dad was wrong in what he did.

And therefore, you have a right to be angry with him and with the school and everyone else. He said, well, I do. I said, no, there's a difference between a reasoning and a right.

You see, if you are the Lord's Romans five says we stand in the grace of God, you are planted the grace wherein you stand. But God has a river of grace down here that can enable you to face any crisis, any situation that comes if your roots will go down to the river of grace. There's a definition of grace that we need to be clear about.

It's not only a favorable position in which we stand. Lance said it so well yesterday, I believe it was. God's grace is the divine enablement to fulfill any situation, anything that develops.

And so I like to say that this river of grace is God's giving us the desire or the power or the ability to do or fulfill what God wills for our life. And your roots can go down and take the desire and the power to forgive your father for what he did. Now, I said, if you're not careful, you can become like lots of individuals I know,

a barren tree planted, but barren.

And instead of roots that go down like this, they're offended with something someone has done. They're offended because God has allowed it and they're going to live a barrenness the rest of their life. And I said, now, here are two trees.

I want you to look at them because you're making a choice today. I believe that your roots are like this right now, resisting. God wants to give you the divine enablement.

Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God, your roots can be like this. He looked at me, he says, well, how do I get my roots down to the river of grace? He said, James speaks about it. Peter speaks about it.

He giveth more grace to the humble. He said, what God wants you to do, just lay aside this reasoning that's going on in your mind, because the scripture says, casting down reasonings and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. Casting these reasonings down and your roots can go down to the river of grace and God will give you desire and power to forgive your father.

What he did, we can't justify. But your problem right now is with God because he has provided availability of grace. You can cast down the reasonings.

In fact, you have no right to be angry with the availability of grace, the desire and the power that God gives. I saw him look at this and he said, whoa, you mean that's my roots? Yeah, exposing them. He said, well, I need to humble myself.

Yes, you cry out, God, forgive me for judging you and my father. And never forget, he turned around at the chair, knelt down and cried out, oh God, forgive me, cast out my reasonings. I have no right to be offended, no right to be angry.

It didn't take very long. He got up and I saw the change on his face, the smile. He said, I'll be going home right away to see my dad.

Ask him to forgive me. Now, the reason I keep emphasizing this is because every place I go, I'm amazed at the individuals who come up against something just as unfair. The dad who shot the pigeons, the dog.

Things that develop in the church and the first thing you know, we're wounded, we're offended. People ask what's wrong. Nothing.

And yet, if we were to be honest, we're offended because of someone, something has taken place. I am utterly amazed in our city of Indianapolis, having been there over 30 years now, moving around and after a while, you get into various churches and I'm just amazed how people escape from one place to another, offended, offended, offended. And I just have to keep saying to folks, cheer up.

God is after you. Sooner or later, he's going to find you in your offense. And if you can be offended, you will be offended too.

Oh, not me. Well, I'm not sure about that, but I guess the reason I'm so convinced of this, because I know how many times I've been on the verge of being offended with the Lord. Something was totally unfair, wrong.

I could justify myself, but I was offended. Didn't tell anybody. So God began to move in and say, look, you'll humble yourself.

I'll give the desire to forgive these people for what they did. Yours is wrong because of your allowing offense in your heart. I'm not sure that that fits anybody tonight, but in the very practical areas, the fact is it's happened since I got here.

Individuals have come up and said, you'll never know some years ago when I saw this little picture of being offended and God has spoken to me through it many times when I was about to bolt, move on, go some other place. The practical issue tonight is basically this then. If God has made provision, I have no right.

Can reason about it, but I cast reasonings down. I have no right. The availability is there.

Well, let's move on quickly. The picture we're getting at tonight is this. If God is working any kind of wisdom in our lives, we begin to see that talent's one thing, brokenness is something else.

God brings us to the place of being responsible for issues, the accountability. Well, let's just take a couple more before we close out tonight. The concern I have so often is when I see individuals who have lost their, put it this way, they've lost their focus.

Here is one thing we call direction and direction in a life should have what I like to call the real focus in which the Lord is working. What do you mean by this? How many times have I sat for a little bit, sat the other day in the plane coming back from San Diego, young doctor sitting beside me and I said, what plans would you have? What would you like to be 25 years from now? What are you looking for? He said, well, he said, I don't know. I'm going to live.

He would surely live 25 more years in the normal course. What would your hope, your expectation, what would you like to be 25 years from now? He said, well, I really hadn't considered it. The fact is, I'm amazed among God's own children, how few individuals they are who begin to sense the sharpening of the focus, what God's really after in their life.

