

“THE SEVEN LAWS OF SPIRITUAL SUCCESS”

“Give Yourself To Others”

Scripture Reading – John, 13:1-17

It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.

The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel round his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped round him.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” Jesus replied, “You do not realise now what I am doing, but later you will understand”. “No”, said Peter, “you shall never wash my feet”. Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me”. “Then, Lord”, Simon Peter replied, “not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!”

Jesus answered, “A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you”. For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord’, and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them”.

‘If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, ‘LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF’, you are doing right.’

James, 2:8, NIV

This series is based on the book ‘THE SEVEN LAWS OF SPIRITUAL SUCCESS’.

Shortly after his seventieth birthday, Selwyn Hughes sat down to compile a list of the truths the Lord had taught him as he walked with Christ for more than half a century. This original list contained between forty to fifty issues which he felt could be passed on to the Christians of tomorrow. In asking what was ‘absolutely essential to living an effective and successful Christian life’, the writer whittled them down to an irreducible minimum of seven.

C:\ My Documents\Word\Ministry\David Ellison\
Books\The Seven Laws Of Spiritual Success\5 Give Yourself To Others

Selwyn Hughes decided to call these seven key concepts ‘LAWS OF SPIRITUAL SUCCESS’. However, this is not a call to legalism but a call to engage with the spiritual laws God has built into his Kingdom, which in turn enable us to experience more of his power and his presence.

Let the Holy Spirit unfold for you the basic laws that govern all spiritual success...

“GIVING YOURSELF TO OTHERS”

‘The fifth law of spiritual success is ‘GIVING YOURSELF TO OTHERS’. Being more interested in others than in oneself is called in Scripture: ‘THE LAW OF LOVE’. It is also called: ‘THE ROYAL LAW’ (James, 2:8). It is called ‘ROYAL’ because it is the supreme law that is the source of all the laws governing human relationships.’

Selwyn Hughes

‘THE ROYAL COMMAND’ is the law of our great King Jesus Christ, who said, “LOVE EACH OTHER IN THE SAME WAY THAT I LOVE YOU” (see John, 15:12). This law, originally summarised in Leviticus, 19:18, is the basis for all the laws of how people should relate to one another. Christ reinforced this truth and Paul taught it, [as did many of the New Testament writers].’

“LIFE APPLICATION BIBLE”, Study Notes

WHAT IS LOVE?

Dictionary: *‘to worship and venerate God; to feel tender affection for somebody; to feel and show kindness and charity to somebody’.*

‘Love is the movement, effusion and advancement of the heart towards the good.’

St Francis de Sales

‘Love is bringing about the highest good in the life of another person.’

Charles Finney

‘Love is patient, kind, does not envy, does not boast, is not proud. Love is not rude, not self-seeking, not easily angered, keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.’

I Corinthians, 13:4-8a, NIV

*‘Love seeketh not itself to please, nor for itself have any care,
But for another gives its ease, and builds a heaven in hell's despair.’*

William Blake

‘To love is to be vulnerable.’

Clive S Lewis

When we love we give those we love the power to hurt us.

But, when they do, we say to ourselves, “Right, I will make sure that I am never hurt like that again”. We protect ourselves from being hurt, refusing to remain vulnerable. We steel ourselves against other people. Our protective barriers prevent us from truly loving others.

Love is moving towards others without self-protection.

When your own heart is breaking, you can move towards others and be more interested in them than you are in yourself. Why are we so reluctant to do this? Why do we find it so hard to be vulnerable? One reason is because our lives are more governed by fear than they are by love. Fear of failure... fear of rejection... fear of being hurt... fear of losing face.

'Every day I put love on the line. There is nothing I am less good at than love. I am far better at competition than love. I am far better responding to my instincts and ambitions to get ahead and make my mark than I am at figuring out how to love another... I am schooled and trained in acquisitive skills, in getting my own way. And yet, I decide every day to set aside what I can do best and attempt what I do very clumsily – open myself to the frustrations and failures of loving, daring to believe that falling in love is better than succeeding in pride.'

"LIVING THE MESSAGE", Eugene H Peterson

*Love has a language, all its own making, voiced in its giving, love gives its best;
Instant and constant with joy while awaking, tells its own story – love stands the test.*
Joseph Buck, SASB 51:1

The truth is that you 'GIVE YOURSELF TO OTHERS' when you 'LOVE ONE ANOTHER'...

1. THE LORD'S COMMAND TO LOVE

'If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, 'LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF', you are doing right.'

James, 2:8, NIV

WE ARE COMMANDED TO LOVE

'Dear friends, I am not writing a new commandment, for it is an old one you have always had, right from the beginning. This commandment – to love one another – is the same message you heard before. Yet it is also new. This commandment is true in Christ and is true among you, because the darkness is disappearing and the true light is already shining.'

I John, 2:7-8, TLB

The commandment to love one another is both old and new.

