

Devotions for Those Who Serve



Serving With Contentment



Tom Lemler

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From the Author

There are few things, if any, that are as emotionally exhilarating, and draining, as the task of serving others. Having worked in a variety of ministry settings, including various roles within Christian camp ministry, I understand the excitement that often comes with the beginning of a new ministry or ministry season. I also understand the weariness that can develop when our focus begins to drift away from the ministry of serving and onto ourselves.

This devotional guide is part of a series that came about through some conversations at a Christian Camp Leaders' Conference about the need for camp summer staff devotional material that would be useful without being a burden in an already busy schedule. On my way home from the conference, I began to pray about what would be a useful format and about potential topics for devotions developed specifically for those who serve. Out of that prayer time, this series began to form in my mind and then on paper.

It is my prayer that every Christian recognizes the importance of serving others. With this guide, I pray that you understand God's desire for you to serve with contentment. As you go through this devotional guide, each day will focus on a different aspect of living with godly contentment. As you pray, ask God to help you see your own level of contentment in serving. Pray that your attitude of contentment would be contagious to those you serve. Use the note section at the bottom of each page to jot down thoughts, ideas, or action steps that God will bring to your mind.

In prayer,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tom".

Tom Lemler

Day 1

Contentment as a Part of God's Commands

(Deuteronomy 5:21)

Are there things that you want, or want more of, just because you see someone else have them? What are some of those things? How effective is visual advertising in getting you to think you need something? With the costs of 30-second advertisements during events like the Super Bowl in the millions of dollars, how effective do you think companies believe visual advertising is? How would a lifestyle of contentment help you to live obediently to God's command to not covet? Why do you think contentment would be such an important quality in the lives of those who serve?

Doing the right thing has always been a core part of who I am. Not that I have always chosen the right thing, but the desire to do so seems to have been imbedded in me by my parents and by God Himself. Our society makes living with an attitude of contentment a very difficult thing to do. Knowing that God commands me to be content, to not covet what others have, helps me have a desire to be satisfied with what He gives me. As you pray, ask God to help you understand His desire for you to be content. Pray that you would be able to serve others effectively because of your obedience to God's commands.

Notes: _____

Day 2

Contentment from a Fear of the Lord

(Proverbs 19:23)

Is a fear of the Lord a good thing or bad thing to you? Why? Are there different ways to fear the Lord? Should how we fear the Lord be different based on our relationship with Him? Are there people in your life with whom you are content to just be with because of your great respect for them? What leads to that level of contentment in their presence? How would having a greater trust and respect for God lead to greater contentment in your life? How does your fear of the Lord help you to serve with greater contentment?

When I bought my first car a few months before I turned 16, my parents told me that if I wrecked it, the keys would belong to them. A few months after my 16th birthday, I took a curve too fast and slid off the road and into a fence requiring a tow truck to get me back on the road. When I arrived home, the first thing I did was to give my keys to my parents. Not that I was ever “afraid” of them, but the great respect I have for my parents led me to be content in doing what they had asked. As you pray, ask God to help you to see that a proper fear of the Lord can lead you to great contentment. Pray that you would learn to serve others with contentment because you fear God.

Notes: _____

Day 3

Contentment with Your Pay

(Luke 3:14)

How much do you get paid? Is it enough? Do you think those are appropriate questions? What do you think leads to the discontentment that many have with their pay? How does your contentment, or lack of contentment, with your pay affect the way you serve? Why? Have you ever done less than you know you could have because, “I don’t get paid to do that!”? Does your level of contentment with your pay say more about those paying you or about you? What does it say about your view of those you are serving?

In a culture that measures worth by financial accumulation, there are few things that get us riled up as quickly as feeling unappreciated, overworked, and underpaid. I know, I’ve allowed my mind to entertain those thoughts at various times in my life. Experience says that the thing that suffers the most when we are not content with our pay, is the level of service given to those we are called to serve. As you pray, ask God to help you know how to be content with your income. Pray that the people you serve would not be “short-changed” because of your dissatisfaction with your pay. Pray that the people around you would know you as one who “works for the Lord.”

Notes: _____

Day 4

Contentment in All Circumstances

(Philippians 4:12)

How often do you find your level of contentment fluctuating based on your circumstances? Should it? Does your contentment in serving change based on the circumstances of who you are serving or what you are asked to do? Is it easier for you to serve someone who appears to need help or someone you think doesn't need your help? What do you think the secret of contentment is that Paul talks about in today's verse (hint: read verse 13 also)? How does knowing that God desires to give you the strength to do everything He calls you to do help you to serve with contentment?

