

VISION DAY PT B: BECOMING LIVING SACRIFICES

II. GIVE TO OTHERS. SERVICE (MINISTRY) Matthew 22:39-40; Romans 12:6-9

The second way we become living sacrifices is to continually be actively giving by serving others. In the Great Commandment Jesus says in vv. 39-40, “³⁹**A SECOND IS EQUALLY IMPORTANT: ‘LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’** ⁴⁰**THE ENTIRE LAW AND ALL THE DEMANDS OF THE PROPHETS ARE BASED ON THESE TWO COMMANDMENTS.”** Jesus says that to love and worship God is the greatest commandment, but then He says a second is equally important. In 1st John 4:11-12 the disciple Jesus loved writes, “¹¹**DEAR FRIENDS, SINCE GOD LOVED US THAT MUCH BY SENDING HIS ONE AND ONLY SON INTO THE WORLD SO THAT WE MIGHT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE THROUGH HIM, WE SURELY OUGHT TO LOVE EACH OTHER.** ¹²**NO ONE HAS EVER SEEN GOD. BUT IF WE LOVE EACH OTHER, GOD LIVES IN US, AND HIS LOVE IS BROUGHT TO FULL EXPRESSION IN US.”**

We actually demonstrate that God is alive because He lives in us, and this is how His love and our worship of Him is brought to full expression in us: We serve others by using our God-given shape that He has placed in us, and also through our obedience to Him and the Holy Spirit, Who lives in us and Who has gifted us. Those gifts are developed through use.

“BUT GOD, HAVING GRACE GIFTS DIFFERING ACCORDING TO THE GRACE GIVEN TO YOU, EITHER PROPHECY ACCORDING TO THE PROPORTION OF FAITH, OR ⁷SERVING IN PRACTICAL SERVICE, OR THE ONE TEACHING IN TEACHING, ⁸OR THE ONE EXHORTING (ENCOURAGING) IN EXHORTATION (ENCOURAGING) OR THE ONE GIVEN A SHARE IN SIMPLICITY, OR THE ONE RULING IN DILIGENCE, THE ONE HAVING MERCY IN GLADNESS.” Romans 12:6-8, Ben Witherington’s translation from the Greek.

A. USE YOUR GOD GIVEN S.H.A.P.E. AS A LIVING SACRIFICE. Matthew 22:39-40; Romans 12:6-9

LD 101 is our Membership seminar. It covers how to get connected to your CVCHURCH family. If you have gone to LD 101 then your next step is LD 201: How to develop your spiritual maturity. Then your next step is to attend LD 301. 301 covers how to engage your God-given **S.H.A.P.E.**

1. The “**S**” in the S.H.A.P.E. acronym stands for the **SPIRITUAL gifts** the Holy Spirit has given to you. Some of them are listed in our passage which I just quoted to you. The Holy Spirit has given you gifts to serve Jesus and others.

2. **H**” stands for your **HEART** which will help you discover those things you are passionate about. Passion is a very strong motivator for getting involved in a ministry that you are truly suited for and that will prevent you from burning out.

3. “**A**” stands for your **ABILITIES**. You have certain skills, aptitudes, and talents that God has given you that you can use to serve Him by serving others.

4. “P” stands for your PERSONALITY.

5. “E” is for your EXPERIENCES in life.

Every one of us is different. Please hear me, family. One the most toxic attitudes and perspectives in life, one that can diminish and thwart your ability to serve God and others with your God given shape, is unforgiveness. Unforgiveness is one of the leading contributors to poor emotional health and to mental illness. Unforgiveness leads to resentment, bitterness, anger, rage, and indignation. Unforgiveness is like a poisonous toxin. It will warp your view and perspective of God, yourself, and others. Living for years with unforgiveness will negatively impact your marriage, family, health, and every area of **S.E.R.F.V.I.P.S.**

B. UTILIZE S.E.R.F.V.I.P.S. TO GAUGE HOW YOU’RE SERVING GOD AND OTHERS.

As a reminder, in S.E.R.F.V.I.P.S. the **1. S.** stands for your Spiritual life. **2. E.** your Emotional life. **3. R.** your Relational life. **4. F.** your Financial life. **5. V.** your Vocational life.

