

LIVING
IT OUT



**DAILY
BIBLE
STUDY**



CEDARCREEKCHURCH

Filling the Space Between

Monday, February 27, 2017

Just over one week ago, on February 19th at 12:05 a.m., my wife and I welcomed Easton Kip Rectenwald into the world as the newest addition to our family. After months of discomfort and a painful day of induced labor, my wife got to hold her baby boy for the first time. While obviously, she would say that all the discomfort was worth it to have another amazing child, there were a few people that made everything a lot easier. Our nurses were some of the most incredible people in the world. Of course, their job is to care for Kaela, but there is a difference between doing your job, and loving people while you do it. These nurses exemplified this in every way.

Whether it was adjusting to help Kaela feel as comfortable as possible, or holding her other hand during especially difficult times, our nurses went above and beyond at every opportunity. Even the smallest details, like the words or tone of voice they used, showed their love for Kaela. They truly were a gift from God. It was clear that they loved to serve, that they lived to serve. What if we approached our personal relationships the same way these nurses approached their patients? What if we decided to fill the space in our relationships with acts of service?

This past weekend, Ben gave us a few things to remember as it pertains to serving people. We need to remember that we should:

- Ease the burden of others
- Don't wait, initiate.
- Aim for impact
- Attitude is magic

There is not a single person in the history of the world who exemplified this better than Jesus of Nazareth. Today, we're going to look at an example out of the Gospel of John, where Jesus washes his disciples' feet.

The way John sets up the particular interaction between Jesus and Peter is telling. He reminds the reader of Jesus' knowledge of his mission. John tells us that Jesus knew that he was about to die and that he would be returning to his Father – to sit at the right hand of God (Hebrews 1:3). He knew that he was God, that he had all authority on earth. Jesus – being God – did not have to do what he did next. In the 1st century ancient near east, feet washers were not people of nobility or leadership. It would've been unheard of for a Rabbi to do anything of the sort, which explains Peter's initial reaction. In Jesus, we not only have a Rabbi washing his disciples' feet, we have the sovereign God of the universe doing so. The sovereign God of the universe "loved his disciples during his ministry on earth," and was going to love them – by serving them – until the very end.

Lest we misunderstand the point of Jesus' foot washing, we have to look at his explanation for his behavior. He says, "Unless I wash you, you won't belong to me." Here, Jesus isn't implying that he needs to physically wash the feet of anyone wishing to be in relationship with him. No, he is making an eternal connection. He's saying that Peter – and all of us – cannot be in relationship with him if he doesn't first serve us through his death and resurrection. Simply put, we separate ourselves from God by making ourselves unclean; Jesus brings us back into relationship with God by washing us clean.

John 13:1-17

¹Before the Passover celebration, Jesus knew that his hour had come to leave this world and return to his Father. He had loved his disciples during his ministry on earth, and now he loved them to the very end. ²It was time for supper, and the devil had already prompted Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. ³Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God. ⁴So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, ⁵and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he had around him.

⁶When Jesus came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

⁷Jesus replied, "You don't understand now what I am doing, but someday you will."

⁸"No," Peter protested, "you will never ever wash my feet!"

Jesus replied, "Unless I wash you, you won't belong to me."

⁹Simon Peter exclaimed, "Then wash my hands and head as well, Lord, not just my feet!"

¹⁰Jesus replied, "A person who has bathed all over does not need to wash, except for the feet, to be entirely clean. And you disciples are clean, but not all of you." ¹¹For Jesus knew who would betray him. That is what he meant when he said, "Not all of you are clean."

¹²After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, "Do you understand what I was doing? ¹³You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are right, because that's what I am. ¹⁴And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. ¹⁵I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. ¹⁶I tell you the truth, slaves are not greater than their master. Nor is the messenger more important than the one who sends the message. ¹⁷Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them.

Reread verses 14-17. Is Jesus' command to us to practice foot washing? What is his actual command to us here (what is the spirit behind it)?

Jesus' servant leadership was radical. He showed his love for his disciples by serving them. He showed his love for us by dying and resurrecting for us. Ben gave us a couple practical next steps for us to live it out:

- **Love tank check in:** Ask a significant other, friend, or family member: "How is your love tank?"
 - If their answer is less than 10, ask them what you can do to help.
- **Seven days of service:** Each day for one week seek to serve people you care about in your life
- **Serving:** Take a step to serve our community with Habitat or at your campus.
- Learn more about how to get involved and sign-up at CedarCreek.tv/outreach

By doing even one of these things, we can fill the space in our relationships with the life-giving, self-sacrificing love we saw Jesus display all throughout his time on earth. Which step are you going to take to live out Jesus' teaching?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank you for your Son. Thank you for his death and resurrection - the ultimate service for a sinner like me. I am in awe at your grace and mercy that you've shown to me even though I don't deserve it. Help me to serve others as selflessly as you did. I ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

Ease the Burden of Others

Tuesday February 28th, 2017

Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do is make a dinner, vacuum a rug or fold a basket of laundry. As the mom of four little people ranging in age from almost six to ten months, I know how wonderful it can be when someone takes a moment to provide for our physical needs.

