

*But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice  
and service coming from your faith, I am glad  
and rejoice with all of you.*

***Philippians 2:17***

*If you have no opposition in the place you serve,  
you're serving in the wrong place.*

***G. Campbell Morgan***

Taking up the cross for the disciple of Christ continues on the path of sacrificial service for the Savior. As a pastor I have learned that the most satisfied people on the face of the earth are the ones whose lives are marked by sacrificial service. The primary reason for this undeniable truth is found in the fact that service leads to significance. Everyone wants to know they are living a life that truly matters and those who serve the most know this best.

I have seen a lot of sacrificial service in the lives of others since conversion in 1995. During one difficult season in life when God was changing our life plans, I caught a glimpse of sacrificial service in the life of Erik Jersted that left an indelible mark on me. I had known Erik since the late 70's from our lifeguard days serving on Beach Patrol in South Florida. We got to know each other through the lifeguard competitions and playing softball together.

When I left the beach patrol, we lost touch with each other until God brought Kim and me to church at First Baptist in 1993, where Erik was serving. I quickly learned that his love for the beach and his wife Sharon was exceeded only by his love and service to his Lord. He was always a source of great encouragement to me and a wonderful witness of God's grace, both before

and after Kim and I were saved. He was one of the busiest people in the church, ministering to everyone he came in contact with, but primarily the senior adults, performing funerals on a regular basis.

After our wellness center was shut down, I served part time as a security officer at First Baptist. During the Christmas season of 2001, I was providing security for the annual Christmas pageant. (Now this was no ordinary Christmas pageant. It was more like a Broadway production with hundreds of volunteers, including singers, dancers, actors, musicians as well as live animals). As you can imagine, walking around during late night security gives one a lot of time to think. One night I remember feeling particularly sorry for myself (due to the collapse of our wellness center after 11 years in business). As I was locking up after the opening night performance, I opened the door to the courtyard and saw Erik not ministering to any person but hosing down the excrement left behind by the pageant animals. Here was one of the busiest people in the church outfitted in a pair of firefighter bunker pants and boots with a fire hose line slung over his shoulder, cleaning out the courtyard of the church.

I was surprised to find anyone still left at the church, and shocked to find Erik doing what he was doing. I had to ask him the obvious question, “What in the world are you doing out here at this time of night doing this kind of menial job?” Here are Erik’s words in response to my question ... *I’m not called to sing or dance in the pageant, but this I can do!*

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*I’m not called to sing or dance in the pageant,  
but this I can do! – Erik Jersted*

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My heart sank to an all-time low. Here was my friend, a man who spent most of his week sharing the gospel with the lost, ministering to the elderly, and pouring into the lives of countless others, filled with the joy of His Lord as he hosed down the courtyard at midnight. Out of sight and away from the limelight, Erik was sacrificially serving His Lord, performing a thankless task that obviously had to be done by someone if the show was to go on. On the way home, with tears running down my face, my strength was renewed as I reflected on this selfless act of sacrificial service by a man after God’s own heart. Erik’s reflection of Christ caused me to begin reflecting on the life of sacrificial service our Lord lived for the short time He was here on this earth. He poured out His life for all those the Father had given to Him, culminating in the cross on Golgotha’s hill. Do you remember the story on the night before His crucifixion and His act of unimaginable sacrificial service in the upper room?

Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. **John 13:3-5**

As a baby Christian reading the Scriptures I did not understand why Jesus got down on His knees to wash their dirty, smelly feet until I read these words from Dr. Les Carter.

As the leader, Jesus was in the position to assign this task to one of the men. Yet quietly, with no words, He stripped to His undergarments, took the basin, and unbegrudgingly performed this inglorious task. Why did He do this? To communicate the powerful message: Our God is a serving God. 1

Erik’s act of sacrificial service (hosing down the excrement in the courtyard) made it crystal clear that He understood this powerful message that our God is a serving God. The question we need to ask ourselves is, “Do we know this truth?” Sadly, Erik finished his sacrificial service to His Savior when he lost his battle with bone cancer in 2007 and was brought home at the age of 59. As God would have it, Erik ministered to me in both life and death. Before He went home to be with His Lord he told his wife Sharon that he wanted me to perform part of his memorial service. On July 27, 2007 at 7:30 pm at Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church, I had the privilege of doing just that for a man who modeled sacrificial service and was used by God to forever change my life.

