

After three and half years with Christ, the disciples still expected Him to establish an earthly kingdom exclusively for the Jews, with the Gentiles serving as their slaves. Not surprisingly, many of the disciples' arguments revolved around who would occupy the positions of privilege and power in the coming kingdom.

That Passover night was no exception. Their mutual jealousies were running deep as a result of the pointed arguments on the way. When they arrived at the upper room and discovered that there was no servant to wash their feet, none of the disciples would

The Art of Being No. 1

by
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suffer the indignity of performing this service for the others—much less for their potential rivals! Each one sat by himself, sour and unmoving.

Into this charged atmosphere Christ entered, carrying alone the burden of the sins of the world, facing His impending torture and death. But instead of condemning or complaining, He demonstrated the attitude required for citizens of the forthcoming kingdom and revealed the essence of the power behind God's authority.

Removing His cloak, He placed a towel about His waist, and proceeded to wash the dusty feet of His disciples. Astonished and ashamed, they watched silently until Christ got to Peter, who exclaimed, "You shall never wash my feet!" (John 13:8, NIV). He could not understand how the King of the universe could perform the task of a slave.

Christ did not remonstrate with Peter but simply replied that the disciple did not understand what He was doing: "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me" (v. 8). Unable to bear the thought of being separated from Christ and excluded from His kingdom, Peter wanted the Master to

wash also his hands and head. Whereupon Christ replied that those who have had a bath needed only to have their feet washed.

When He finished, Christ sat down and explained what He had done: "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" (vs. 14, 15). He was thus restating the basic operative principle of His new kingdom.

Later that evening, Christ suggested to Philip that this principle was also the motivating factor behind the actions of God the Father: "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.... The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work" (John 14:9, 10, NIV). This statement portrays the true nature of the Godhead and their relationship to the inhabitants of the universe. All their actions are motivated by selfless love.

When we practice the ordinance of foot washing, we are identifying ourselves with Christ and His mission, a servant to all. We seek to follow His example of self-denying service to our fellow human beings. This is done by following the lead of the Holy Spirit who will cleanse us of our natural selfishness and direct us to those who need our help.

What does servanthood mean in practical, 20th-century terms?

Christian health specialists can have the greatest impact on their communities if they learn from the Master's principles and methods. There was no disease, no malady, no hurt that He did not attend. None were turned away because of an inability to pay; their need was the only requirement. Some took advantage of His generosity, such as the 10 lepers of which only one returned to thank Him, yet Christ did not refuse their cry for healing. In a time when the disease of leprosy was rampant and lepers were outcasts, He responded with compassion. To the leper who pleaded for healing, Christ responded by touching him and commanding, "Be clean!" (Mark 1:42, NIV). The man was immediately cured.

Teachers, counselors, psychologists, and others in related fields can exert a powerful influence for good on the young if they imitate the master Teacher and Counselor. The manner in which they respond to the needs of those assigned to their care will determine their charges' future on this earth and beyond. The apparently dumb student or

the difficult patient need as much, if not greater, attention as does the brilliant student or the "normal" patient.

Christ's example speaks powerfully to all of us, regardless of our chosen field of studies or profession—the arts, business, law, technical fields or scientific research. He challenges us to serve other people's real needs and to lead them to an encounter with their Creator. It also places before us a high standard of integrity and thoroughness.

The basic principle of God's kingdom applies especially to the family circle. Christ asks husbands to treat their wives with the same self-sacrificing love with which He treats His church (Ephesians 6:25-33). Wives, for their part, are asked to be the helping companion that God envisioned at the beginning (Genesis 2:18). Contrary to the contemporary emphasis on what each spouse can get out of the marriage, Christ encourages His followers to approach marriage with the purpose of serving each other and contributing to their partner's happiness. In such a context we can then teach and prepare our children for a life of service prompted by love.

Most of us are far from that high ideal. Yet Christ took imperfect individuals and through them, changed the world. The initial results of His tutelage were not promising. James and John wanted to call down lightning from heaven to destroy those who ignored Christ. Philip, even after the Resurrection, found it hard to believe. But Christ patiently worked with each. He prepared the disciples for the work they would do.

In the end it will really come down to just two groups of people: those who have learned to minister to the needs of others and those who have refused to learn; those who are servants and those who are not (Matthew 25:31-46). In this life we are in training for the highest calling in God's universe—service to others motivated by love. □

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Driver's Ed & the Will of God

by Ruth Senter

Lord,
there are too many options:
colleges, careers,
people I could marry,
places where I could live someday.
How will I ever know which one is for me?

All the possibilities seem good.
They lead somewhere I'd like to go,
and could be right for me.
I glance one direction and say,
"This is the way I should go."
But the next time I look,
I see new opportunities
down another road.

How do I know the will of God?

One day
I stumbled on an image that helps me
understand.
It is the first day of driver's ed,
sophomore year.
I take my place in the driver's seat
of the white Ford Tempo
and grip the wheel as though
one false move would send us
over the brink.
"Relax," says my instructor.
"A road gives you a certain margin of
error.
That's what shoulders and medians are
for."

I cautiously pull onto the street,
my fears somewhat relieved.
The lane is wider than I thought.
"Choose the route,"
Mr. Gibson says as I come to a four-way
stop.
"There is more than one way to get there."
I turn left.
At least I'm heading in the right direction—
toward the county courthouse where we'll
practice parallel parking.

Today,
as I sit squarely in the middle of indecisions
with good options spread out before me,
I remember Mr. Gibson's words:
"Choose your route.
There's more than one way to get there."

I am somewhat relieved;
maybe God's will is wider than I thought.
I stop trying so hard to figure it out
and instead concentrate on doing
what I've always done:
Get up,
go to school,
go to practice,
come home,
do homework,
go to bed,
get up. . . .
I stay in touch with God.

(If I know what he wants me to do today,
I will know what he wants me to do
tomorrow.)
I follow the signposts I can see
rather than worry about the ones I can't;
I am rejected by a certain college;
accepted by another.
The person I thought I loved breaks up
with me;
my best friend introduces me to her
cousin and
we click immediately.
My boss in my part-time job—the kind
of work
I thought I might want to do forever—
tells me he doesn't need me anymore.
My uncle offers me summer work and,
to my surprise, I like it.

Then one day,
after I've made a few major decisions
which have turned out well,
I look back and realize God's will
was something I did every day.
As for the options:
God designs the map,
but he leaves it to me
to figure out the route.

Ruth Senter is a magazine editor and the author of eight books. This poem is reprinted with permission from Campus Life magazine.