

“SERVANTS ARE ESSENTIAL”  
Psalm 34:15-22, John 15:9-17, Acts 6:1-7  
July 6 & 7, 2024

“Most folks have a key chain and on that key chain there are a plethora of keys, each designed to open a certain lock. It is quite normal to have a number of keys. There are probably some for the house, some for the car, some for the office, and so on. Each key has been uniquely cut to fit a specific lock in order to enter or gain access to a specific location.

“I have a number of keys that look alike, are the same length, and appear similar in shape, but they won’t open the same door because they have each been uniquely crafted from a different master key. Each key has been uniquely crafted for a special place, a specific door to open.

“In our context, today, we see that God is the Master Key. He opens everything, but He has uniquely crafted every believer for a specific place in which He wants you to make a difference in the lives of others as a recipient of the manifold grace of God.”<sup>1</sup>

You see, God has called each of us into His service, doing a specific task for the sake of the Christian Church. And we each have been gifted with skills and abilities through the Holy Spirit to perform the tasks specific to our calling as servants in the Body of Christ. We each fit into our own keyhole to unlock the work that God has given us to do, and He delights when we use our key to do the work.

The struggle comes in when we don’t use our key to unlock all of the potential given for us to use in order to complete our task. And as a result, we find ourselves working only in our own strength, and our own wisdom, and that limits our abilities to do the work of the Lord. We can do very little for the Lord in our own strength and wisdom. But when we use the key given to us through the Holy Spirit, it unlocks all kinds of abilities we thought we never had, and He give us the ability to do so much more for the Lord.

Another struggle comes when we want to use our key to do the work of the Lord, but we want to

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<sup>1</sup> (Tony Evans, *Tony Evans’ Book of Illustrations*, [Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2009] pg. 276, #825)

do things our way, and in our time. There's a little poem that goes like this:

“I'll go where You want me to go, dear Lord, Real service is what I desire.  
I'll sing You a solo any time, dear Lord, Just don't ask me to sing in the choir.

I'll do what You want me to do, dear Lord, I like to see things come to pass.  
But don't ask me to teach boys or girls, O Lord, I'd rather just stay in my class.

I'll do what You want me to do, dear Lord, I yearn for Thy kingdom to thrive,  
I'll give You nickels and dimes, dear Lord, But please don't ask me to tithe.

I'll go where You want me to go, dear Lord, I'll say what You want me to say;  
I'm busy just now with myself, dear Lord, I'll help You some other day.”<sup>2</sup>

Well, God has given us the key to do our tasks, only it needs to be done in His time and in His way. We are invited to trust in the power of His Holy Spirit to guide us to do what He wants us to do, right when He wants us to do it. Opportunities come upon us and if we do not take advantage of that opportunity, it passes for all time, and we've missed our chance to fulfill God's work in His time.

Another struggle for us is to use our key to unlock the right lock in order to fulfill the purpose God has for us. It can be easy to look at what others are doing and then try to use our key to unlock the doorway to their purpose, and we get stuck. Oh, the key may go into the lock, but it doesn't open up the gifts and abilities God has given just for us to use to fulfill OUR purpose. If we spend our time trying to do the work God has given others to do, or to try to direct the others how to do the work God has called them to do, then we find ourselves getting into trouble and the work of the Church gets stalled with folks working outside their designed purpose. No, God has called each of us to do our own part of the work of the Church and we are to focus on doing our part the best we can and let the others do their work as best as they can with the help of the Holy Spirit. And as we apply the abilities and skills that the Holy Spirit endows us with, amazing things happen, and the church is blessed and grows.

Psalm 34 tells us that God guides us to the right place at the right time to do His work among His people. It might not be socially acceptable for some, however, and they may begin to chastise us and persecute us because we are doing the work that God has called us to do. So we are reminded that “*the*

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<sup>2</sup> (Charles Swindoll, *Swindoll's Ultimate Book of Illustrations & Quotes*, [Nashville; Thomas Nelson, 1998] pg. 516)

*eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are attentive to their cry; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to blot their name from the earth” (Ps. 34:15-16).*

Now, that might seem harsh to us, but God delights for people to follow Him and become His servants, doing His work to bring about the very best for the rest of the people around us. If we’re not doing the work of the Lord, we stand against Him, and all we do or say will come to a terrible end. But if we are working for the Lord, using His keys given to us to do His work, He will bless us and cause us to do the best work we can for Him. And that will shine out before all those around us, letting us become the examples of a Spirit filled life.