At Cross Community Church I am convinced that our growth, which is all of God’s grace, is also inexplicably linked to the fact that our pews are filled with contributors not consumers. Our congregation understands that the pew is a place to be reinvigorated for service, not relaxed for sleeping (although occasionally I see someone dozing off which I am sure is due to their being poured out in sacrificial service on the altar of the Almighty). The culture of our church is one of commitment to meeting the needs of others, rather than our own. In God’s economy, we are promised greater blessings in giving than in

receiving (**Acts 20:35**) and God never fails to deliver on His promises.

On the front of our bulletin are these four words... GATHER, GROW, GIVE, & GO! God gathers us and grows us for the purposes of giving and going. Gathering and growing to maturity is for giving and going into ministry. The life of our Lord was characterized from beginning to end by sacrificial service. He Himself said He came not to “be served but to serve” (Mark 10:45). So should we, as His disciples, shrink from sacrificial service? God forbid! Remember, we are saved individually, but we are saved to community, and in order for that community to be fully functioning, we all must do our part.

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.  
**1 Corinthians 12:12**

What a beautiful picture the Scriptures paint of the important role the disciple of Christ is to play. We are all part of one body, which means when one of us is not functioning as we should (i.e., offering ourselves in sacrificial service to others) all of the other parts suffer. Think about it this way: when one part of your body is not functioning properly (e.g., the lungs when you are sick and congested), the rest of your body does not function at its best. Every part of the body is dependent upon every other part of the body if we are to be fully functioning and operating as God originally intended. The same is true in the body of Christ. We each need each other! Sacrificial service is the super-glue that holds us all together. Dr. Kennedy shared a story about a pastor who preached a sermon entitled, “The Menace of Mediocrity” addressing people in the church who never seemed to do much for God. “If an automobile had as many useless parts as the church has useless members, it wouldn’t even roll down a hill!” **2** Yikes! May God forbid the “Menace of

Mediocrity” to ever be the measure of the life of the disciple of Jesus.

### **God’s Workmanship**

As we have previously made clear, we did not crawl out of a bubbling cesspool of amino acids billions of years ago, nor did we come into being as a result of the evolution of eternally existing energy. We are not a result of time and chance, but rather, we were conceived in the mind of God and handcrafted personally by the Almighty. The apostle Paul put it this way.

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. **Ephesians 2:10**

Before the foundation of the world, you were planned by God (even if you were not planned by your parents). David describes this truth beautifully.

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth... **Psalms 139:13-15**

You are a one-of-a-kind work of art designed by the Creator Himself. And because God did not make any extra disciples, you are both valuable and needed. Every part of the body of Christ is important to carry on the work of Christ. Would you be willing to give up any part of your physical body today? A hand? A foot? An eye or an ear? Put in this context, it sounds a bit silly doesn’t it? Just like in our human bodies every individual part serving every other part, as different as it may be, is absolutely vital for the health of the church body. Keeping this in view helps us to see beyond the individual benefits of salvation to the community benefits of it.

Because God owns it all, we are simply managing all that we have been given, no matter how *meager or massive* the amounts in the areas of the three “T’s” – time, talent, and treasure! The Bible calls this stewardship. Jesus said, “Everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required” (**Luke 12:48**). Make no mistake, the “Everyone to whom much is given” includes every one of us living in the United States of America today. We all certainly have more than we deserve and most have more than we need. Everything we have becomes both a gift and a trust to be used as God intends. So it is required of every disciple of Christ to be “found trustworthy” (**1 Corinthians 4:2**). Let’s take a look.

## **Time**

As God’s workmanship, you have been given the perfect amount of time to do everything He is calling you to do in expanding the cause of His kingdom. The Bible has much to say about “redeeming” the time for the glory of God. From the Proverbs 31 woman who beautifully balances her time for the glory of God to the industrious ant, the Word of God is chock full of time management truths that, when applied, can take an ordinary life and make it extraordinary.

Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest. How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest – and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.

### **Proverbs 6:6-11**

Notice the ant does not need to be told what to do and watched over to make sure it gets things done. The diligence of the ant in redeeming the time produces an abundance at harvest time when it is need most. In contrast, the sluggard

(lazy person) wastes time by being in bed when he should be out working. In the end, poverty is the portion for the sluggard.

