

Vital Signs V

Created to Bestow

May 4, 2025

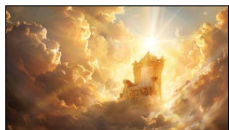


Today we're wrapping up our *Vital Signs series*, by *observing who's deserving of our serving!*

So let's start with this: **Do you see yourself as God's gift to the world?**

Cuz you are. Think about your collection of friends, family, and acquaintances. No one else in the whole world has assembled that same unique group. And **to that group, God gave you.** So, are you taking care of 'em? Are you looking after 'em? Because, that'll likely be on the test, when:

We must *all* appear before the judgment seat of Christ ... for the things done while in the body, **[His body]** whether good or bad. – 2 Corinthians 5:10 NIV



And that's when our *actions* will show if we *actually* **believed in Him.** And our *fellowship* will show if we *really* **belonged to His flock.** And our *discipleship* will show how *much* we **became like Him.** And our *interactions* with the world will show if we **branched out on His behalf.** And finally, **our serving and giving will show if we were bestowers or bystanders.** Because *bestowing* is all about **living to give yourself away as an expression of pure love** to your group. So if we're not *growing in giving*, we're *not* only missing out on *living*, but we're just drifting and loitering and lukewarming our way toward our date with death, during what *could've* and *should've* been our *time to shine* down here.

"You are the *light* of the world. ... **[So]** Let *your light shine* before others, **[David calls it the light of the Lord's unfailing love (Ps26:7)]** so that they may see *your good works* and give *glory* to your Father" – Matthew 5:14-16 ESV

For it is **by grace** you have been saved, through *faith* ... *not* by **[good] works** ... For we are God's workmanship, created in **[the sacrificial, serving love of]** Christ Jesus to **do [our own] good works [of sacrificial, serving love in His image]** – Ephesians 2:8-10 NIV

So, when you *make an entrance*, wherever you go, **do you brighten the room or darken the doorway?** Because one *brings life and energy*, and the other just sucks. And just to be abundantly clear: **we are not saved by good works** (that comes by God's grace), but **we are saved for good works.** And those come by a *growing desire* to express our own love as we come to comprehend the sacrificial love that our all-loving Creator and Savior has bestowed on us.

You see, **you can't be a bystander in a kingdom of bestowers.** Because Jesus commands and demands that His followers follow His manner of love. But it's even more than that. **He requires it to come from a desire to become like Him.**

Because we're going to stand before Him, and give an account to Him.

So, with *that* in mind, on **which side of that foot would you rather be: servER or servEE?** Gotta choose. Cuz it takes *Spirit-empowered effort* to love in the *manner* of the *One* who washed the feet of His own *betrayor*! But *that's* your *calling*! Because, we're to:

Present your *bodies* a *living* and *holy sacrifice*, **[which is the only kind]** acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. – Romans 12:1 NAS

When we *give others* our *time* and *attention* and *care*, we *sacrifice* a *literal piece* of our *life* in *service* to our *Lord*. And **this worship fulfills Christ's code of conduct**. But we've been warned that **it'll only be holy and acceptable if it's offered with the right heart**. As *Paul* says:

I may give away *everything* I *have*, and I may even give my body as an offering to be *burned*. But I gain nothing if I *do not* have *love*. – 1 Corinthians 13:3 NCV

And *not just any ol' manner* of love, but *love* that *bestows* in *two very specific ways*. *Isaiah* says:

I will *mention* the *lovingkindnesses* of the *Lord* ... according to all that the *Lord* has bestowed on us ... according to the *multitude* of His *lovingkindnesses*. – Isaiah 63:7 NKJ

[And] "I am *among* you **[Jesus said]** as the *One* who *serves*. ... And I *bestow* upon you a *kingdom* **[of serving]**, just as *My Father* *bestowed one* upon *Me*" – Luke 22:27-29 NKJ

[For] "The Son of Man came ... to serve, and to *give* His *life*" – Matthew 20:28 ESV

[So] Behold what *manner* of *love* the Father has *bestowed* on us, **[because it's His manner to serve and to give]** that we should be called *children of God*! ... **[And]** when He is *revealed*, **[as "the One who serves"]** we shall be **[eager, earnest, and excited to be]** like Him, for we shall see Him as He **[most truly and deeply]** is. – 1 John 3:1-3 NKJ

Because God is love. **[In its purest form]** – 1 John 4:8 NIV

[So] Whoever does not love **[in God's manner]** does not know God – 1 John 4:8 NIV

Because **to know Him is to love Him**. And **to love Him is to desire to become like Him**. And we're given a *lot* of opportunities to *grow*, because just about every *meaningful moment* and *personal encounter* shows the *world* on which *side* of the *dirty foot* we'd rather be: *washer* or *washee*!

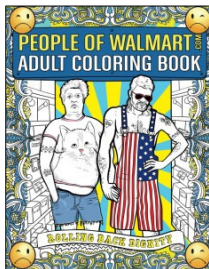
But **don't get all spiritual, cuz it's all relational**. We gotta *translate* this into *real world stuff*. Cuz at the *end* of the *day*, **it's all about giving in a way that tells your group you actually care**.



A couple years ago, a man in my group happened to mention that his favorite meal as a kid was **SpaghettiOs** with meat balls, and raspberry Twinkies. So I made a note (on my list of possible gifts to give to anyone who happens to mention anything that has meaning to them, that I can fulfill). And a few months back, I needed to get him a thank-you gift. So I looked at my list, and low and behold! I've never felt such exhilarated joy buying a 4-pack of Spaghetti-Os with meat balls, and a box of Raspberry Zingers! And when he opened it, it took him back to his childhood, and he said, "This was my favorite meal growing up!" And I said, "That's why I got it for you."