It's not that I can't manage to get food on the table 35 times a week (they always want to eat), or run the vacuum, (so the crawling baby doesn't eat the worm the big brother brought in and subsequently forgot about), or fold the 20th load of laundry that week; but, sometimes it's hard to do it all. When my mother-in-law offers to take us out for dinner or fold a load of laundry, I don't say no. In fact I'm calculating if the next load will be done before they leave. It's not necessary but these small acts of service go a long way in easing a burden. I don't want my responsibilities taken away but it's really nice when someone offers to help out even if it seems small to that person.

Acts of service often look like this. When someone has a new baby, or someone is grieving the loss of a loved one, or another is recovering from an illness, or if you are just having a bad day. Showing love looks a lot like housework. It's not removing a burden, but it is helping to lessen it.

Sometimes it's holding the door for someone that has their hands full or letting someone "cut" in front of you at the grocery store. Whatever it happens to be at the moment, it takes intentional effort looking at those around you and trying to anticipate their needs. Sometimes physical acts of service are not possible, but we can always pray.

Psalm 34:15 says that the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cries. Paul repeatedly stated throughout his letters that he was in constant prayer for those he was writing to. Prayer is not a platitude; it is communication with the God of the universe and is powerful and effective. (James 5:16). *When you can't*

do anything to provide for a physical need, or even when you can: pray.

Once we provide for a physical need or offer up prayers to God we need to follow-up with that person. Often there is a great outpouring of love in the weeks following a birth or death or injury, but then that person is forgotten. However, for the new mom, the baby is still getting up every two hours to eat, or for the widow, there is still an empty chair in the living room, we need to check back with them. Drop back in and hold the baby while the mom sleeps or sit and listen to the person still grieving. Those initial acts of service are wonderful, but to really fill the space, we need to follow-up. Those we serve are not asking us to take their burden. We can't. But we can share in their joy or sorrow.

In Matthew 11, Jesus calls us to himself. He tells us that he is there to exchange our burden-not take it away. He offers us rest for our weariness and a lighter "yoke". In ancient times a yoke was used to tether two oxen together to pull a heavy load. It was a heavy wooden harness connected to a heavy piece of equipment, often a plow. When we provide acts of service to those around us we are acting as Jesus to those people. We are not removing their burden but lightening it to help them continue in their journey.

Matthew 11:28-30

Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."

How does Jesus describe himself in this passage? When you approach someone to offer help, remember his attitude.

Think about two people who are struggling. Think of one practical thing you can do for those people to ease their burden.

Think about another person that is hurting. Commit to praying for

that person, and let them know. Remember the prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank you for allowing us to partner with you in serving others. Thank you that we can be the hands and feet of Jesus when loving those around us. We pray for opportunities to serve others and a humble and gentle attitude. Open our eyes to see how we can show love through service. In Jesus name, Amen.

This post was written by Julie Mabus, a regular contributor to the Living it Out.

Don't Wait, Initiate

Wednesday March 1st, 2017

I'm always told the story of how my grandma came over on a little boat from Italy. Soon after, she met my grandpa, who was a farmer in Ohio. They started a family, two sons and two daughters. My dad was the oldest. On the farm, he quickly learned hard work. Tragically, my grandpa died unexpectedly of a heart attack when my dad was only 13. As the oldest, he cared for the farm and the family much like a father would.

Over the course of my life, I have seen nothing but hard work from this man. It is part of who he is. But I believe it stems more from his kindness and compassion, his servant's heart. He goes out of his way to look for a way to help. One of the many things he has taught me is the power of an encouraging word. At a store register, he would know just the right words to say to the cashier. That person would just light up. At other times, it would be just having a casual conversation with somebody, where he would soon find out what was on their heart, maybe troubling them, and pray with them.

Everybody has a need. We are all going through struggles and challenges. But, if we are only consumed by our own life, we will never see the needs of those around us. We will miss opportunities that surround us to be used by God. Any way that we can give of ourselves, big or small, is serving.

In John 13, Jesus gave us the best example of a servant's heart.

"So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist,⁵ and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he had around him.

He goes on to ask them, "Do you understand what I was doing?"¹³ You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are right, because that's what I am.¹⁴ And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet.¹⁵ I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you.

To see past ourselves, we need the eyes of Christ. We must allow God to fill the needs within us first. Not just once, through accepting salvation in him, but on a daily and sometimes momentary basis. Make seeking him a state of mind. He knows us, loves us, and is waiting to make our burden light. Only then, can we look around us in clarity. With the eyes and heart of Christ, these opportunities will call out to us before they are even made known.

