

5-DAY Devotional Guide



THE COST OF SERVICE

Day 1: Love That Goes All the Way

Devotional

It is one thing to love people when they are easy to love. It is another thing entirely to love them when they have let you down, hurt you, or are about to walk away from you. Yet that is exactly the kind of love Jesus showed in John 13. Hours before the cross, fully aware that one disciple would betray Him and another would deny Him, Jesus chose to serve them anyway. He did not pull back. He leaned in. John tells us why before the towel was ever picked up: Jesus loved His own to the end. Not because they deserved it. Not because they had earned it. He simply chose to love them completely, all the way through. That kind of love is not natural for us. It has to come from somewhere deeper than our own willpower. It comes from staying close to Jesus and letting His love for people become our love for people. You may have someone in your life right now who is difficult to love. Maybe they have disappointed you more than once. Maybe the relationship feels one-sided. Here is the encouragement: you do not have to manufacture love for them on your own. You just have to stay connected to the One who already loves them to the end, and let that love flow through you.

Bible Verse

"Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end." - John 13:1 (English Standard Version (ESV))

Reflection Question

Is there someone in your life you have been holding at arm's length because they have hurt or disappointed you, and what would it look like to choose love toward them today?

Quote

"He loved them to the end."

Prayer

Lord, thank You for loving me all the way through, even when I have failed You. Give me the strength to extend that same kind of love to the people around me who are hard to love. Amen.

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Day 2: People Are the Mission

Devotional

It happens to all of us. Someone interrupts your day, slows you down, or needs something from you at the worst possible moment. The temptation is to see that person as an obstacle standing between you and everything else you need to get done. But what if that interruption is actually the point? Jesus never treated people as inconveniences. He stopped for the one. He noticed the overlooked. He made time for the person everyone else walked past. People were not getting in the way of what He was doing. They were what He was doing. That shift in perspective changes everything. When you start seeing the person in front of you as someone with an eternity ahead of them, someone God deeply cares about, it becomes much harder to brush them off. It becomes much easier to slow down and actually be present with them. You may not be able to serve everyone around you perfectly every day. But you can start by simply changing how you see the people in your path. The coworker who frustrates you. The neighbor who is hard to talk to. The family member who drains your energy. They are not in the way of your purpose. They may very well be your purpose today.

Bible Verse

"Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God..." - John 13:3 (English Standard Version (ESV))

Reflection Question

Who in your daily life have you been treating as an interruption, and how might God be inviting you to see them differently?

Quote

"People weren't getting in the way of Jesus ministry, people were the ministry."

Prayer

Jesus, open my eyes to see the people around me the way You see them. Help me to stop rushing past the very people You have placed in my path. Amen.

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Day 3: You Have Nothing to Prove

Devotional

Before Jesus ever knelt down to wash His disciples' feet, He knew exactly who He was. John 13 tells us that the Father had given all things into His hands, that He had come from God and was going back to God. Jesus was fully secure in His identity. And it was that security that freed Him to serve without hesitation. He had nothing to prove and nothing to protect. That is a powerful truth for us. So much of what keeps us from serving others is pride. We worry about how it will look. We feel like certain tasks are beneath us. We keep a quiet mental record of who has served us and who has not. But when we truly know who we are in Christ, loved, chosen, and secure, we no longer need to protect our reputation or guard our status. We are free to pick up the towel. You do not have to be the most important person in the room. You do not have to be recognized for what you do. Your identity is already settled. That freedom is what makes genuine, humble service possible. Let your security in Christ be the thing that moves you toward people, not away from them.

Bible Verse

"If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet." - John 13:14 (English Standard Version (ESV))

Reflection Question

In what area of your life does pride or the need for recognition make it hardest for you to serve others without keeping score?

Quote

"We know who we are in Christ, and we don't need to be too important to serve the world around us."

Prayer

Father, remind me today that my identity is secure in You. Free me from the need to be seen or recognized, and give me a humble heart that is quick to serve. Amen.

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Day 4: Following, Not Just Knowing

Devotional

Jesus did not wash His disciples' feet and then leave it as a nice moment to reflect on. He looked at them directly and said: I have given you an example. Do what I have done. He was not offering a suggestion. He was setting a standard. And then He took it one step further. He said the blessing does not belong to those who understand this. It belongs to those who actually do it. That is a convicting line. It is easy to nod along with the idea of servant leadership. It is easy to appreciate the image of Jesus kneeling with a towel. It is much harder to go home, go to work, go through your week, and actually live it out. Knowing is not the finish line. Doing is. Following Jesus means more than agreeing with what He taught. It means letting what He did shape what you do. Every day, you will have moments where you can choose the title or the towel. You can protect your comfort or you can step toward someone who needs you. The good news is that you are not doing this alone. You are following someone who has already shown you the way, and He walks with you every step.

Bible Verse

"For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you." - John 13:15 (English Standard Version (ESV))

Reflection Question

What is one specific, practical way you can move from simply knowing about servant leadership to actually doing it this week?

Quote

"Knowing isn't the finish line. Doing is the finish line."

Prayer

Lord, keep me from being someone who only knows the right things but never acts on them. Give me the courage to follow You all the way into action today. Amen.

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Day 5: Pick Up the Towel

Devotional

Serving begins with a decision. It is the moment you choose to sacrifice something that matters to you for someone who matters to God. It might be your time, your comfort, your pride, or your plans. Whatever it costs, that is where real service starts. Jesus modeled this in the most striking way possible. He was the Son of God. He had every reason to sit at the head of the table and let others serve Him. Instead, He got up, wrapped a towel around His waist, and knelt at the feet of people who were about to fail Him. He moved from the title to the towel. And He calls us to do the same. The world around you is not waiting for more polished arguments or impressive principles. The people in your life, your neighbors, your coworkers, your family, need to see the love of Jesus in action. They need to see someone willing to show up, to sacrifice, and to serve without needing anything in return. That person can be you. Not because you have it all together, but because you are following someone who does. So this week, look for the towel moment. It will come. And when it does, remember why you serve: not because people always deserve it, but because Jesus is always worth following.

Bible Verse

"If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them." - John 13:17 (English Standard Version (ESV))

Reflection Question

What is one "towel moment" you have been avoiding, and what would it look like to step into it this week for the sake of someone who matters to God?

Quote

"Serving begins when I become willing to sacrifice what matters to me for someone who matters to God."

Prayer

Jesus, thank You for showing me what it looks like to serve with love and without limits. Give me the courage to pick up the towel today and follow You into the lives of the people around me. Amen.