6. I. is for your Intellectual life, and here’s an example why this one is so important: I recently came across a Parent Guidebook for **FIGHTING CRITICAL RACE THEORY IN K-12 SCHOOLS** by Christopher F. Ruffo. He is the founder and director of Battlefront, a public policy research center. He is a graduate of Georgetown University, and is a former Lincoln Fellow at the Claremont Institute for the study of Statesmanship and Political Philosophy.

As executive director at the Documentary Foundation, he has directed four films for PBS, including, most recently, “America Lost,” which explores life in Youngstown, OH, Memphis, TN, and Stockton, CA. He is also a contributing editor to “City Journal,” where he covers topics including critical race theory, homelessness, addiction, and crime. If you type **christopherruffo.com** into the search engine of your choice you can then click the word “Article,” and you can read this booklet for yourself.

Listen to how Mr. Ruffo, who is an investigative reporter, defines CRT: **“Critical Race Theory is an academic discipline that holds that the United States is a nation founded on white supremacy and oppression, and that these forces are still at the root of our society. Critical race theorists believe that American institutions such as the U. S. Constitution, and the legal system preach freedom and equality but are mere ‘camouflages’ for naked racial domination. They believe that racism is a constant, universal condition that simply becomes more subtle, sophisticated, and insidious over the course of history. In simple terms, Critical Race Theory reformulates the old Marxist dichotomy of oppressor and oppressed, replacing the class categories of bourgeoisie (middle class) and proletariat (the poorest working class) with the identity categories of white and black. But the basic conclusion is the same. In order to liberate humanity, society must be fundamentally transformed through moral economic, and political revolution.”**

Family, this is nothing more or less than Marxism, which is a godless, atheistic ideology that replaces God with the state. In this instance it is driven by racism, yet they call themselves antiracists. This is simply to introduce you to the subject if you don’t know anything about Critical Race Theory. This is one of the ways we can make ourselves heard and stand up for

Jesus and our religious, educational, and socio-economic freedoms. There is more to say about all of this, but I will save it for the weeks ahead.

Loved ones, I feel that I am moving in the prophetic realm more than ever. What I mean by that is that I sense the Lord's leading very clearly. I sense that in my teaching from the Scriptures, and that I, and we, as a church, are being led to push back on our spiritual enemies. The same enemies that Paul references in Ephesians chapter 6:12 which says, **"FOR WE ARE NOT FIGHTING AGAINST FLESH-AND-BLOOD ENEMIES, BUT AGAINST EVIL RULERS AND AUTHORITIES OF THE UNSEEN WORLD, AGAINST MIGHTY POWERS IN THIS DARK WORLD, AND AGAINST EVIL SPIRITS IN THE HEAVENLY PLACES."**

To wrap up our discussion of **SERFVIPS**:

7. P stands for your **PHYSICAL** and your **POLITICAL** life. And **8. S** is for your **SEXUAL** Life.

Now, let's circle back to LD 301 and how this all connects to Living Sacrificially. Kathe teaches our LD 301 seminar. She is incredibly passionate about helping you discover how God has wired you so you can make your largest impact, all by serving others. The next LD seminars will be offered on February 27th. You can sign up now online or fill out your Friends Card and place it in one of the Communication Centers. That's what we call the two boxes on the back wall. That is also one way you can give of your tithe and offerings. You can place a tithe envelope with your tithe or offering in those centers. Or you can use Push Pay, or mail it in.

When we discuss giving, we do it in terms of giving and serving with your **time, talents, treasure, tithe, touch, troubles, and traumas**. It is a wholistic, Biblical way of discussing giving. And let me emphasize this: God doesn't want what we have—He wants us. He wants our hearts. He can tell where your heart is by how well you're doing in the giving of your time, talents, treasure, tithe, touch, troubles, and traumas.

The first priority and purpose of becoming a living sacrifice is by **granting God first place**. That means we admit we're not God—He is. And that we willingly become His slave. We realize that He calls us to die to our own ambitions, desires and directions for our lives, and we live out His ambitions, desires, and directions for our lives. We truly become Kingdom people of His dominion, His power, and His glory.

The 2nd way to become a living sacrifice is to **Commit to a lifestyle of giving**. We see ourselves as not only servants of God, but the servant of others. We do this by selflessly giving of our time, talents, treasure, tithe, touch, troubles, and traumas. We are acknowledging there is nothing that we have, or has happened to us, that God cannot redeem or heal. And through that healing process He can empower us to take what He has given us to influence, impact and impress on others the love, joy and peace that only comes through surrendering your life to Jesus Christ.