Each of us have different things that bring us satisfaction and make contentment more likely in our lives. For some it is financial or material reward. For others it is being recognized or honored for what we do. Still others have great contentment when they see the lives of people changed as a result of the effort they have given. Whatever is our "reward" of choice, we will all have times when that reward doesn't come and we must choose to be content in the circumstances we face. As you pray, ask God to help you have contentment as you are faithful in all circumstances. Pray that your serving of others would not be based on how you feel.

Notes: _____

Day 5
Contentment with Godliness
(1 Timothy 6:6)

Would you say you make every effort to live a godly life? Why would you give the answer you did? What do you hope to gain from a godly life? How would you respond to someone who believes their godliness should result in immediate material gain? What should be the purpose of living a godly life? How does contentment reflect that purpose? How are godliness and contentment related? What examples can you give? Would godliness without contentment be of any value? Is it even possible? Explain.

If you've lived very long you probably know someone who does their best to live by all the "godly rules", yet is bitter about "having" to do so. There are people who believe they have made all of the correct life choices yet have somehow missed out on the best parts of life. Without the contentment that comes from a complete trust and surrender to God, being a legalistic follower of the rules will often lead to regret rather than relationship. As you pray, ask God to fill you with a desire to pursue both godliness and contentment. Pray that your life would be a reflection of both the godliness and contentment displayed in the life of Jesus.

Notes: _____

Day 6

Contentment with Basic Needs

(1 Timothy 6:8)

What do you need? What do you act like you need? Would the lists of the answers to those two questions be different? Why? How difficult do you think it would be to actually be content if all you had was food and clothing? What makes our “stuff” so hard to give up? How might a lack of contentment with basic needs keep us from serving others as we should? Do you think the people you serve need the same things you do? Do you act like they need what you have?

Our culture has become very good at convincing us that most of the things we want are actually things that we need. It hasn't really been a hard sell because we tend to go out of our way to justify obtaining anything and everything that we think will make our life complete. When called upon to serve, many people feel they can't because they are enslaved to the payments required for all the things they simply can't live without. Yet when it comes to serving those who have less than us, how often do we refuse to share because “they don't need all of those things”? As you pray, ask God to help you learn contentment with less. Pray that you would be more willing to serve as you learn the true needs that everyone has.

Notes: _____

Day 7

Contentment with God's Presence

(Hebrews 13:5)

If disaster were to strike and you only had time to save one physical possession, what would it be? Why? What things tend to lead people to a lifestyle of accumulation? How should knowing God will never leave you help you to grow in a contentment with what you have? Why does money seem to be such a huge distraction when it come to our having a growing relationship with God? Are there times that you feel you need more than God's presence? Why? How does having a contentment with God's presence help you to serve others?

If I don't keep a close eye on myself, I can become a hoarder rather quickly. For some reason, it can be easier to put my trust in things I can see and feel rather than in a God who has proven Himself trustworthy over and over again. When our mind is set on accumulating, we tend to serve based on what we think we can get out of doing so. However, when we learn to be content with God's presence, it helps us to freely serve others knowing that we don't have to gain anything from them. As you pray, ask God to help you see His presence as being enough. Pray that you would serve others freely, expecting nothing but a filling of God's presence for doing so.

Notes: _____

Devotions for Those Who Serve: Serving With Contentment is a part of a series of devotionals written specifically with those serving in Christian camp ministry in mind. I pray that these devotionals are useful tools in a wide variety of ministry and service settings. While the development of these devotional guides is an ongoing project of Impact Prayer Ministry, the following is a list of the initial topics to be addressed:

Called to Serve

Serving with Contentment

Serving with Strength

Serving with Courage

Serving with Excellence

Serving by Faith

Serving through Friendship

Guard Your Heart in Serving

Serving with Integrity

Serving by Listening

Serving with Patience

Serving in Purity

Serving as you Go!

Please contact Impact Prayer Ministry for information about using these devotionals in your ministry. If you have ideas for other topics related to serving, please feel free to pass them along also.

www.impactprayerministry.com

About the author:

Tom Lemler is the director of Impact Prayer Ministry where his preaching, teaching, and resource development is designed to help individuals have a greater connection to God through prayer.

For more information about Tom's ministry of teaching, preaching, and writing, visit the "Tom's Treasure" blog at impactprayer.com or the Impact Prayer Ministry website at impactprayerministry.com.