The wise preacher writes in **Ecclesiastes 3:1** “*For everything there is a season, and a time for every activity under heaven.*” When it comes to time, we are all standing on level ground. God has given to each of us 168 hours per week to live one of two lives:

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***a life poured out – in service to our Savior***  
***- or -***  
***a life poured in – in service to the self***

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Those who live a life poured out in sacrificial service to our Savior use their time wisely. Those who live a life poured in – in service to the self do not. Funny thing about time; it is morally neutral and there is no inherent value in it until it is spent (invested). So what have you been investing your time in lately? Has the lion’s share of your time being invested in the expansion of God’s kingdom or your kingdom?

You are probably already familiar with some of the popular tips and techniques for using time wisely...

- A place for everything, everything in its place
- Control your environment, control your interruptions
- Measure twice, cut once
- Handle mail once, file or throw away

No doubt these and other strategies can be very helpful in maximizing our use of time. But if we don’t get to the root of the time management problem we will always end up back where we started... with not enough hours in the day. The most important step we can take to begin maximizing the time God has given us is not to look at **WHAT** we do, but rather **WHY** we do it. It comes down to understanding the perfect plan

and purpose God has for our lives ... DISCIPLES MAKING DISCIPLES... and making the decision in advance to live it to the best of our ability. If you are constantly running out of time (which is keeping you from serving sacrificially to expand God's kingdom) you can be certain of this...you are not living God's plan for your life. God will ALWAYS provide enough time for you to do all the things He has called you to do.

The greatest time waster in the world is doing something God does not want you to do and having to clean up the mess after. This I know from personal experience! Perhaps you do too! Remember, because we are all dying at the rate of 60 minutes an hour, when you spend an hour you have one less hour to spend. So the disciple must be careful to spend (invest) it wisely. The best time to do what God is calling us to do is now. As I have said from the pulpit many times, the one thing no one can do is serve God tomorrow. The past is gone; the future on this side of the grave is promised to no one; all we have is right now. How sacrificially are you investing your time right now, right where this finds you?

“Show me, O Lord, my life's end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting is my life. You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before you. Each man's life is but a breath.” **Psalm 39:4-5**

The years have taught me that one of the best questions we can ask ourselves as it relates to managing our time for our Master is this ...

### **IS THIS THE ABSOLUTE BEST USE OF MY TIME RIGHT NOW?**

A few other questions to ask are, “Will my commitment to this task or activity take away from something I know God has called me to do?” And the one question that is the foundation upon which all others stand is, “Will the investment of

my time bring glory to God?” Remember, we can be doing many of good things or a few great things knowing that often “good” is the enemy of “great” when comes to maximizing the use of our time for the glory of God.

As you consider how you are investing your time, don't forget that God Himself rested. And God wasn't ever tired! God gave us the biblical principle of appropriate rest if we are to redeem the time. Remember there is more to life than increasing its speed and God demonstrated this truth when on the seventh day, after having finished His work, He rested (**Genesis 2:2**). Work and rest must be kept in proper balance or it will lead to an unbalanced life.

### **Talent**

As God's workmanship, you have been given special gifts, talents, and abilities to build up the body of Christ and expand the cause of the kingdom of Christ for the glory of God.

Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. **Romans 12:4-6**

Do you know the one thing in the world no one else can ever be? YOU! God wants you to put in your gifts, your talents, and your abilities because you're the only one who has them in this package called YOU. Far too often people say, “Pastor, I just don't have the gifts to do what you do!” To which I respond, “Excellent! Now take the gifts you have to do what God is calling you to uniquely do!” Another thing I hear often is, “I just don't know what I am gifted to do. I have never taken one of those Spiritual Gifts Inventory Tests?” To which I respond, “Excellent! We have a Cross Spiritual Gifts

Inventory Test for you to take. But let's not wait for the results to start serving." To find where you light up for Jesus all you need to do is ...

### **PLUG IN UNTIL YOU LIGHT UP!**

The best way to find out you are not gifted or called to serve in the nursery is to serve in the nursery. If you come out all frazzled and freaked out by all the noise, noise, noise, then the nursery is probably not the area God is calling you to sacrificially serve – you get the point. Stop waiting and start serving, wherever, whenever, however, and to whomever. Regardless of where this finds you, let me encourage you to plug in to any type of ministry of service open and available to you both in and outside of your church. Experience has taught me that engaging in a variety of different ministries is the best way to find where you are best suited for service.