This began to take on some meaning to me when I began to realize that in the Apostle Paul and his own life in ministry, you get a little unfolding in the fact that there came a day of direction and that moment of direction, there began to be a sharpening of focus. Let me give it to you in one verse. It's Romans chapter one and verse one.

This all came to meaning to me years ago. Many years ago, I walked in after service one night, too tired to fall asleep and turned on the radio and heard the familiar voice of Charles Fuller. Now probably 90% of you have the idea who he is or was, the old fashioned Revival hour.

And he said to the radio audience that night, I want to speak to you about the calling of God, the unfolding, the way God leads the life in the sharpness of focus. And he said, it's been a real help to me to discover what Paul says. Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God.

He said, I see the general calling, I see the special calling in his life, and I see the specific thing that God was wanting to work out in his life. That little word, Paul, a bondsman, Paul, a servant, one whose ear has been pierced, one who is given the total direction of his life. Oh, God, from this moment on, I belong to you.

I've been hearing the testimony of a few young people who said, there came a moment in my life, there came a time some years ago when I knew the basic direction was set. Ever any doubt since? What is that basic direction? Well, you see, the problem at this point is that you qualify first in learning, and this is so appropriate for what we've been seeing and hearing. We are bondsmen, we are slaves, we've given up the rights to our own life.

We choose to serve, and I believe that the degree to which the Apostle Paul entered into this first sphere of serving, bondsman, giving himself, there was in the church at Antioch, these prophets, he had given himself there in ministry, in serving the Lord. Then the time came when God could move him into the more special thing that he had, separate me, send out Barnabas and Saul. It would never have happened if there hadn't been first the fulfilling of the servanthood, the general in his life.

And because Paul was faithful in the special, the churches that he planted, the time came when the specific thing that God was going to work through his life, the ministry of the letters that were written to all of these churches. See, so many people want to get into the focus, just wanted to get my life really focused, like to get to the specific. It'll never come until you pay your dues as a servant, and you move into fulfilling the special.

Then the specific thing that God has, and I just can't help but realize tonight, how through the years, that little principle that Charles Fuller planted in my own life has been, oh God, I really want to know how to be your bondsman. My rights given up, my ears pierced, sensitive to know what you really want, and the degree to which that, God was able to move him into the more special thing, thrust him forth in the planning of churches. And then finally, the specific thing that we're blessed with today, when we pick up the letter of Ephesus, the letter of Colossae, the letters that were written, could never have happened.

So the question tonight is this, if God has basic direction in our life, am I following on faithfully to allow the special and the specific to unfold? I expect there were those who were saying, Paul ought to be out planning more churches, he's committed himself to this whole issue with Caesar, to Caesar he will go. Poor Paul, he could be out so much more use. You can never measure from God's viewpoint, what he's working in life, until you see the real blessing, and not the churches that he planted, but we have the specific thing in the letters that Paul wrote.

Well, let's move on to another. I think I'm always interested in the fact that there are some things that are given to us, and then that have to be earned. Certain things that are given, things that are earned.

I've often looked at an individual, I said, or two groups, were you ever given a position of responsibility before you're prepared for it? And almost everybody said it happens all the time. We get a position, something given to us, and then we have to learn how to earn the right, the authority in it. And I began to explain, you know there's an individual in the Old Testament, who went through this problem.

People of Israel crying out, give us a king, give us a king. They wanted to be like the other nations. God heard them, and he gave them a king.

Raised up a man who looked just like they wanted, his name was Saul. And I've often looked at an individual said, do you know why in God's picturing of the thing, Saul was anointed with a vial or a flask of oil, but years later, David was anointed with a horn of oil. Was there a difference? The oil was probably the same.

One represented the flask, the other the horn. And I go on to explain, the fact that Saul was given this position, made king, God is saying, this is man's way. I will acknowledge, give him a place, a position, but there's going to have to develop in his life some inward preparation.

Most of us get positions at times, long before there's been any inward reality or preparation or character produced. And you see how God was giving King Saul openly, open opportunities to obey, to develop, to come into earning position. Now, by contrast, God works in a young man called David, herding his sheep, taking care of the father's flock, all these things.

David goes through crisis after crisis, the bear that he killed, the lion that he killed, all these things, I believe are inward preparation. Do you know why? Because God is beginning to develop inwardly in David, the spiritual authority and preparation. They begin to say, what do you mean, Lord? He said, you know, there's an authority that's given by man from a position, but the authority that I'm after is like a horn that grows and develops, a horn.

