

To Step Forward

Join God's Team—part 3

January 21, 2024

Life Vision Statement.

By God's grace, to step forward, as God's man or woman,
in my spheres of influence, to serve His purposes, for His glory.

DAY 1: Sitting on the sidelines

1. In the Christian world, one of Satan's deceitful ploys is to get us to make Christianity about self. Become obsessed with how far you have to go. Tell yourself, "What do I have to give? How can I serve? If I can't do something big I shouldn't do anything at all. What difference does my little bit make?" In other words, we take ourselves out of the game.

2. There is nothing so frustrating for a football coach as to have a player on the team who can contribute, but virtually disqualifies himself from the team. How? Either he believes he should have a bigger role on the team than he has, or, assumes his role is so insignificant that, "why bother?" He sits on the bench, not because the coach benched him; he benched himself!

3. God values "the little."

*Luke 16:10 Whoever can be trusted **with very little** can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest **with very little** will also be dishonest with much. ¹¹ So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? ¹² And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?*

4. What is the real test, here; whether we can do the "big" things faithfully or the "little" things faithfully?

*Matt. 10:42 "And if anyone gives **even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones** who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward."*

5. How valuable to Jesus is the tiniest of kindnesses to someone around us?

6. Jesus tells a parable to Christians. In the parable they perform different kinds of service for people. Jesus shocks them by telling them that they ultimately did these things for Him!

Matthew 25:37 "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

Matthew 25:40 The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

7. What turns little things into big things?

DAY 2: It's a team effort. Every team member plays a role

1. God compares everyone in a church as members of a body.

Romans 12:4 For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

2. Make two observations from this verse:

a.

b.

3. God gives His people spiritual gifts. Every Christian has at least one.

Romans 12:6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; ⁷ if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸ if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

4. This list of spiritual gifts is not exhaustive. What point is Paul making in this passage?

5. Here is another batch of spiritual gifts.

Ephesians 4:11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

6. In verse 11, we have different spiritual gifts that all serve the same purpose, what is underlined in verse 12.

a. What is the primary role of the people gifted in verse 11?

b. What is the primary role of God's people who are equipped?

c. Underline every effect possible in a church when virtually everyone serves:

Ephesians 4:13...so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Ephesians 4:14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

7. What strikes you from today's study?

DAY 3: “She did what she could”

1. In this next episode, Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem to be arrested and crucified. Bethany was a small town just on the outskirts of Jerusalem.

Mark 14:3 While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head.

2. A woman does a very extravagant but simple act of service.

a. What was the woman’s name? _____

b. Question “a” was a trick question. The woman is not mentioned by name. Why do you think that is?

c. What did the woman do with her expensive perfume?

d. Why do you think she did that?

Mark 14:4 Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, “Why this waste of perfume? ⁵ It could have been sold for more than a year’s wages and the money given to the poor.” And they rebuked her harshly.

*Mark 14:6 “Leave her alone,” said Jesus. “Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. ⁷ The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. ⁸ **She did what she could.** She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. ⁹ Truly I tell you, **wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.**”*

3. Let’s unpack how Jesus sees this event.

a. What is Jesus’ response to her critics in verse 6?

b. How does Jesus see what she did in verse 6?

c. How does Jesus prioritize what she did in verse 7?

d. He gives her the best compliment He could give anyone in verse 8. What was it?

e. We might think that this selfless and simple act would be a “nothing burger” in the gospel writings, but not only did this event make it into the biblical text, but how does Jesus explain the importance and example of what she did in verse 9?

4. What is your take away from today’s study?

DAY 4: She sewed, she cared

*Acts 9:36 In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); she was **always doing good and helping the poor.** ³⁷ About that time she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room.*

1. What does the author comment about Tabitha's life?
2. If a story was written about your life after you died, how would it be written? Check any that apply:
 He or she made a lot of money.
 She kept a clean house.
 He was impressive at work.
 Look what great vacations she took.
 He always played it safe, never took any risks with his service.
 She served as little as possible.
3. What strikes you about the options, given in the last question?

Acts 9:38 Lydda (the town) was near Joppa (another town); so when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, "Please come at once!"

*³⁹ Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, **crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them.***

4. Tabitha was a seamstress. Why were "all the widows" crying?
5. What were they doing?
6. Perhaps you have been to a funeral. What kinds of things do you hear people say about the person who died?

Acts 9:40 Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, "Tabitha, get up." She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up. ⁴¹ He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called for the believers, especially the widows, and presented her to them alive. ⁴² This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord.

7. Look back at Tabitha's actions in verse 36. Look back at Tabitha's impact on verse 39.
8. What strikes you from today's study?

DAY 5: A player's duty

1. We looked at spiritual gifts earlier this week. In the following verses are a few more.

*1 Peter 4:10 Each of you **should** use whatever **gift** you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

2. These two verses not only tell us to use our spiritual gifts, but HOW to use our spiritual gifts! Jot down at least three ways that should characterize HOW we serve:

a.

b.

c.

3. Some Christians dabble with serving. As long as it's convenient, as long as it's easy, as long as it's not too taxing, then they will do a little. Check a box, and go back to living for yourself.

4. Here's your "guilt-trip" for the week. It's the word "**should**." Spiritual gifts are useless in the game if you're not in the game.

5. It's one thing to play in games you want to play in, the easy games, the games that don't extract too much from you.

6. The challenge is to play every game on the schedule. And in those games, to play the entire game, and not quit before the final whistle.

7. What strikes you from today's study?

8. What strikes you from our theme this week, of **Stepping forward**...?