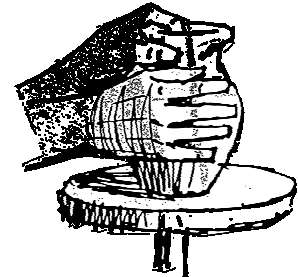


His Workmanship: Westside

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works."

—Ephesians 2:10



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Isaiah 64:8

Why Serve Others? by Noal Atkinson

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a couch potato is defined as "a person who takes little or no exercise and watches a lot of television." The word was actually invented in 1976 and spread quickly into the English world. A similar problem in the church can be summed up in a new phrase, "pew potato." A pew potato is a Christian who makes his way into the building at every available opportunity to sit and watch what's going on while snacking on religion. Possibly we all have played the part of a pew potato at some point in our lives, and like the couch potato we are disinclined to spiritual activity or exertion.

For many Christians, the life of Christ is no life at all, it is a spectator sport. They come to assembly to watch what's going on and never involve themselves in the working of the kingdom.

Let's face it, service is hard. It's hard to put our own wants aside and serve others—especially when we're talking about the small mundane tasks that people do not want to do. And like the couch potato suffering from ill health, the body of Christ suffers and becomes ill when we allow ourselves to become pew potatoes. Christians become pew potatoes for a number of reasons:

1. They don't feel they have anything to offer
2. They think ministry is to be done by professional full time preachers, elders
3. They feel that all the work is currently

being done, and when a slot opens up, they'll jump right in

4. They feel the positions of service that are available do not fit their gifts

5. They say "I'm too old"

6. They say "I'm too young"

7. They think that to offer their services would be prideful

8. They consider the available jobs to be unappealing

And so on. But the fact is none of those is a very good reason for not getting out of the pew and into a place of service.

There are some excellent reasons why we should fight the pew potato syndrome and get into a place of service—not only in the church but in life as well.

It's amazing how devoted people were to Jesus. In everyday life, people loved Him so much that they left all and followed Him. For those of us in the 21st century who are just trying to get through life and make a few friends, we can learn a thing or two. In your family, at work, and in your social life we can learn from Jesus and how He connected with people. Early in His ministry, Jesus spent an incredibly busy day that was typical for Him. Matthew records it in Mt 8: "When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.' Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, 'I am willing; be cleansed.' Immediately his lepro-

sy was cleansed," Mt 8:1-3. He was friendly, approachable, willing to serve. As He walked on into town, a centurion approached Him, saying, 'Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented.' And Jesus said to him, 'I will come and heal him,' " vs. 6-7. As He talked with the centurion, He also taught the people, and He healed the man's servant from miles away. In Mark's account of this day, He entered a synagogue and taught. In the synagogue was a man with an unclean spirit, who cried out; Jesus rebuked the spirit and cast it out, so everyone in the synagogue was amazed, Mk 1:21-28. He was teaching as He served. Later, He went to Peter's house, and "He saw his wife's mother lying sick with a fever. So He touched her hand, and the fever left her. And she arose and served them. When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick," Mt 8:14-16. Then, when Jesus saw all the crowds around Him, He told His apostles to leave by boat and go to the other side. As He was doing this, a scribe came and said, " 'Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.' And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head,' " Then another came, and He said, "Follow Me," Mt 8:19-22. Then, the disciples got into the boat with Him, He went to sleep, and a storm arose. When they awakened Him, He calmed the

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Why Serve Others? from p. 1 storm, and when they got to the other side, He met two demon-possessed men, who blocked the way and begged Him to cast them into a herd of swine. When people in the nearby city heard what had happened, they asked Him to leave, Mt 8:23-34. Whew! What would you have done during a day like this? He had people tugging at Him from all directions, with no time to Himself, little time for rest or refreshment. He was rarely thanked for His kindness and was even rejected. How would you have reacted to this day? Remember, most of Jesus's days were just this busy!

Why Should We Serve Others?

1. Because We Were Created for Service. Even before we were born, God planned a life of service for us. "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do," Eph 2:10. The reason that so many people are miserable or feel empty is because they've missed the point of life. From the beginning God planned that people should serve others. As we serve others, our own needs are met; and as we give our lives away, we find them. We were created for service.