When an animal is developing a horn, picture of a horn is something of authority. I remember back on the farm in Dakota one day, my grandfather turned to my uncle and said, you see that roan cow out there? I want those horns off by night. We stood and observed and looked.

The first thing I realized, those horns were keeping everybody, all the other animals, two or three feet away. What was it? The authority that issued because of the horns. Oh, it came tumbling back and I thought, oh God, there is in the scripture a picture of the horn that grows, the horn that develops, the inward authority that comes out of character.

You spend all this time preparing David, a little horn was growing. Could it be that your way of saying the vial represents man's giving a position? God allows preparation to take place, but the real preparation of the Lord is the horn that's growing and developing within. I've heard the individual say, well, that means that the horn can grow.

I can earn the position because of what God has begun to work in me through the principle of learning to walk in obedience with him. The question tonight is basically this. We just have folk with the vial of oil, or do we have those in whom God has taken the horn? The oil of life out of which springs the character and the qualities that he's after.

Well, let's bring it to a close by simply saying tonight, if there are any practical realities God wants to work, may he somehow help us to recognize that in the course of training, practical issues, he's saying, I would prepare you if your ears were pierced, there was an openness and a real sensitivity. In the meantime, all the practical issues may not mean much, but my burden is, oh God, raise up some of us who know how to minister to serve one another by when we see a real need slipping in and saying, you know, you've got a reasoning, but you don't have a right. You're chasing a cause that is worth dying for.

God wants to enlighten you. You have some direction, but you need to qualify in serving a bondsman so that the sharpness of focus can really be fixed and settled in your life. I'm grateful, and I close with this tonight, I'm grateful for some of the individuals God has brought into my life through the years.

Things that still stand to shake my heart, when I was a much younger man back in 1948, came a crisis that was a real sharpening of the direction of my life. I've been ministering for several years on the West Coast, quite often slipping into Yakima, Washington, to my friend ministering on the radio with him. We left a

conference on Monday morning, closed out the day before, gathered in a circle, invited a missionary from Korea who had been through much revival and blessing of the Lord, invited her to ride with me back from Yakima to Portland, near where she lived, another missionary and the partner who was traveling with me.

We reached the edge of Yakima, suddenly were hit head-on by a young man driving a stolen car, making a getaway, losing control. He came way over into the far lane where we were, hit his head on. His car almost instantly burned, went into flames.

Traffic backed up and they were able to lift my car away from it. We were all unconscious, we were there. The lady sitting next to me, Daisy, had poured out her life in Korea.

She'd been back home maybe six or eight months. She seemed to show up wherever I was holding meetings and just constantly praying and nudging me to keep sure that my heart was really focused toward him. Daisy went to be with the Lord that day, along with the other young man in the other car.

I was stunned when after about nine or ten days came out of the coma and discovered what had happened to her. Some months passed and got a letter from Daisy's mother saying, you know, you might like to have the diary that Daisy wrote in the last six months. She came back from Korea.

You might like to have the diary. Some very wonderful things hidden in it. I was pleased, felt honored.

I clipped out one little portion and pasted it from one Bible to another because it has spoken again and again to my heart. I read it to you tonight. She wrote, typed it out, the way you look at it, from an April Digest, 1948.

A young soldier wounded in the Battle of the Bulge heard the army surgeon speak to him very tenderly. You're going to be all right, son. The only bad part is that you lost a leg.

We had to amputate. But gasp, the soldier, I didn't lose it. I gave it.

To this, Daisy wrote, the best years of my life, not lost, but given to my Lord, not to an organization, nor a cause, nor even a mission field, but to him. Therefore, it is all right, if he is so satisfied, to put me aside. Perhaps he does want the remaining years of my life.

Perhaps not. But can I not trust his wisdom and mercy? She wrote that in her diary, April 13th. Monday, May 6th, she went to be with the Lord.

I had seen Daisy that day before. There was a strange hush in the arena, probably a thousand people sitting there, waiting what's next. Unannounced, uninvited, I remember Daisy walking all the way down to the platform, moving up to stand behind the microphone and said, I felt impressed before we went on to tell you that I am so burdened for America.

I've come back from revival and God's dealing where we've been on the field, find such casual, such coldness, such indifference. Thank God for many of you here. But she said, we all need a fresh touch from the Lord.

And she said, looking up, I would gladly give my life, if it would be the means of bringing awakening to this area, or to our country. That's all she said. Nobody invited.

She went back, sat down. Most of us who remember that, look back on that day before when she had said, I would gladly give my life. It's little things like this that keep nudging and pressing me to say, oh God, I don't want to just somehow finish.