I want to close our time together by going back and discussing **HOW TO ACTUALLY FORGIVE ANOTHER PERSON**. This is an entire teaching in itself, but I sense that the Holy

Spirit is leading us into a special season right now. There are some of us who are going to miss what God has for us if we don't take seriously what Jesus says about forgiveness.

Matthew 6:12, 14 & 15 is part of what can be called the Disciples' Prayer. Most people know it as the Lord's prayer, but Jesus taught this to His disciples in response to their question about how they should pray. **"¹²AND FORGIVE US OUR SINS, JUST AS WE HAVE FORGIVEN THOSE WHO HAVE SINNED AGAINST US.... ¹⁴IF YOU FORGIVE THOSE WHO SIN AGAINST YOU, YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER WILL FORGIVE YOU. ¹⁵BUT IF YOU REFUSE TO FORGIVE OTHERS, YOUR FATHER WILL NOT FORGIVE YOUR SINS."**

In other words, Jesus says to us that **our unforgiveness short-circuits our ability to receive and experience His forgiveness.** Family, **unforgiveness keeps us tethered and bound to unrealistic expectations. It skews and distorts our ability to perceive reality. Unforgiveness shortchanges us from fully experiencing God's purposes for our lives, our marriages, our families, our friendships and our CVCHURCH LIFE together.**

Jesus set the standard for us by teaching us that just as Father God has forgiven us, and because we are His children, that forgiveness is not a luxury or a privilege. It is our responsibility as children of the living God. Forgiveness is not an option, but it is to be a way of life--because it is the way of the cross. In Mark 8:34-35 Jesus said, **"³⁴IF ANY OF YOU WANTS TO BE MY FOLLOWER, YOU MUST PUT ASIDE YOUR SELFISH AMBITION, SHOULDER YOUR CROSS, AND FOLLOW ME. ³⁵IF YOU TRY TO KEEP YOUR LIFE FOR YOURSELF, YOU WILL LOSE IT. BUT IF YOU GIVE UP YOUR LIFE FOR MY SAKE AND FOR THE SAKE OF THE GOOD NEWS, YOU WILL FIND TRUE LIFE."**

This is pivotal to BECOMING LIVING SACRIFICES. Jesus says, "If you want to be My fully-devoted follower then you must put aside your selfish ambition." That means learning to die to yourself. To stop trying to preserve yourself and always be right. Family, this is what "shouldering our crosses" means in the most practical ways. Forgiveness is one of the most difficult decisions to make. Everything within us screams out, "You've got to be kidding me, God. I have been treated wrongly." "I have been treated unjustly." "I have been slandered. I have been misperceived." "This person or persons must be paid back. They must be exposed. They must be forced to recompense me for what they have taken from me spiritually, emotionally, relationally, financially, vocationally, intellectually, physically, politically, and sexually." "God, I demand that you vindicate me, and that You do it now!"

Here's the thing family: In Romans 12:19 Paul writes, **"¹⁹DEAR FRIENDS, NEVER TAKE REVENGE. LEAVE THAT TO THE RIGHTEOUS ANGER OF GOD. FOR THE SCRIPTURES SAY, 'I WILL TAKE REVENGE; I WILL PAY THEM BACK,' SAYS THE LORD."** Paul is quoting Deuteronomy 32:35 which says, **"³⁵I WILL TAKE REVENGE; I WILL PAY THEM BACK. IN DUE TIME THEIR FEET WILL SLIP. THEIR DAY OF DISASTER WILL ARRIVE, AND THEIR DESTINY WILL OVERTAKE THEM."**

Let's quickly look at

C. UNLEASH your ABILITY to forgive.

1. **ADMIT** what actually happened.
2. **ACKNOWLEDGE** the feelings that are **ATTACHED** to what happened.
3. **ACCEPT** the fact that you must **CONFESS** to God and to someone else your feelings. I'm not to blame-shift but admit the feelings that rose up when I was wronged.
4. **ADD** boundaries that stop you from getting hurt **NEEDLESSLY**.
5. **ANNUL** (cancel) the debt that is **OWED** you.
6. **ALLOW** for the **POSSIBILITY** of reconciliation.

Take any questions if there is time. Pray.