PRAYER

God, I want a heart like yours. Help me to see the opportunities you place in my path to give of myself. Help me not just to see it, but to do it.

Aim for Impact

Thursday March 2nd, 2017

“Can you do me a favor?”

At home, a follow-up question may include a request to complete a chore, or at work, it may come from a boss asking you to take on a special project. A friend might need a ride, or a neighbor may ask to borrow your lawn mower.

The attitude we take in response to these questions speaks to our desire to perform acts of service. We can't (and shouldn't) say yes to every request to help someone, but we can find ways to meet the needs of others that will allow them to flourish and thrive.

Most people wouldn't be asking unless they really needed something. By saying yes, we take a step toward serving them and showing them the love of Christ. If you have taken the 5 Love Languages Assessment, you know that an act of service occurs any time we are able to “ease the burden of responsibilities” of someone who receives love in this way.

This proves difficult for someone who enjoys words of affirmation. Being “asked” to take out the trash or to increase my workload doesn't seem like a lot of fun, but performing these duties can show love to those who asked. God made a huge request of Jesus, who offered the greatest act of service when he laid down his life and sacrificed himself for our sins. He did so willingly, but even *he* asked God if there might be another way (Matthew 26:42). But Jesus knew this was his part to play and an amazing way to show his love both for God and for us.

One of the numerous examples of Jesus' acts of service occurred in John 4 in his interaction with the Samaritan woman at the well. The woman was thirsty and had come to the well to draw water. Instead it was Jesus who asked her for a drink. The woman pointed out to Jesus that it was more than just a strange request, especially coming from a Jewish man to a Samaritan woman. Little did she know who she was actually speaking to:

John 4:13-15:

Jesus replied, "Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again. But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life."

"Please, sir," the woman said, "Give me this water! Then I'll never be thirsty again, and I won't have to come here to get water."

The Samaritan woman, who looked for love in all the wrong places, finally found the love she sought so desperately, in the way she wanted to receive it. Jesus offered her a gift, but he also offered the woman a service. By providing her with Living Water, she would never thirst again. She still had to endure the arduous process of traveling to the well to draw water, but she could stop searching for artificial love from her third, fourth or fifth husband, and rest in the love of Christ.

What act of service can you offer someone that will make the biggest impact for them?

Write down a list of five things you can do.

Choose one, and follow through.

PRAYER

God, open my eyes to opportunities to serve others in my life. Use them to reveal your love to them, and to me. Soften my heart to the constant requests, and help me discern the ones I need to say yes to in order to have an impact for you.

Your Attitude is the Magic

Friday, March 3rd, 2017

Our attitude is the secret sauce. It really is magical. It can change any situation from incredible to terrible and back again. The situation remains but the way we decide to perceive it, the way we choose to respond to it, can transform the entire experience. We hear more and more talk of an attitude of gratitude and how it can radically alter the way we live our lives, and nothing can get us there faster than serving others. I've been on a couple of mission trips to Honduras, and inevitably I hear people talking about how they want to go and make a difference- heck, I said it myself the first time I went. But what I realized by the end of the week was that I was the one who was helped. I was the one who changed for the better. Yes, I might have built some stuff and helped some people, but they radically altered my perceptions and brought me closer to God. Serving is so incredibly fulfilling!

Our attitude towards others as we serve them is paramount. For example, when Jesus washed the disciples' feet, those had to be some pretty gross feet. They had been walking all day through town in sandals, through dust and dung and heat. Jesus didn't care. He wanted to show his friends that he respected them and didn't care that they had toe-jam or long funky nails. They were embarrassed and taken aback by the gesture because they didn't feel they deserved it, and they were right!

Sometimes we don't think other people deserve things. Look at story of the prodigal son. The older brother was upset because his father was celebrating his young son's return. The older brother thought that he deserved more than his brother.

Our own selfish pride, envy, and expectations can get in the way of seeing the big picture. Attitude is the key. If the older brother had been able to see how happy his father was and be glad for that, or even be happy himself knowing that his little brother was alive and had come home, he could have enjoyed the party and made everyone's life that much better.

[When we fill the needs of others](#), we need to remember that Jesus, when we were at our worst, gave his life for us. We didn't deserve it, but he did it anyway. If we can keep that always in mind, it makes our attitude one of gratitude and makes it effortless to serve with gladness. Paul had the secret recipe for keeping that attitude. By focusing on these good things and remembering the way that God loves us we can serve with a cheerful heart.

Philippians 4:8-9

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.”

Write down a specific example from each of the things that Paul tells us to think about.

Try adding one every day for a week and see if you notice a difference in your attitude.

PRAYER

Father, thank you for being the God of peace. Help me to remember to fix my eyes on your good gifts so that I will be willing to give gifts of service to others with a cheerful heart.