It is old because it originally comes from the Old Testament, and it is new because Jesus interpreted it in a radically new way. In the Christian Church, love is not only expressed by showing respect; it is also expressed through self-sacrifice and servanthood. In fact, it can be defined as SELFLESS GIVING, reaching beyond friends even to enemies and persecutors. Love should be the unifying force and the identifying mark of the true Christian community.

*Spirit divine, purge thou our hearts, make us to understand,
Thy blessed will concerning us, and teach us love's command.*

Brindley Boon, SASB 218:2

WE CAN CHOOSE TO LOVE

Does this mean that if you dislike someone you are not a Christian?

These verses in Scripture are not talking about disliking a disagreeable Christian brother or sister. There will always be people we will not like as well as others. John's words focus on the attitude that causes us to ignore or despise others, to treat them as irritants, competitors, or even as enemies. Christian love is a choice, not a feeling. Therefore, we choose to be concerned with people's well-being and treat them with respect, whether or not we feel affection toward them. When we choose to love others, God helps us to express that love.

'Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow-man has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY', 'DO NOT MURDER', 'DO NOT STEAL', 'DO NOT COVET', and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: 'LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF'. Love does no harm to its neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfilment of the law.'

Romans, 13:8-10, NIV

WE ARE CONCERNED TO LOVE

In Matthew, 22:37-40, Jesus was asked to define 'THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT'.

"'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind'. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself'. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Jesus is making the point that, generally speaking, we will have a natural love for ourselves and a concern for our own survival and welfare. We all like to have a good home, a happy family, good health and so on. The point Jesus is making is that we ought to seek these things for others.

'Do you not like to satisfy your hunger? Then you must with similar urgency feed your neighbour. Jesus is presupposing not commanding love. We desire and seek what we think is for our own good and this universal trait becomes the rule by which all loving self-sacrifice must be measured.'

John Stott

2 THE LORD'S DEMONSTRATION OF LOVE

'Jesus showed his disciples the full extent of his love... Jesus said, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you".'

John, 13:1b, 15, NIV

'Many years ago, in a hospital, a little girl was suffering from a rare and serious disease. Her only chance of recovery appeared to be from a blood transfusion from her five-year-old

brother, who had miraculously survived the same disease and had developed the antibodies needed to combat the illness. The doctor explained the situation to her little brother, and asked the little boy if he would be willing to give his blood to his sister. He hesitated only for a moment before taking a deep breath and saying, "Yes, I'll do it if it will save her life". As the transfusion progressed, he lay in a bed next to his sister and smiled as he saw colour returning to her cheeks. Then his face grew pale and his smile faded. He looked up at the doctor and asked with a trembling voice, "Will I start to die straightaway?" Being young, the little boy had misunderstood the doctor – he thought he was going to have to give his sister all his blood in order to save her.'

'This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.'

1 John, 3:16, NIV

Real love is an action, not a feeling.

It produces selfless, sacrificial giving. The greatest act of love is giving oneself for others. How can we 'GIVE UP OUR LIFE'? By serving others with no thought of receiving anything in return. Sometimes it is easier to say we'll die for others than to truly live for them – this involves putting others' desires first.

THE REASON FOR CHRIST'S LOVE

Jesus was sent into the world through God's love (see **John, 3:16**). God loves us... and he showed us the extent of that love. The Almighty took the initiative to teach us what love really means. '**THIS IS HOW WE KNOW WHAT LOVE IS**'.

THE REALITY OF CHRIST'S LOVE

Jesus was obedient to God's command when he laid down his life (**John, 10:17**). In his crucifixion and death, we see the reality of God's love. '**JESUS LAID DOWN HIS LIFE FOR US**'.

THE RESPONSE TO CHRIST'S LOVE

Is this a call to be prepared to die for the sake of our brothers? Yes, if it is called for! But if not, we are living a sacrificial life – living for others and not ourselves. '**WE OUGHT TO LAY DOWN OUR LIVES FOR OUR BROTHERS**'.

Such actions show that we have even 'GREATER LOVE'.

'Jesus said, "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no-one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command".'

John, 15:12-14, NIV

We are to love each other as Jesus loved us, and he loved us enough to give his life for us. We may not have to die for someone, but there are other ways to practice sacrificial love: listening, helping, encouraging, giving.

3. LEARNING TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER

'The first thing we need to do is to focus on the fact that what our Saviour longs for every one of his children is that we might give ourselves to others in the same way that he gives himself to us. We are to love one another, Jesus said, in the same way that he loves us.'

Selwyn Hughes

The Apostle Peter said of Jesus: 'HE WENT ABOUT DOING GOOD' (see Acts, 10:38).

John Wesley said of Jesus: 'ALL HIS LIFE WAS PRAYER AND LOVE'.

One preacher said of Jesus: 'IN JESUS CHRIST THERE MOVED ON THE SURFACE OF THIS PLANET FOR THE ONLY TIME IN HISTORY A COMPLETELY UNSELF-CENTRED PERSON. COMB THE RECORD OF HIS DAYS ON EARTH AND YOU WILL FIND NOTHING ON WHICH YOU CAN CON VICT HIM OF SELFISHNESS'.