And he said, “How in the world did you know?” And we both *basked* in the warm glow of real love. And I’m tellin’ ya, **once you feel the thrill of giving pure love you need another fix!** Paul has a very unexpected example to growing in the joy of bestowing. Get this – He says:

Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity [like lust or greed or perversion or drugs or whatever] and [therefore] to ever-increasing wickedness, [cuz impurity demands ever-increasing doses to gratify] so now [in that same way] offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to [ever-increasing] holiness. – Romans 6:19 NIV



Instead of a vicious cycle, surrender yourself to a victorious cycle. **Paul wants us to become love junkies!** Wherein everything in us is **pushing us to find ever-increasing expressions of love to satisfy an ever-holier appetite!**

Cheryl once said that every Christmas, as a kid, she’d circle this basket of rabbit-fur kittens, in the Christmas catalogs – but she never got ‘em. Well, years later, when she retired, guess what you all, as a church gave her! I found old Christmas catalogs online, and went through ‘em, and found ‘em! And then stalked my prey on Ebay till one came up. And it arrived the day of her retirement party. Granted, it’s ugly as sin, but it made us both cry when she opened it.

But it’s not all about crying. It’s about touching someone’s heart by going out of your way for no other reason than to serve them some love in the manner that suits them. Noah is kind of a smarty pants. So, when I got him a “People of Walmart” coloring book, I had to find a way to add some smarty pants love to it. So I got an old box of crayons, and changed all the labels to go along with the book. Colors like: accident on aisle four; Friday night eyeshadow; and sagging diaper. Point is, **you’ve been factory loaded with God ordained gifts to bestow at will on your one-of-a-kind lineup.** And caring for them, and touching their hearts, and showing them love, in no uncertain terms, is so integral to our created purpose that **Jesus is gonna judge our greatness** (and this is good to know for the test) **by how many we serve**, as opposed to how many serve us.

[Remember when] He asked [the disciples], “What were you arguing about on the road?” But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest. Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and [that simply means] the servant of all.” – Mark 9:33-35 NIV

So now you know how to get the highest score when you go before His heavenly throne.

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people – Galatians 6:10 NIV

But, we’ll only see the opportunity and seize the opportunity if we’re expecting and watching for the opportunity. Which is why **the greatest bestowers are the best listeners**. Because those few around you are always revealing – if you’re really listening – what they’d love to receive. And **it’ll mostly be things like compassion or encouragement or patience or prayer or support or understanding or comfort or kindness or a good laugh**. Want to see some more crayons? Okay. We have: unfortunate rash; failed urine test; stretch marks; and teeth! We kid because we love.

Picture your collection of friends, family, and acquaintances as I read the following Scriptures.

[Like] Make the *most* of every opportunity – Ephesians 5:16 NIV

[And] Be *kind* and *compassionate* – Ephesians 4:32 NIV

[Actually] Be *interested* in the *lives* of *others*. – Philippians 2:4 NCV

Encourage one another and *build* each other *up* – 1 Thessalonians 5:11 NIV

Speak up for those who *cannot* speak for *themselves* – Proverbs 31:8 NIV

Carry each other's *burdens* – Galatians 6:2 NIV

Rejoice with those who *rejoice*; [and] *mourn* with those who *mourn*. – Romans 12:15 NIV

[Because] [God] *comforts us* in *all* our troubles, *so that* we can comfort *those* in *any* trouble with the comfort we ourselves have *received* from *God*. – 2 Corinthians 1:4 NIV

In other words, **sharpen your sensitivity and hone your spontaneity so you don't miss out on the next God-given opportunity to see a need and seize the moment.** And the *next time* you're at the *home* of a *loved one* who owns a *cherished set* of *china*, *wait* till they *leave* the *room*, and *count* the *pieces*. Something's *always missing* or *broken*. Take *note*. Take a *photo* of the *writing* on the *back*. Go to *Ebay*. And when *Christmas* comes, you *bestow*. And when they *look confused* and say, "What's this?" You say, **"The piece you've been missing."** Trust me. *That one* can bring *laughter and tears*! But just *know* that **what we bestow mostly comes via our mouth,** because:

Death and life are in the *power* of the *tongue* – Proverbs 18:21 NKJ

We get so *nervous* and *anxious* about *sharing Jesus*, when **Jesus just wants you to share ... you.**

[After all] It was He who gave *some* to be *apostles*, *some* to be *prophets*, *some* to be *evangelists*, and *some* to be *pastors* and *teachers*, [Why?] to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the *body of Christ* may be *built up* – Ephesians 4:11-12 NIV

We're *not saved* so we can *sit around* and *wait* for *heaven*. Do you *consider* yourself as an *apostle* or a *prophet* or an *evangelist* or a *pastor* or a *teacher*? If so, then **you are expected to help prepare God's people.** If *not*, do you *consider* yourself to be *one* of *God's people*. If so, then **you are expected to perform those works of service.** Because, *believers* are *called* to be *bestowers*. And **a bystanding bestower is a self-contradiction.**

And, now that you *know* who's *deservin'* of your *servin'*, **boldly go be God's gift to their world.**

Time's a'wastin', so **get to using what the good Lord gave you, to love those around you with your brains, or your brawn, or your bucks, or your Bible!** Cuz He's the *One* who *factory-loaded* you, and *sent* you as a *gift*, to *serve* and *give* your *life* to your *group*. And if He's *in* your *heart*, they'll *notice*, and they'll *ask*, in *one way* or *another* (if you're *listening*), what that *is*.

And then you can say, **"That's the peace you've been missing."**