As Christians, we are careful with time and money: we are careful (as good stewards of God, 1 Cor 4:2; 1 Pet 4:10) so that we can use what we have to be generous with our time and money towards others. We give of ourselves to those around us. In serving others, we do what we were designed to do. Here's how a blonde served (from her diary):

MONDAY: It's so much fun to cook for my new husband Ron. Today I made angel food cake. The recipe said beat 12 eggs separately. Fortunately, the neighbors were kind enough to loan me some extra bowls.

TUESDAY: Ron wanted fruit salad for dinner. The recipe said serve without dressing so, I didn't dress. What a surprise when Ron brought his boss home for dinner!

WEDNESDAY: A great day for rice. The recipe said wash thoroughly before steaming the rice. It seemed silly, but I took a shower. I can't say it improved the rice.

THURSDAY: Today, Ron asked for salad again. I tried a new recipe. It said prepare ingredients, then toss on a bed of lettuce

one hour before serving—which is what led up to Ron asking me why I was rolling around in the garden.

FRIDAY: I found an easy recipe for cookies. It said put all ingredients in a bowl and beat it. There must have been something wrong with this recipe. When I got back, everything was exactly the same as when I left.

SATURDAY: Ron did the grocery shopping today and brought home a chicken. He asked me to dress it for Sunday. (Oh, boy.) For some strange reason, Ron keeps counting to ten.

SUNDAY: Ron's parents came to dinner. I wanted to serve roast, but all I could find was hamburger. Suddenly, I had a flash of genius. I put the hamburger in the oven and set the controls for roast. Much to my disappointment, it still came out hamburger.

GOOD NIGHT DEAR DIARY: This has been such an exciting week. I can hardly wait for tomorrow to come so I can try out a new recipe on Ron. If only we could get a larger oven, I would love to surprise him with Chocolate Moose. We have to applaud her attitude of service—cheerful, willing, and open to new ideas.

2. Service Proves That We Belong to Christ. "So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God," Rm 7:4.

In doing small jobs like practicing hospitality, sending cards in the mail, or cleaning up after others, we show that our personal self-worth does not come from titles or positions, but from Jesus Christ. People say, "Why do you clean up other people's garbage?" We answer, "Because I love Jesus." Our attitude that we are serving Jesus gives glory to every menial task. *And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ," Col 3:23-24.* We show we belong to Jesus by serving others. In our offices, in our families, we show we belong to Jesus by serving others.

3. Serving Others Is the Way We Serve God. No matter what we're doing, who are we doing it for? We either do things for ourselves or for Christ. "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him," Col 3:17. When Jesus described the Last Judgment, He described Himself sitting on the throne

of His glory, with all nations gathered before Him, separating them like a shepherd divides sheep from goats: "Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brothers and sisters, you did it to Me.'" Mt 25:34-40.

Basically He was saying "When you feed and clothe others, then you feed and clothe Me. When you serve my brethren, you serve Me!" Humble, willing service to others is the same thing as service to God. And wonder of wonders!—as we become more humble, we become more attractive and more like Christ. Most of us do not trust "perfect people," those who put on a face; we trust humble people, real people, people with flaws, people who serve.

4. Because We Owe God Everything.

"Therefore, I beseech you, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—which is your true and proper service," Rm 12:1.

The reason that we serve the Lord is because of what He has done for us—because of His mercies. When we think of what Jesus Christ has done for us, the sacrifice that He's made for us, we know that there is no sacrifice that we can make that will ever compare. The fact that He saved us, that He made us His own, that He is preparing a place in heaven for us, and that He forgave all our sins—those mercies must move us to serve Him and to serve others. So we give Him our lives because we owe Him everything.

5. Because Serving Is the Best Use of Our Lives and Makes Our Lives Meaningful.

Have you ever known anyone who was wasting his life? A wastrel, or

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God makes my heart clean in 2015 "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." —Ps 51:10

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a prodigal, or a spendthrift—that person wastes the resources God has given him. His life is empty, meaningless, worthless, vain. But because of Jesus—His sacrifice and His resurrection which gave Him (and us) victory over sin and death—our lives have meaning and purpose. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that *your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*" 1 Cor 15:58. If we are in Christ, our lives have purpose and meaning. God has a plan for us! To serve! If we're serving by helping in the nursery Bible class, and we have to grab a parent because a kid has wet himself, that is important. If we pick up a piece of trash on Sunday morning because we say, "Someone walking in who needs to know Jesus might be turned off by this," that's meaningful. It's of value. If we walk into a restroom, see paper out all over and pick it up thinking, "Someone coming in here might be offended by this," that is purposeful and valuable. Nothing we do is without value if we do it for the Lord. Whatever we do, since we do it as to the Lord—it all counts, it all matters, it is significant.

