

Care Ministry Prayer

A Liturgy Before Serving Others

Oh Christ Who Made Himself the Servant of All,
I would set my heart and my affections upon you -
and upon you alone - for I can only
serve others rightly when such service
is undertaken from first to last as
an act of devotion to you.

In serving you, I am freed from my need for the praise
of others. So that even if my kindnesses are shed from
scarred hearts as rain from a sloped tin roof,
my joy will not be dimmed, for I will know that you
have received and remembered each act of sacrifice,
and reckoned it an act of love rendered to you.

So let my love be sincere, and let my service be fearless, Oh Lord.

I would serve in imitation of you, who poured out your life
for me. I would serve knowing that your Spirit is ever at work
in the lives of those I serve, ever calling, ever drawing,
ever seeking to soften hearts encased in fear and
disappointment and anger and idolatry. So let my kindnesses
and sacrifice fall like warm shafts of sunlight on icy ground.

I cannot know the end of another person's story.
Our lives so often only briefly intersect. So let me
be content to minister regardless
of visible outcomes, trusting that the small mercies
I extend will be woven into the larger theme of
redemption at work in the lives of others as you
woo them to yourself, drawing their hearts
by graces offered, and shaping my own heart too
in this process of learning to serve well, and
by learning to serve well, learning to love well.

Amen.

Every Moment Holy Volume I, Douglas McKelvey

Read

S: Matthew 25:34-40

M: John 15: 9-17

T: Romans 12: 9-13

W: Galatians 6:9-10

TH: Philippians 2:1-4

F: Hebrews 10: 23-25

S: 1 Peter 4:8-11

As you read the scripture passage each day this week, read it slowly the first time.
Read it a second time and notice which words stand out to you.
Read that section again and ask God to help you keep it in mind throughout the day.

Care Ministry Spiritual Practice Guide - Week 2

June 5-11

Thirty years ago, I wrote a letter to a guy I admired a lot. He was one of the early contemporary Christian musicians: Keith Green. Of course, when we write someone who is well known, most of us think we'll never hear back from them. At best, I thought I might get a generic response from someone who worked for him. This isn't what happened. Instead, I got a personal letter back from Keith Green. His letter to me was only three sentences long, but the fact that he took the time to write to me made a lifelong impression.

Most of us undervalue the impact our words and our availability can have on the people around us. We don't get to decide how tall or short or rich or talented we are. I'm never the smartest guy in the room, but I learned a long time ago that I can be the most available one. I also learned from Keith Green the massive impact availability can have in someone's life. More than just incredibly validating, the act of extravagant availability says "I see you," "I hear you," "You matter."

Don't be stingy with your time; fill it with words that matter to someone. Release them into the world like they were hundreds of helium balloons and see what happens in the lives of the people around you. You'll be blown away by what you see.

I receive hundreds of e-mails a day. Anyone who e-mails me gets a response from me. Do you know why? Because thirty years ago, Keith Green got a letter from a young guy he didn't know and instead of ignoring it, or staffing it out, or blowing it off completely, he made himself available to send me three sentences. Honestly, I don't even remember what he wrote - but I remember this: I felt like a boss because he decided to be available to me.

So, what do you think? Is there someone you can be available to? You don't need to do it for a whole year. How about in the next ten minutes you don't make a big deal of it but write somebody who has reached out to you a note. It only needs to be three sentences long.

Who do you need to be more available to?

Live In Grace - Walk In Love, Bob Goff


Read

Matthew 19:13-15

Reflect

In what ways is God calling you to be more available? What is holding you back? What steps can you take to be more available to care for others?

Is there someone in our church family that the Holy Spirit is nudging you to reach out to? Take Bob's lead and write that person a note this week.



Care Ministry Spiritual Practice Guide - Week 3

June 12-18

Airports are a place to build patience. Few things amp up my anxiety more than sitting on the runway a few feet short of the gate while I miss a tight connection one gate away. Or waiting for the last plane out before the storm, then having it canceled at midnight. Airports are a place where babies cry and teenagers bump into us with roller bags and all comfortable seats have been removed.

I used to dread airports for all these reasons, but when I started thinking of them as opportunities to give away love, my attitude changed. Now when I interact with a customer-service agent who isn't moving as fast as I want them to, I think about how many people have probably been rude to them that day, and I try to make them smile. When I'm seated next to a screaming baby on a flight, I imagine how tired the parents must feel, and I do my part to make the kid smile.

