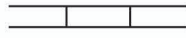


REVISED & EXPANDED

CHARLES F. STANLEY BIBLE STUDY SERIES



DEVELOPING A SERVANT'S HEART

BECOME FULLY LIKE CHRIST
BY SERVING OTHERS



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THOMAS NELSON
Since 1798

DEVELOPING A SERVANT'S HEART
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INTRODUCTION

A FRESH PERSPECTIVE ON SERVING

The Bible is more than a great piece of literature or a book of inspirational and spiritual truths. It is a practical manual for daily living. In many ways, it is God's "service manual" for life. It tells us how to live a godly life, how to maintain loving relationships, and how to fulfill our reason for being on this earth. It clearly tells us how to use our gifts, time, talents, money, and more for God's glory and His purposes.

From cover to cover, the Bible is filled with examples of men and women who had a servant's heart and who demonstrated loving service to others. Virtually all of the great stories in the Bible fall into one of three categories: (1) God's service to humankind, (2) humankind's service to God, and (3) the service of men and women to each other.

Service is giving, and giving is the essence of the gospel. God gave His only begotten Son. Jesus gave His life on the cross. We give our hearts to God. We are called to give of ourselves to others. The Bible tells us how to serve others and what to expect when we do so. It challenges us to serve with generosity and unconditional love.

This book can be used by you alone or by several people in a small-group study. At various times, you will be asked to relate to the material in one of the following four ways.

First, what new insights have you gained? Make notes about the insights you have. You may want to record them in your Bible or in a

separate journal. As you reflect on your new understanding, you are likely to see how God has moved in your life.

Second, have you ever had a similar experience? You approach the Bible from your own unique background . . . your own particular set of understandings about the world that you bring with you when you open God's Word. For this reason, it is important to consider how your experiences are shaping your understanding and allow yourself to be open to the truth that God reveals.

Third, how do you feel about the material? While you should not depend solely on your emotions as a gauge for your faith, it is important for you to be aware of them as you study a passage of Scripture and can freely express them to God. Sometimes, the Holy Spirit will use your emotions to compel you to look at your life in a different or challenging way.

Fourth, in what way do you feel challenged to respond or to act? God's Word may inspire you or challenge you to take a particular action. Take this challenge seriously and find ways to move into it. If God reveals a particular need that He wants you to address, take that as His "marching orders." God will empower you to do something with the challenge that He has just given you.

Start your Bible study sessions in prayer. Ask God to give you spiritual eyes to see and spiritual ears to hear. As you conclude your study, ask the Lord to seal what you have learned so you will not forget it. Ask Him to help you grow into the fullness of the nature and character of Christ Jesus.

I encourage you to keep the Bible at the center of your study. A genuine Bible study stays focused on God's Word and promotes a growing faith and a closer walk with the Holy Spirit in each person who participates.

LESSON 1



SAVED TO SERVE

IN THIS LESSON

Learning: What is God's purpose for our lives?
Why did He save us?

Growing: How can I become more like Christ?

Complete these three statements: (1) *God saved me because _____*, (2) *God's purpose for saving me was _____*, and (3) *I am most like Jesus when I _____*. The purpose for my opening this Bible study with a little quiz is to set the proper framework for our discussion of servanthood. The answers that I am seeking are these: (1) God saved me because *He loves me*, (2) God's purpose for saving me was *to bring Him glory*, and (3) I am most like Jesus *when I serve others*. Let's begin by looking at these three statements.

GOD SAVED ME BECAUSE HE LOVES ME

In the opening chapter of the Gospel of John, we read, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (1:14). God sent His Son, Jesus, into the world to dwell among us and live as one of us. He did this for one single reason: because He loved us and wanted to reconcile us to Himself. God forgives us, grants us eternal life, and gives us the gift of His Holy Spirit out of His immeasurable love and grace. There is no other reason.

Many people seem to believe that God saves them because of their good works or service. But nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, there isn't any type of service that can earn salvation. The apostle Paul made this clear when he chided the believers in Galatia for believing that following the Old Testament law would bring them salvation. As he wrote, “O foolish Galatians! . . . Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?” (Galatians 3:1–4).

