

# IMPROVING YOUR SERVE *The Art of Unselfish Living*

## Introduction *Servant...a devoted and helpful follower or supporter*

Let's start here ....

*As you read this book underline thoughts and phrases that jump out to you, that speak to your heart about being a servant.*

In his introduction of IMPROVING YOUR SERVE Charles Swindoll shares how God took a remarkable passage of scripture which motivated him to dig deeper on the subject of servanthood. This inspired him to write the book. He studied this scripture, read it over and over, in the original Greek - in different translations and paraphrases because He wanted to find deeper meanings about servanthood. He was troubled and convicted. Yet, at times, he was encouraged. What was the verse?

**Mark 10:45** “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many” (NIV)

Swindoll knew that this verse teaches Authentic Servanthood! Read it again, out loud. JESUS took the time to explain to us why He came to live among us. Simply and directly, Jesus said He came to serve and to give. Not to be served. Not to be in the spotlight or be the center of attention. Not to attract attention, be successful, famous, powerful, or be idolized or hero worshipped. Those were traits that he walked away from.

Read Isaiah 42:1-3. What main word did Isaiah use to describe the Messiah? \_\_\_\_\_

In the next paragraph Swindoll also gives a wonderful description. List some descriptive words about Jesus in this paragraph.

The author offers this personal comment plus a challenge.

“This is not a book for giving people the warm fuzzies. It’s meant to be applied. You don’t have to be brilliant or gifted to pull off these truths in your life. But you do have to be willing. Before the ink on the pages can be permanently transferred to a change, first in your thinking and then in your living, there must be a willing spirit that says, ‘Lord, show me...teach me...help me...to serve and to give’”.

We hope this will be your attitude. We hope you have a desire to be involved in becoming more like Christ Himself. To serve and to give.

## Improving Your Serve Chapter One *“Me a Servant, you gotta be kidding!”*

Read chapter one and don't forget to underline or highlight the things that speak to you or that you find touching, intriguing, convicting, etc. You get the picture!

Look at the scientific experiment with mice in Chapter One, then describe in your own words what happened to the mice. Give an illustration of how this looks today with the human race instead of mice.

### Answer yes or no.

Do you believe we as a people are losing touch with one another? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you think we are becoming satisfied with alienation (becoming unfriendly/unsociable)? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you believe that foundational values such as bravery, self-control, generosity/kindness, patience, friendliness, giving & sharing are getting lost? \_\_\_\_\_

### Read **Romans 8:28-29**

What does “the image of His Son” means from Romans 8:29? A good answer is on page 4 - the last statement of the paragraph that begins with the words “No mumbo jumbo”. Write it here.

In the middle of Chapter One there are three categories of characteristics related to the servant image.

Transparent \_\_\_\_\_ Genuine \_\_\_\_\_

Absolute \_\_\_\_\_

Now.....you *MUST* read the Skin Horse Story.....it's a picture of how a servant might look after being a loving, caring, giving person. Not the traits we think are desirable...but these are traits that make us like look more like Jesus.

Under the trait of humility list the 2 tests of revealing genuine humility.

1.

2.

 Improving Your Serve Chapter Two *A Case for Unselfishness*

Read Chapter Two....Fill in the blanks for the 'monument' described at the beginning of Chapter Two.

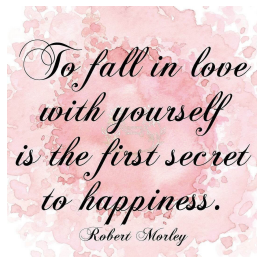
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Amazing isn't it! That this book was written in 1981! But believe me, the false god of self has been fighting for the number one spot in your life from your beginning. Satan would love nothing more than to see you living for yourself, expecting others to bring you every ounce of joy and happiness you think you deserve. I know it sounds harsh, but you and I both know this is true for every living - breathing person on the planet. We all fight SELFISHNESS. We live in an even more powerful ME ERA now than when this book was written.



Self and success are big business in today's world. We dream of success, winning, super stardom, super sports, it's me, me, me. I want, I have, I am. As Mr. Swindoll put it, *'no wonder thinking like a servant is so hard.'* We fill our time with so much 'stuff', we have no time to truly 'think', especially what Jesus thinks.