Something we are all to have in common in the work we’ve been called to do is to “love one another.” Jesus expressed this to His disciples, telling them “*As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Now remain in My love. If you keep My commands, you will remain in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commands and remain in His love...My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are My friends if you do what I command”* (John 15:9-10, 12-14).

So part of our service to the Lord is to love each other more than we love ourselves. We are to be ready, in season and out of season, to serve one another in love for one another. If we are all serving each other, then no one will have any needs left out, and we will all be able to rejoice together. And in that way the whole community benefits and the whole community thrives.

Jesus tells us, “*You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit - fruit that will last - and so that whatever you ask in My name, the Father will give you”* (15:16). Our calling as disciples of Jesus is to make lasting fruit, using the resources and skills and gifts given to us by the Holy Spirit to meet the needs of the people around us. As we do this, we show love to each other. And the service that we perform to others, the work that God has called us to do, should be done in the joy of the Lord, not out of compulsion. We are invited to serve the Lord with gladness and joy.

But the work God has called us to do for Him is not in order to earn a right to be with Him in heaven when we are finished with our journey here on earth. No, God has called us to do His work because we are His servants already, having received the gift of eternal life as we claimed Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord. We don't need to work to prove ourselves worthy of God receiving us into His kingdom. We've already received that reward. God is inviting us to serve Him and share His love with others out of our love for Him, knowing that there is nothing that can "*separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Romans 8:39).

"A flight attendant one day wanted to go on a trip and she received a seat that was available in first class. At no cost to her, she was able to fly to Europe.

"An emergency occurred on the airplane that made it so that they were in need of another flight attendant. She raised her hand and let them know she was a flight attendant, and even though she was on vacation taking a trip to Europe, she would be glad to serve as the additional help that was needed.

"She was not serving to get to Europe; that had already been taken care of. It was part of the package of being a flight attendant for the airline. But she had no problem serving on the airplane, either, because she was just so grateful for the benefit to be able to ride to Europe at no cost to her. That service was a joy and not a complaint.

"It is unfortunate today that many people are serving Christ in order to earn brownie points to make sure they're saved, rather than serving Christ out of the overwhelming joy of the free ride. God wants your service, but not as validation for your salvation. He wants your service out of your joy for the assurance of your salvation."<sup>3</sup>

And that's where we find the young Christian Church in our study of the Book of Acts. Listen to the next segment of the Acts of the Apostles. This is Acts 6:1-7. (READ Acts 6:1-7).

People were hearing the testimonies of the apostles, and they were understanding the prophecies

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<sup>3</sup> (Tony Evans, *Tony Evans' Book of Illustrations*, [Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2009] pg. 278, #829)

of the coming Messiah with the accounts of Jesus' life, and they were coming to the conclusion that indeed, Jesus was God's promised Messiah, sent to bring Salvation to the people of Israel. Thousands were turning to Jesus and claiming Him as their Savior, being baptized with water in His name, and then receiving the gifts of the Holy Spirit in their lives to begin working together to meet the needs of the community of faith. And as the new church grows, questions and discrepancies arise.

Remember that there was open sharing among all the believers, so that there were no folks in need of anything. However, there were not only Hebrew Jews coming to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior, but Jews from all over the world. They had been the ones addressed on the day of Pentecost, and as they hear the fulfillment of their Scriptures that happened through Jesus, they joyfully become a part of the New Church. And so many folks were turning to the Lord that there are too many to be cared for by just the twelve apostles.

Now, growth is a good thing, but if there are not enough people willing to serve the growing numbers of believers, there comes a time when growth will taper off and plateau. But as folks step up to become servants, the needs of the people are met and growth continues. This is not only in physical needs, but spiritual and emotional needs, too. People need the Lord, but if only a limited number of people are willing to serve to help them come to know the Lord, and grow in their faith in the Lord, only a limited number of folks will be reached. Servants are needed as leaders to meet the needs of the growing church.

When the apostles gathered the believers together, they stated clearly the need; *"It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the Word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word."* (Acts 6:2-4).

When it became impossible for the apostles to meet the needs of all the people, additional people were sought to assist in the duties of the Church. These folks were picked because they had already

demonstrated the working of the Holy Spirit in their lives, using their endowed gifts and abilities to touch the lives of others around them. These new leaders would have been using their keys from the Master to unlock the solutions to many struggles and concerns within the life of the Church. And as they let the Holy Spirit work in and through them, they were seen as capable leaders to do the work needed at just that time and place.