If God saved a person on the basis of works, we would have to ask ourselves, “How much good service is enough?” Such a question cannot be answered. There is no amount of good service that can equal the shed blood of Jesus Christ. The gospel is that Jesus Christ shed His blood on the cross to purchase salvation for you and for me. He did so voluntarily and willingly in obedience to His heavenly Father. As John writes in his Gospel, “For God so *loved* the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (3:16).

Just as people are not saved because of their past good works, neither is a person saved because they have the potential for future good works. God does not look at one person and say, “You have the

potential to be a preacher, so I am going to save you,” and then look at another and say, “You aren’t worth much, so I won’t save you.” God’s gift of salvation is offered freely to all who will receive it. “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name” (John 1:12).

God created each one of us with a unique set of talents and traits that can be employed for His service as He wills. No person is without merit in His eyes. All are worthy of salvation. Furthermore, there is also no inherent goodness in any person that warrants salvation. No person has the prerogative to stand before God Almighty and say, “I deserve to be saved.” Rather, we each must confess, “I *need* to be saved.” As Paul declares, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

Developing a servant’s heart is something that we do in *response* to God’s gracious gifts of salvation, eternal life, and the Holy Spirit. It is never something that we do in order to *earn* salvation—to win, warrant, or put ourselves into a position to deserve it.

1. “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23). What does Paul mean when he says the “wages of sin is death”?

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2. Have you accepted God's offer of eternal life? If not, what is preventing you from accepting Christ as your Lord and Savior?

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3. If so, what is your attitude toward serving others?

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GOD'S PURPOSE FOR SAVING ME WAS TO BRING HIM GLORY

God saved us so that we might be His “trophy”—so that we might be examples to others of His love and mercy at work in and through a human life. Many people think that the reason for salvation is so they might go to heaven when they die. Although eternal life is certainly part of God's forgiveness plan for us, it is not the sole reason for our salvation. We are saved so that we might be *redeemed*. We once were in slavery to something that was evil, but we have been rescued and set free so that we might live a life of righteousness before God.

If God’s only purpose for our salvation was so that we might go to heaven, He would be doing each of us a great favor by saving us and then immediately slaying us. Rather, His purpose for saving us is that we might reflect His nature. He wants us to represent Him on earth, doing the kinds of works that Jesus would do if He were walking in our shoes. God desires to manifest His character through our personalities and gifts. When we allow His Holy Spirit to work in and through us, we become vessels of His love in action. We reflect His compassion, love, and mercy to others. In so doing, we bring credit, honor, and glory to *Him*.

God does not save us so that we might be part of an elite group of “good people.” He saves us so we might reach out to people with His goodness. He does not put us in the church so that we might soak up sermons, Bible conferences, prayer meetings, and seminars. He puts us in the church so that we might be of good use to those who are in need—so that we might function as His body, using our gifts, talents, and skills as the Holy Spirit directs us to help one another.

This is an important point for you to consider as you begin this Bible study. God did not save you simply so that you can have the assurance that you are going to heaven one day. He saved you in order that you might live every hour of every day of the remainder of your life in faithful service and obedience to Jesus Christ.

- 4.** “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people” (1 Peter 2:9). What does it mean to be God’s “trophy”?

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5. What sort of a trophy has your life been in the past?

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I AM MOST LIKE JESUS WHEN I SERVE OTHERS

The foremost characteristic of the life of Jesus Christ is *service*. We are most like Him when we serve as He served.

Many think that people are most like Jesus when they preach as Jesus preached, teach as Jesus taught, heal as Jesus healed, or perform miracles as Jesus performed miracles. They look only at the outward manifestation of people's witness and ministry. But we need to look beyond the outer manifestation to the motivation for Jesus' life: *service*. Jesus preached, taught, healed, and performed miracles to help others, not to call attention to Himself. He poured out His life so others might be saved, never thinking for a moment to save Himself. Time and again, Jesus said to those whom He had helped, "Don't tell anyone what has happened."

The critical point for you to recognize is that God has called you to serve others just as Jesus served them. He didn't save you or call you to service so that you might be exalted. He saved you so that you might serve others and bring praise and honor to His holy name. The good news is that any person who is saved *can* serve God and bring glory to Him. The nature of the ministry is not what is important—what *is* important is the motivation behind that service. God loved us so that we might love others. That is what the Christian life is all about.

