

Spiritual Rhythms

DO

For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven. –Matthew 5:20

With this statement, Jesus contrasts the literal legalism of the leaders of his day with the need for heart transformation expected of Jesus-followers. Don't just "not murder"—make peace with your enemy. Don't just "stay married"—keep yourself from lust. Don't just "love those who love you"—love and pray for your enemies. What we do with our time, talent, and resources reflects our level of commitment to follow Jesus.

God's plan for those who follow Jesus is that we live our lives on behalf of others. Jesus "did not come to be served, but to serve" (Mark 10:45). We are called to follow his example and invest our lives for others' sake. We give ourselves first to God, then we can give ourselves wholeheartedly to those around us. When we combine the practice of "doing" something with our previous practices of rest, study, meeting, and prayer, we put feet on our faith and show the world that we are Jesus' disciples because we "love one another" (John 13:35).

This type of love is exemplified in three of CCC's DNA statements:¹

- *We do life together.* We offer our time to listen to someone who is lonely, we give up our rights to meet the needs of those around us.
- *We are contributors, not consumers.* We offer our talents to serve in ways that benefit others.
- *We are outrageously generous.* We offer our resources to provide for those less fortunate, and/or for the expansion of God's kingdom.

We were "created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:8–10).

You were made for this. What will you **do** this week?

SCRIPTURE BASIS

Read and reflect on Romans 12:1–21:

- Why is "offering ourselves" (what we do and what we own) to God a form of worship? What are we responding to (verses 1–2)?
- Why is humility such an important foundation for serving others (verses 3–8)?
- Putting love in action requires specific next steps. Which of these actions listed do you need to work on most (verses 9–16)? Which of these actions comes the most naturally to you?

Read and reflect on 2 Corinthians 8:1–7:

- The Macedonian Christians are described with "overflowing joy," "extreme poverty," and "rich generosity" (verses 1–3). Does this combination of traits surprise you? Why or why not?

¹ CCC's DNA statements can be read here: cccomaha.org/dna

- Why do you think these Christians were able and willing to be so generous with their resources?
- Compare verse 7 with 1 Corinthians 13:1–3. How does “love” best show itself? Why is “knowledge” and “faith” incomplete without love?

RESPONSE

- Sometimes when we are encouraged to *do* more (whether that is serve with our talents or give our resources) we feel guilty into it, as if it is a burden. How can we prepare our hearts to be people who want to serve and give?
- What do you need to offer to God as a sacrifice?
- How can we encourage those around us this week to live wholeheartedly for Jesus?

CHRISTIAN TRADITION

William and Catherine Booth are two examples of Jesus-followers from the 19th century who “put feet to their faith.”² With their own life experiences of both poverty and illness, they had great compassion for the people around them and combined preaching the word with “doing.” They collected funds from the rich to feed the hungry and provide encouragement for those dealing with addictions. As they established the Salvation Army in 1878, they became known for meeting people’s physical needs through humanitarian aid, while they also introduced them to Jesus for salvation and healing. On at least one occasion, Catherine Booth was invited to preach at A.B. Simpson’s church.³

PRACTICE

Choose one or more exercises to try this week, alone or in community.

New to this practice?

- Serving others doesn’t have to be complicated. Choose a random act of kindness for each day this week. Google “Random Acts of Kindness” for ideas.
- While you’re in the drive-through, pay for the person behind you.
- Shovel someone else’s driveway and sidewalk while you are outside shoveling your own.
- Donate funds to one of our International Workers, residents, or short-term mission trips. Even small dollar amounts make a big impact! You can do that at cccomaha.org/give.
- Sign up to provide baked goods for Village One partners or sign up for other serving opportunities at cccomaha.info.

Ready to go deeper?

- Sign up for Team CCC, Christ Community Church’s awesome team of volunteers. There are a variety of serving schedules and positions available. Learn more at cccomaha.org/serve.
- Offer a sacrificial gift, or sign up for automatic giving, toward the “One Fund” ministries at CCC. Give at cccomaha.org/give.
- Consider offering part of your home to host a resident in next year’s cohort. Learn more at cccresidency.org/hosthome.
- Learn about short-term mission opportunities at cccomaha.org/stm.

² salvationarmy.org.au/about-us/our-story/our-history/founders-william-and-catherine-booth

³ Paul L. King, “A Brief Summary Critique of Ballitch’s Critique of Stumbo,” page 39, footnote 11

PRAYER FOCUS

Use these specific prayer prompts as catalysts to action this week:

- **CCC:** Creator God, thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit and the way you have shaped each of us to serve with purpose in your kingdom on earth. Help us to not be selfish with our time, talent, or resources, but to offer ourselves wholeheartedly to you first, so that giving to others seems a privilege, not a burden. Give us the willingness to follow your Spirit's prompting. Thank you for the works you've prepared for us, and the wisdom to lean into opportunities you provide.
- **Omaha:** God of the universe, give us hearts for our community. Open our eyes to see the potential for kindness in every day. Remind us to pay attention to the people around us and to have compassion for those in need. Give us a renewed sense of community with those in our path, recognizing that we are all made in your image. We can learn from each other if we listen well. Help us both to be helpers, and to be willing to receive help from others.
- **C&MA⁴:** Almighty God, you have your eye on the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalized in our world. Give us hearts of outrageous generosity that seek to bring kingdom values to a dying world. Help us to offer ourselves in service, and our resources in abundance. Remind us that every good gift comes from you and we are only stewards of what you have so richly provided us. Thank you for those who serve in missions around the world and help us recognize it is our privilege to serve and give.

RESOURCES

Books and websites that support this week's practice:

- Watch four short videos of Dawn Gentry talking about the Bible's teaching on spiritual gifts at cccomaha.org/cccinstitute/2020/7/16/spiritual-gifts
- *Living on the Edge* podcast with Chip Ingram, "Your Divine Design—How to Develop Your Spiritual Gift for Kingdom Impact," (two parts). Also see Right Now Media video series with same title, rightnowmedia.org/Content/Series/210⁵
- Ann Voskamp, *Every Good Gift: Living Generously in a Self-Centered World*, Right Now Media, 2019, rightnowmedia.org/Content/Series/361050⁵
- Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*, Zondervan, 2002.
- Randy Alcorn, *Managing God's Money: A Biblical Guide*, Tyndale House, 2011, and *The Treasure Principle*, Multnomah, 2017.
- Bob Goff, *Love Does: Discover a Secretly Incredible Life in an Ordinary World*, Thomas Nelson, 2012
- Chan, Francis, *Crazy Love: Overwhelmed by a Relentless God*, David C. Cook, 2013.
- Winsemen, Clifton, and Liesveed, *Living Your Strengths: Discover your God-given Talents and Inspire Your Community*, Gallup, 2004.
- Matthew 5–7, Luke 9:57–62, 14:25–33, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 2:8–10, Philippians 2:1–13, James 1:22–27

⁴ To sign up for a Christian & Missionary Alliance forty-day prayer resource, visit cmalliance.org/40days.

⁵ You'll need to set up a Right Now Media account to view these. For free access through Christ Community Church, text CCCOmaha to 49775.