When we go home and play with our kids, that is as important a service as preparing a sermon. When we take out the garbage or do the dishes or change a diaper, that's just as significant service as when we're leading a Bible study—it all counts in God's eyes. It's not so much what we do, it's our heart and how we do it. What is your attitude toward service? There's no insignificant service in God's eyes—except the service that is done in pride, or done grudgingly, unwillingly, with complaint.

Discipleship Here At Home

The Bible says that nothing we do in the Lord's service is ever without value—unless we have tarnished our service with a bad heart. When we serve humbly, especially in the smallest way, we're making an impact for eternity. It is the best use of our lives to serve other people. What counts for eternity is giving our lives away. That's why Jesus said, "Whoever wants to find his life will first lose it for My sake," Lk 17:33; Mt 8:35; 10:39; 16:25; Jn 12:25. A man was at an engagement party talking to a younger man and reminiscing about playing basketball together often when the younger man was a teen. The man suddenly realized that all those times of picking teens up, driving them around, spending time with them had actually had an impact upon their lives. The older man remembered thinking at the time, "This is pointless. I have better things to do than this. I can spend my time in better ways, and here I am driving teenagers around in my car." Want to know something? He realized that there was nothing better to be doing with his time. It makes life meaningful to surround yourself with people whom you serve, to know that God is using you and that your years are not being wasted away. "Jesus called them together and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many,'" Mt 20:25-28 (Mk 10:42-45).

6. Service Will Be Rewarded For Eternity. Jesus said, "My Father will honor the one who serves Me," Jn 12:26. How we spend our time here is going to determine what's continued on p. 4

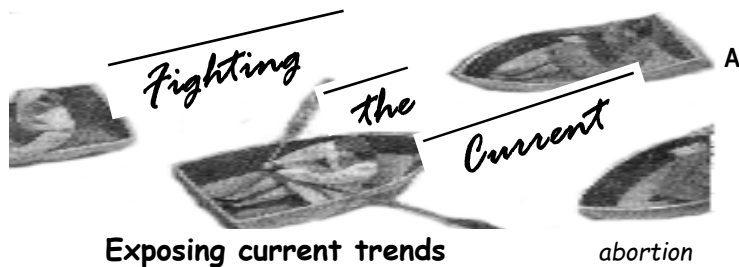
Bereaved Letha Fink's sister, Alta Rendon, passed away unexpectedly three weeks ago. Please pray God's comfort and peace for Letha and her family.

Travel The Wilkeses are cruising the Panama Canal with family. The Corrays are in Steamboat Springs today. Mina Gonzalez is in TX & AZ visiting family until 12/30. Sarah McMurray and Nate are traveling 12/23-28.

PRAY FOR healing, protection, help

- **Brittany Tope's** mother **Gayle**—liver spot biopsy last week showed breast cancer returned; grandmother—dialysis
 - the **Savarese's** grandchildren, **Frankie Kosik, Lorraine** and **Christian Harrod**—breathing difficulty, using nebulizer, or inhaler and steroids
 - **Jordan Corray's** colleague and mentor **Craig Smith**—in ICU with brain injury after fall from roof; friend **Kylie Cabalka**—staph infection complications; good progress in rehab
 - **Sarah McMurray's** mentee **Lakesha Griffin**—age 12; safety, stable home place
 - **Connor Boyd's** friend **Christian Lyons**, high school freshman—leukemia
 - **Berney Charo's** brother **Eliud**—prostate cancer
 - **Kory Tope's** uncle, **Skeeter Schulz**—hip
 - **Judy Strand**—preparing for liver transplant by chemo drugs; also broken arm, post-surgery pain
 - **Sheryle McNeill**—pinched nerve
 - **Ernesto Gonzalez's** father **Fidencio**—stage IV lymphoma, some improvement after 2nd chemo
 - **Linda Szymanski's** grandson **Slade**—broke elbow
 - **Letha Fink's** brother **Kenneth Morrison** of GA—liver disease, diagnosed with neuro-muscular disease
 - **Bill Dennis**—home recovery following rehab
 - **Noah Hadders's** teacher **Sharolyn Elmore**—chemo for breast cancer
 - **Larry Campbell's** FL partner **Terry Hargadine's** wife **Michelle**—cancerous lymph nodes removed, latest scan shows no new mass; chemo; **Terry**—2nd knee replacement
 - **Kayla Knighten, Christine Adams's** daughter, needs our prayers; **Judy Strand** requests prayer for her son **Joe**; pray **Ed's** son **Rodney Schulz** and **Sheryle's** daughter **Tiffany** receive the gospel; pray the **Wilkeses's** son **Mike** and grandson **Drew Lehner** return to the Lord.
 - **Sylvia Chapman, Brett's** grandmother—third stage pancreatic cancer; **Brett's** grandmother **Sue**, and Aunt **Connie Doss**—cancer returned
- CHRONIC CONDITIONS**
Christian Harrod; Addison Tope; Rocco Jr. Ann Cox; Logan Corray; Pat Wilkes—asthma
Orchid Cox—chronic blood clot condition
Jonathan Hadders—RA
Autumn Hadders—epilepsy; celiac disease
Kirk Johnson—MS; **Amanda Mailloux**—IBS
Menards—Lloyd diabetes, Alzheimers; VA help; **Virginia**, blindness from macular degeneration
Sandra Perry—diabetes complications; oxygen
Cheryl Reames—fibromyalgia; diverticulitis
Judy Sartin—rotator cuff injury; spinal stenosis
Judy and Mike Strand—hepatitis treatment
Lynda Szymanski—COPD, lung weakness