You see, the apostles were reaching out to everyone in Jerusalem, as Jesus had commanded them to do. As they were developing this New Church the apostles began to establish the structure needed to continue the ministry of Jesus. As many in the city of Jerusalem, along with the surrounding towns and villages, were placing their trust in Jesus Christ as the Messiah of God, there was need for others to step up to administer the different needs that were there, so that no one would be missed. The Light of Jesus Christ was beginning to shine out in Jerusalem, and the need was very real to equip and empower others to begin their own outreach ministries, in the same Name and Spirit of Jesus. It was too much for just a few to do by themselves.

And so began the enlistment of willing and capable servants to do the work of the Lord through the gifts and abilities given to each person. Money was coming into the reserves of the Church, so someone had to step up to manage the income. Others were needed to take those resources out into the communities of faith to enable the members in those areas to keep working for the Lord.

The apostles came to realize that they were not able to be the preachers, the evangelists, the teachers, the healers, the prophets, the workers of service, the caring for the poor, and the administrators of the Church, to meet the needs of all the people. They were gifted and called to be men of prayer and to do the ministry of the Word of God. That was their key given to them to do ministry. What was needed were those to be appointed into ministry in other areas to complete the work of the church.

Think of a young business getting started. The founders of that company begin by doing the work of that business, making the products of that company, getting sales contracts, purchasing the equipment needed, servicing that equipment, and taking care of all the records and proceeds of the small

business. The new business owners needed to do all the work just to get started.

However, as the business grows, more employees are needed to focus on one part of the work of that company so that it can grow and everything can continue as they present their product to the people around them. As the number of employees grow, a human relations department is set up to employ more people and take care of the employees they have. As sales increase, regional departments are started to focus on those specific areas of the nation that are being serviced. As the number of regions increase, additional sites are developed to produce the product in those areas to keep up with demand.

There is no possible way that the original founders of the business can keep doing everything to keep that business growing and to meet the needed demands of that product. Others are needed to make that business successful. The original founders become the overall managers and overseers, letting trusted individuals step up to focus on specific duties within that business. Each leader, each employee, every person involved in the life of that business is essential for the successful running of that business. No one is greater or lesser, but each one has their part in the business to make them work smoothly and effectively.

And so it is within the life of the church. The apostles were not capable of doing all the work of the growing Church all by themselves. So seven men were chosen who demonstrated gifts of the Spirit present in their lives, already in service using the gifts of wisdom to do their work for the Church. They were capable and trusted men who began to do their work for the outreach in Jerusalem. They were chosen by the people and brought to the apostles for their blessing.

In this situation, the men chosen for this part of the ministry were of Greek descent. They were Jewish followers of Jesus called upon to direct the ministry to the poor. It was reminiscent of Moses following the advice of his father-in-law, Jethro, to appoint trusted and faithful men to become the judges in the midst of the Hebrew people as they made their way into the Promised land (Exodus 18:13-26). It was too much for just one man to handle all the work by himself, so he appointed leaders of thousands, leaders of hundreds, and leaders of fifties, and leaders of tens to help out (Ex. 18:25).

The apostles were empowering these men to be the leader-servants so that the church could continue to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. They prayed over them, laid hands on them and let God work through them. And we are told, *“So the Word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith”* (Acts 6:7). As people stepped up to become the servants within the life of the New Church, God made it flourish and grow, incorporating the lives of many more. Even the priests of the Temple were being convinced of the Truth of Jesus Christ, and using their skills, began to teach the people the history of the church in the Name of Jesus Christ.

Folks, it is essential for every member of this congregation, every member of every church, to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, so that we might find where God has called us to be His servants, and to use the keys given to us that unlock the doors of unlimited potential provided through the Holy Spirit. Every member is essential to the life of the church, and every member is called to serve so that we might touch the lives of those around us for the love of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let’s pray.

Father God, Thank You for giving us life through Your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Thank You for the invitation to “Come follow Me,” so that we might receive eternal life in Jesus. As Your disciples, Jesus, we offer ourselves to Your guidance so that we might find the work You have for us to do. Empower each one of us, through Your Holy Spirit, to have the gifts and abilities we need to complete the work You have called us to do. Give us Your eyes to look around us and see the need that is there both physically and spiritually, to meet. Then give us a heart to do Your work here in our community to help many more learn of Jesus, and receive Him as their Savior and Lord, too. Father, there is so much for us to do within the life of the Church. Therefore we ask that You encourage Your people to step up and begin making a difference for You, here, at home, and everywhere we go. Thank You for Your call to ministry. Move us, Lord, to hear Your Word, receive Your call in our lives, and then do Your work, in the Name of Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. AMEN.