Look up **I Peter 5:5-7**. What are the three crucial areas related to true success given on Page 17? Each begin with the letter A

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

What is the one benefit we have that the world can't promise when we follow God's directives?

A deep sense of \_\_\_\_\_ !

"That is the success that comes to those who desire to develop the heart of a servant!"

Page 18

Underline in your book the opening statement in the 3 paragraphs that begin with "First", "Second", "Third".

Read aloud those verses again. I Peter 3:5-7. One day they will mean the world to you. Ask the Lord to help you to let **Him** be the one to exalt or elevate you, **not** yourself exalting yourself. It is awesome to know that we can tell Him anything and everything about our feelings and our lives. He wants to be your ALL IN ALL. He cares for you!

In his account of Adam and Eve in **Genesis** chapters 2 and 3, Swindoll describes on Pages 19-21 what happened to them when they disobeyed God and became SELF-conscious. Describe their attitude toward authority, and to one another?

Would you agree that selfishness is rather ugly? Yes! I am sure you would. Haven't you witnessed with friends, peers, people everywhere. It's almost impossible to escape seeing a scenario of self-centeredness in any given day.

Swindoll gives a very personal account of selfishness on pages 22-23. He ends the story with this statement, "No person has ever lived on this earth completely free of this dreaded plague (selfishness), except ONE."

## JESUS

He did no sin - knew no sin - had no sin.  
He cut a new path. He gave directions that had never been given before.

Read **Matthew 20:25-28**

Remember the monument at the beginning of the chapter?

Self-LESS-ness tears down that monument.

We are going to learn what it means to be different. If you desire more than \$3 worth of God, you're in for the time of your life!

Fill in the blanks and then write the word CHANGE ME over it.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Improving Your Serve Chapter Three *The Servant As A Giver*

At the beginning of this chapter there is a list of philosophies that attempts to define the focus of philosophy itself - which is "self"! Read them. You will notice that they are all about SELF, SELF, SELF. Jesus had a better idea, a perfect example, and message. The message is to focus the eyes of our hearts outward. Away from ME.

**Philippians 2:3-4** explains it perfectly. "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interest, but also for the interest of others."

After reading his explanation for what these 2 verses mean, what 2 strong tendencies are we told to stop allowing to control us?

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_

With what are we to replace those 2 tendencies? \_\_\_\_\_

We must strive to pre-set our minds in order to re-place a bad attitude with caring for & encouraging others. This is an attitude of having a genuine desire to GIVE GOD OUR DAY ahead of time. Like as soon as you wake up.

Can you offer these words to God? "*Lord I willing to release **my** way this day to **YOU**. Show me how You would respond to others, then make it happen in me.*"

**Romans 12:10-13.** Underline words that show you and describe for you how you should respond.

"Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer; contributing to the needs of the saints (fellow Christians), practicing hospitality."

Before wrapping up with chapter 3, Swindoll lists some characteristics to describe authentic servanthood. 1. Anonymously 2. Generously 3. Voluntarily 4. Personally

How Much Does Giving Cost *You*? Swindoll suggested Jesus' radical philosophy went something like this, "Be a servant, give to others." **Luke 9:23** says: "**and He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."**

Being a Christ-follower IS a costly, unselfish decision! As the writer put it, It calls for a radical examination of our self-centered lifestyles.

First, you must come to terms with self-denial, then secondly, you must decide to give yourself to others (taking up your cross) - this has to be a *daily* matter. Costly - but so necessary.

➤ Questions to ask yourself — — —

- ☞ Am I serious about being a close follower of Jesus Christ?
- ☞ Do I think of others to such an extent that self-denial is becoming the rule rather than the exception in my life?
- ☞ Is my walk with Him a daily thing?
- ☞ Is It Worth It?

In **2 Corinthians 9:7** God promises us that **“he who is generous will be blessed”**.

Let’s believe Him! Give, instead of grab.

It! Is! Worth! It! Whatever it takes, make that commitment to start right now!

The story of the American soldier in London who meets a young orphan boy on the street outside a bakery is a touching picture of one being like our Lord Jesus Christ.

*We are never more like God than when we give.  
“God so loved the world that He gave. . . .”*



*There are many quotes from Charles Swindoll in this study. There are also paraphrases of Swindoll’s words. Some books may differ in page numbers and paragraphs. Search to find. You will learn more.*