Jesus came into the world to serve and to give.

The Lord was the only one who has ever lived on this earth completely free from self-centredness. He did not prevaricate. There was no fudging of the issue. As he declared one of his primary reasons for coming into this world, he gave us a crystal clear statement of why he came...

'Jesus called his disciples together and said, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many".'

Mark, 10:42a, 45, NIV

'Jesus said to his disciples, 'I am among you as one who serves.

Luke, 22:25a, 27b, NIV

*Nowhere in Scripture is the willingness and desire and attitude of our Lord better seen than in the occasion when he knelt down to wash his disciples' feet (see **John, 13:1-17**)...*

While in the first century Rome was famous for its paved roads, in the rest of the world they were few and far between. Roads were little more than winding dusttrails and it was the custom of hosts to provide a slave at the door of each home to wash the feet of guests as they arrived. The servant would kneel with a pitcher of water, a pan and a towel and wash the dirt from the feet of those who entered the home. Shoes and sandals were left at the door. If a home could not afford a slave then either a member of the family or one of the guests would perform the service.

At the home of Simon Peter, no one volunteered to wash feet.

How interesting it is that the home of this disciple was filled with people who had proud hearts. The disciples would fight for a throne, but none wanted the towel. Jesus himself knelt at their feet and took the role of the servant.

*Meekness and Majesty, manhood and Deity,
In perfect harmony, the Man who is God.
Lord of eternity dwells in humanity,
Kneels in humility and washes our feet.*

'Jesus said, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you".'

John, 13:15, NIV

You know, Lord, how I serve you, with great emotional fervour; in the limelight.

You know, Lord, how eagerly I speak for you at a woman's club.

You know, Lord, how I effervesce when I promote a fellowship group.

You know, Lord, my genuine enthusiasm at a Bible Study.

But how would I react, I wonder, if you pointed to a basin of water

And asked me to wash the calloused feet of a bent and wrinkled old woman –

Day after day, week after week, month after month,

In a room where nobody saw, and nobody knew.

'The second thing we need to realise is that although we are naturally tainted with self-centredness, we can choose to live otherwise. No sooner does the life of God come into the soul of any man or woman through conversion than that life seeks to manifest itself in the same way that it revealed itself in Jesus Christ. The only thing that blocks us is our pride and unwillingness. We must trample our pride and seek to rise above it.'

Selwyn Hughes

In the world's system there are different levels of authority.

It was true in the time of Jesus and it is true today. In Government there is the Prime Minister, the Cabinet, Ministers and Members of Parliament. In the Military there are Generals, officers, non-commissioned and enlisted men and women. In the Business World there are Heads of Corporations, Chairmen, Chief Executive Officers, Directors, Managers, and so on.

'Happy are the 'pushy' for they get on in the world.'

'Happy are the hard-boiled, for they never let life hurt them.'

'Happy are they who complain, for they get their own way in the end.'

'Happy are the blasé, for they never worry over their sins.'

'Happy are the slave drivers, for they get results.'

'Happy are the knowledgeable of the world for they know their way around.'

'Happy are the troublemakers, for they make people take notice of them.'

"WHEN GOD WAS MAN", J B Phillips

That may be true of the material world, but the spiritual world is different...

'Jesus called his disciples together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many".'

Mark, 10:42-45, NIV

'Jesus said to his disciples, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.'

Luke, 22:25-27, NIV

'I saw that if one's motives are wrong nothing can be made right. It makes no difference whether you are a postman, a hairdresser, an insurance salesman, a housewife – whatever. As long as you feel you are serving others you do the job well. When you are concerned only with helping yourself, you do it less well – a law as inexorable as gravity.'

Stephen R Covey

'Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.'

Philippians, 2:3-5, NIV

'The third thing we need to do is to begin to think of ways in which we can minister to others in love. Tilting our souls in the direction of serving rather than being served, of giving rather than receiving. Developing an attitude of giving. All actions begin with the right attitude.'

Selwyn Hughes

'Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant.'

Philippians, 2:5-7a, NIV

Early one chilly winter morning in London during the Second World War, a soldier was making his way to the barracks when he spotted a lad with his nose pressed hard against the window of a bakery. Inside the baker was kneading dough for a fresh supply of doughnuts. The hungry boy stared in silence watching every move. Through the steamed-up window they could see the mouth-watering items that were being pulled from the oven. The soldier's heart went out to the little boy and he asked if he would like a doughnut. The boy was startled and nodded his head. The soldier stepped inside the shop, bought a few doughnuts and walked back to where the lad was. He smiled as he held out the bag and simply said, "They are yours". He walked away but had not got far when he felt a tug at his coat. He looked down and heard the child ask quietly: "Mister, are you Jesus?"

We are never more like Jesus when we give ourselves to others.

It is the law by which every one of us should live!

JESUS SAID, "LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS I HAVE LOVED YOU"