6. In what ways do you presently serve other people? In what ways do you serve God?

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7. How might God be calling you to serve others tomorrow?

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DRAWING FROM THE TRUE SOURCE

At the outset of this study, I want to stress that we do not serve out of our *own* strength but out of the strength that Jesus provides. Let's face it . . . some people in our lives can be difficult to love. We all know people whom we would rather avoid than go out of our way

to show love. Even more, serving can be difficult, time consuming, and draining. For this reason, we need to make sure we are connected to the right source before we seek to perform any act of service.

Hudson Taylor, a missionary to China, was a wonderful example of faith. What he accomplished in spreading the gospel of Christ has rarely been equaled in this age. But even he went through times when he was feeling worn out, sick, weary, and wanted to quit. One of his friends wrote him a letter and spoke to him about this need to draw his strength from Christ dwelling within him. All of a sudden, it dawned on Hudson that this was the answer. From that moment on, he began to serve the Lord not out of his own strength and energy but out of the power of the Holy Spirit that resided within him. God specializes in energizing the weak.

When the apostle Paul wrote, “we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Romans 8:37), he was not expressing pride or egotism. He was not saying, “you name it, and we as believers can conquer it.” Rather, his attitude was one of humility. Paul refused to boast about himself in any fashion or under any condition. As he said, “God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Galatians 6:14). When Paul looked around, he could find nothing to boast about except one thing . . . and that was the cross.

Paul understand everything good that came his way happened because of the cross. The power of the cross had forever changed his life. As he wrote, “What things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him” (Philippians 3:7-9). Furthermore, Paul realized what Hudson Taylor came to realize. All of his efforts for the gospel—no matter how noble—would fail if he were not drawing on Christ as his source.

As you begin this study on developing a servant's heart, make sure that you are tapping into the one true Source for your efforts. As you do, I am sure that you will find that "God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

- 8.** "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10). When have you found it to be true that when you were weak and weary, God provided a new reserve of strength to you?

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- 9.** What is an area of serving where you need to draw more on Christ's strength?

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CLOSING PRAYER

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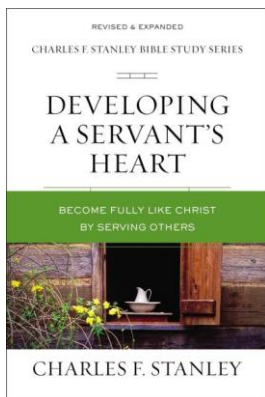
Father, thank You for giving each of us talents, gifts, abilities, and resources. May we be the type of stewards who will not keep the gifts You provide for ourselves but use those resources to invest in eternity. Help us to minister freely to one another through our acts of service. We know that just attending church services is not enough—we want to actively engage in worshiping You by loving others. One day, when we stand before You on that final day, we want to hear You say to us, “Well done, my good and faithful servants.”

NOTES AND
PRAYER REQUESTS



Use this space to write any key points, questions, or prayer requests from this week's study.

A series of horizontal dotted lines providing a space for writing notes and prayer requests.



DEVELOPING A SERVANT'S HEART

by Charles F. Stanley

How to serve with generosity and love.

Service is giving, and giving is the very essence of the gospel. God *gave* His only begotten Son. Jesus *gave* His life on the cross. The Holy Spirit *gives* us the power to resist sin and follow God's commands. It is from this abundance of what we have been given that God calls us to then freely give *ourselves*—to actually develop a mindset in which we look first to the needs of others above our own interests. In *Developing a Servant's Heart*, Dr. Charles Stanley shows how each of us have been equipped, empowered, and charged to do this as we follow the example of Jesus—the Supreme Servant.

The **Charles F. Stanley Bible Study Series** is a unique approach to Bible study, incorporating biblical truth, personal insights, emotional responses, and a call to action. Each study draws on Dr. Stanley's many years of teaching the guiding principles found in God's Word, showing how we can apply them in practical ways to every situation we face. This edition of the series has been completely revised and updated, and includes two brand-new lessons from Dr. Stanley.

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