When I think someone ought to be more loving, it's usually me. The longer I follow Jesus, the more I'm trying to see through the eyes of other people. Don't get me wrong. It's not always easy, and I've got a lot to learn. We come into contact with people every day who need to encounter love. They need to know that whatever they're going through at the moment, they don't have to go it alone. One word, one kind and understanding nod in the direction of someone struggling, can change everything. When we choose to step in the shoes of people having a difficult time, we usually find they're a lot like us. They just need to know they're loved and valued and that it's going to be okay. Don't leave it to someone else to do the loving for you.

What one word can you share with someone today to show you love them?

Live In Grace - Walk In Love, Bob Goff

Read

Ephesians 4:2 & 32

Reflect

Is there someone in our church family you have been unkind to or short with? Ask that person for forgiveness.

Is there someone who has been unkind or short with you? Make sure your response to them is loving. Pray for that person - that they will sense God's love for them and know how valued they are in whatever struggles they are facing.

How can you show love to someone this week? Bob suggests sharing one word with someone today - ask God to give you an opportunity to do that today and throughout this week.



Care Ministry Spiritual Practice Guide - Week 4 June 19-25

Hospitality. It sounds kind of fancy, but its meaning is simple, bare-bones, pure, and entirely holy - you are invited. There is room for you here, next to me. I receive you with gladness and offer my truest self. Here, we draw nearer to each other, seeking refuge from the crush of life. Here we are safe. We are warm. We are free.

Knowing that, why does something so vital to our souls often feel scary and uncertain? What is it about the come-as-you-are-spirit of hospitality that makes us doubt our ability to do just that? We can blame social media with its impulse to stage perfection and crop around the mess. We can point a finger at the individualistic bent of our modern age. I'm sure we all have a story or two to share about a time we put ourselves on the line in the name of welcome and walked away lonelier than ever. Rejection is a chronic injury, difficult to shake, once felt. We are so afraid our vulnerability won't be held with gentle hands...

...Despite all the mess and unpredictability, I'm positive it is worth taking some risks and making some mistakes to cultivate a consistent rhythm of welcome and belonging...

The Ministry of Ordinary Places, Shannan Martin

Read

Romans 12:9-13

Reflect

This reading talks about hospitality. Hospitality doesn't always mean inviting someone into your home, but rather just making room for and caring for everyone.

Over the past couple of weeks, we've had the opportunity to intentionally care for people in our church family, but this doesn't always come easily.

What is holding you back from caring for others? What makes you hesitant to reach out?
Ask God to reveal the areas you're struggling in. Ask God to help you change your thinking in the areas you are hesitant.

What steps can you take to start caring for others more intentionally?
What will you do this week to reach out to someone in our church family?



Care Ministry Spiritual Practice Guide - Week 5

June 26 - July 2

I had a home in Washington, DC, for years, and some of my good friends are involved in politics. They're dedicated to their country. They leave no room for doubt with their commitment and excellence. But when it comes to politicians I don't know personally, like most people, I tend to feel suspicious. I'm sure they're great people, but it's hard to believe they're genuine when you know they're thinking about so many different things. My suspicions make it hard to believe they really care when they show up because they might be working all the angles, and I wonder if I'm just one of those angles.

Politicians are an easy target, but if we're honest, a lot of us do the same thing. Sometimes we compliment other people, hoping to endear them to us. Sometimes we show up for them when they need us because we have hidden motives. We can't give away love freely if we're secretly wanting something in return.

We don't need to be stingy with our love, treating it like currency that buys you something when it's given and makes you bankrupt when it's taken back. When we realize God's already given us His unending love, we can give that kind of love away recklessly.

Let's make a point to do a check-in with our motivations every so often. It'll be a good reminder that God's crazy about the people He created, and He's using you to show them love with no strings attached. We won't be able to give away love freely if what we're really looking for is validation.

What can you do today to love someone freely without expectation?

Live In Grace - Walk In Love, Bob Goff

Read

Romans 13:8-10

Reflect

What is motivating your love for others? Are you expecting something in return? Are there strings attached or are you loving freely? Ask God to reveal your motivations and if there is an area you need to work on changing.

Who is someone in our church family you can show love to this week? (Remember, showing love to someone doesn't have to cost money. It can be delivering a treat, inviting someone to chat, calling to check in with someone, or any way you feel led to love someone.)