Thanks to everyone who is teaching and preaching while Jim is on vacation!



Not-So-Murray Christmas for Libs

The only package pro-lifers cared about this Christmas was the budget reconciliation. Thanks to the hard work of conservatives in the House and Senate, they got it for a minute! Two weeks ago, Americans celebrated a major victory against Planned Parenthood and ObamaCare.

Despite amendments offered by liberal Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) and after weeks of late nights and procedural gymnastics, the Senate delivered a stinging rebuke of the president's favorite twin pillars of policy: his signature health care law and his favorite abortion business. For conservatives, it was the culmination of a five-year struggle to repeal ObamaCare—which the Supreme Court twice sidestepped. For pro-lifers, many of whom have been waiting their whole lives to see the end of taxpayers' forced partnership with PP, the 52-47 vote was even sweeter.

The president's party tried to throw a few wrenches into the vote, offering two amendments that would have stripped the abortion funding language from the bill. Murray tried not only to block the pro-life provision, but actually to boost abortion funding by \$1 Trillion. Under the Murray-Wyden Amendment, Democrats suggested rewarding groups like PP, despite the ongoing investigations into its baby parts-for-profit scheme. Others tried, unsuccessfully, to tie the Colorado Springs shooting to this effort, suggesting that this was an unnecessary attack on "reproductive rights."

While liberals desperately try to lessen the significance of the moment, the vote was more than symbolic. For once, the president will have to answer for entangling America even deeper into the culture of death—by bankrolling an industry built on the backs on innocent unborn children and then through the government's disaster of a health care takeover. This was a victory for unborn children, their mothers, and for taxpayers. Even if the bill goes no further, we've still made some progress.

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going to be done with us in the next life for eternity. "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord,' " Mt 25:21. This life is a test. It's probation. We're being tested and proven. God sees what faithfulness we have. We're going to spend far more time on that side of eternity than we do the 20 or 60 or 90 years we're here. Jesus promised that if we're faithful here, He will reward us with joy. He invites us to come and share His own happiness. That's the greatest motivation in life.

Many of you had Bible studies with people who are not yet Christians in this last year. Many of you gathered to read the Bible together. Many of you taught and visited the sick and sent cards and prepared meals and washed dishes. All of you did these things because you are not pew potatoes. Somewhere in your past you said, "I will not be a pew potato! I will serve God by serving others, and I will be happy about it. No matter what God asks me to do I will do it!" You know the true joy and meaning of life!



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Assembly Schedule

Sunday

Bible classes	9:00 am
Morning assembly	10:00 am
Afternoon assembly	1:30 pm

Wednesday

Bible classes	7:30 pm
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Sunday morning

- **adult Bible class**, A Life-Changing Encounter with Christ from "The Gospel According to John," Kenny Boyd

- **sermon**

Sunday afternoon

- **sermon**, Clifford Cox

Feeding on His Word Reading

Everyone is invited to an open Bible reading of 2 Kings this evening, 12/20, 4 pm, at the Shreves' house, supper after reading. See Joel Walker for schedule.