I want a run to win. I want Paul's spirit of pressing toward the mark for the prize. Not a matter of years.

It's a matter of a spirit that says, God, I want to finish triumphantly. We laid in the hospital for eight days and conscious and then awakened one day. A young man had come all the way from Portland.

He'd heard about it on the radio. We've been on the radio and the station there kept a prayer vigil around the clock. People were praying for the recovery of my partner, the other lady in the car, and myself.

One was dead, two were dead, the other fell. I remember awakening out of, for the first time, wondering what was all about. Suddenly, a voice speaking to me and a young man said, I heard about this on the radio and God sent me to pray for you.

He said, I had two flat tires and had to finally hitchhike to get here, but I know God sent me because he wants me to pray for you. Now here's a strange voice, somebody I'd never met, standing over before me and saying, God sent me to pray for you. The difficulty was this, both my eyes were bandaged.

The doctor was fearful that I would lose my eyesight and he said, but God sent me. And short of the story, I believe that the Lord touched a back that was broken, a knee that was pulverized. I believe God did some miraculous working because in the next weeks, we began to recover.

There was an awareness and a sense of a hand, the healing hand of the Lord. One day, they said a lady walked in who had been in Seattle. In Seattle, she had heard over the radio of the accident and alerted many of the friends there praying.

She said to her close friend, I wish you would go to Yakima, just 130 miles, and sing this song to Brother Framke. I've heard that he might lose his eyesight unless there's intervention. I never saw her, but I remember standing.

I could hear a lovely voice as she began to sing. Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in his wonderful face.

The things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace. She explained to me that her friend Helen Lemel, who wrote that particular song, had sent her to sing it for me and to give me an autographed copy. She was praying that God would touch my eyes, and then she explained.

She said, you know, Helen Lemel has been blind from the year four or five. She was blinded in some particular situation, but all these years, the cry of her heart has been, oh Lord, I'm so glad you're giving me spiritual eyes. She began to claim and to pray.

You can be thankful that God did touch, because while there's been weakness, there's been a good recovery of eyesight. I kept rejoicing and saying, oh God, oh God, what a privilege to have Helen Lemel's song. Not only that, but to have her praying.

She knew what it would be like to be blind. One day I was sharing this in A.C. Switzerland. The sister who was playing the piano started to play the song, Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus.

Look up to speak a few minutes later. I explained how precious that song was to me, how wonderful it had been, because the way the Lord had ministered to me when I was almost sure we were going to lose our eyesight. I no more got through with that.

Brother Sparks walked up, put his arm around me, he said, I knew Helen Lemel personally. She moved from Seattle down to California. One day I got a call from Helen.

She said, Brother Sparks, often she visited Westmoreland Chapel, she said, I have a choice to make. With all the new types of surgery and all they can do to repair eyes, they tell me my eyesight might be restored. She looked at Brother Sparks and said, would you pray with me? If this is God's choice, that I will know to enter into the surgery.

He said, we'll be praying. He went back, I think a day or two later. She said to him, I've decided not to.

She said, God has given me through the years such insight, inward spiritual insight. I'm afraid if I had the others, I might miss it. Anyway, she said, the first face I'd like to look upon is my lovely Lord.

I only share this with you tonight because God brings issues across your life through the years and they're benchmarks, the things that rivet you to the fact that there is a focus to your life, finishing the race triumphantly, pressing spirit. I keep crying, oh God, I've been so privileged through the years to know individuals who not only had direction but the sharpening of the focus until the one cried the heart is, oh God, just to know you and to please you. Well, I share my heart with you tonight just simply to say, do you have a focus? Has he been sharpening it? I don't think any of us sitting here these last few days, but what there's been a whole new awareness within, we are called to be servants.

He's the one who serves in us. It's by the river of his grace. It is not our own, but by his supply that we live.

But the sharpening of the focus is, oh God, let me fulfill the race triumphantly. Father, I pray tonight you will take some of these bits and pieces and make them meaningful in the lives of some of the parents. Help them to recognize it's one thing to tell what, another thing to give the why back of it.

When they're talking to a son or a daughter, help them to recognize the principles behind that will make the what, the thing they're asking, more meaningful. I pray tonight that you'll lift us and move us just beyond having gifts, talents to give to you, but allowing the brokenness, the dealing, the consecration within our life until there can be out of that the overflow for yourself. I claim in this closing moment that all that we learned this week, all that we said yes to, you'll summarize into one statement.

Yes, Lord, we hear you speaking. We choose to finish the race triumphantly. We will give you thanks and praise and honor and glory.

But we ask it in Jesus name and everybody said amen.

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