As a coach for 3 decades I have counseled countless parents who are looking for the sport that will give their child the greatest opportunity for success. I often tell them to try as many as possible and see what fits their personality, temperament, and gifting. Soccer players don't know they are soccer players until they begin playing soccer. Baseball players don't know they are baseball players until they begin playing baseball. Karate kids don't know they are karate kids until they take karate. Gymnasts don't know they are gymnasts until they take gymnastics. Volleyball players don't know they are volleyball players until they begin playing volleyball. You get the point! Rick Warren provides great insight here in his book, *The Purpose Driven Life*.

"Many books get the discovery process backwards. They say, 'Discover your spiritual gift and then you'll know what ministry you're suppose to have.' It actually works the exact opposite way. Just start serving, experimenting with different ministries, and

then you'll discover your gifts. Until you're actually involved in serving, you're not going to know what you're good at." **3**

Spiritual gifts are only a part of God's wonderful workmanship in the life of the disciple. He has given you talents, abilities, personality, personal experiences, and passions of the heart that all go into the masterpiece God has created in you to be used for His glory. You never want to limit the reach of your sacrificial service and eternal impact in the lives of others to the spiritual gifts you have been given. God will use all of you to bless everyone if you will sacrificially serve in any way. The key is to hold nothing back and the key to holding nothing back is to remember everything we have has been given. The more we have, the more we are in debt to the One who has given it to us. God owns it all. In the section on Sold-out Surrender we saw how the Bible makes it clear we are not our own because we were bought at a price.

### **Treasure**

As God's workmanship, you have been given the right amount of treasure to do your part in expanding the cause of Christ. Did you know that Jesus discusses "money matters" more than any other area including heaven, hell, faith, and prayer? Now this is where the wheels come off the track for some by reducing the gospel message to a message of financial prosperity. As my friend Steve Brown says, "This smells like smoke and comes from the pit of hell." Jesus was not preaching a prosperity theology (i.e., health and wealth blessings are God's will for the "faithful" Christian – which sprang out of the Healing Revivals of the 1950's in the United States). What He was doing, was making it clear that greed can come between the disciple and God if we are not paying close attention.

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up

for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money." **Matthew 6:19-21, 24**

Now let's clear up a well-known and widespread misunderstanding regarding money matters rooted in a misquotation of the Scriptures (no pun intended). The apostle Paul tell us that the "love of money is the root of all kinds of evil" (1 Timothy 6:9-10) not the money itself. Just like time, money is morally neutral and a gift from God for use in expanding the cause of His kingdom. The Bible has so much to say about money simply because we are sinners and have a tendency to love the things God gives us (like money), more than God Himself. [A quick note on the flip side of this coin...wealth is not a sin, but the love of it is.] My friend and mentor Dr. Ron Kovack reminded me of a great quote from Andrew Carnegie regarding our treasure, "Surplus wealth is a sacred trust which its possessor is bound to administer in his lifetime for the good of the community." Listen, God gives wealth to some and poverty to others. The key to understand is this... *It's not what you possess but what possesses you!*

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So what has been possessing you lately? What does your sacrificial giving (i.e., supporting missions, sponsoring a student going on a mission trip, funding Christian education, contributing to the local food pantry or thrift shop, making a meal for someone, paying for a meal for someone when out, etc.) shout to those around you? To be sure, there are countless

ways we are called by God to invest our money in the expansion of His kingdom. But the area most neglected is in the financial support of the local church.

Most polls today indicate that less than 5% of those claiming to be evangelical Christians tithe (10% of total income) to the local church. In other words, more than 95% of those who claim to be disciples of Christ, are systematically robbing God, since the principle of tithing is still in effect as a biblical mandate. Would the confession of your checkbook say you are in the 5% or the 95% when it comes to supporting the work of God's kingdom?

Early in my walk with Christ, I began to study the Scriptures, and for the first time I started to understand what the biblical concept of tithing was all about. The two questions that need to be answered at this point are, "Why did God institute the tithe in the Old Testament?" and "Is it still in effect in the New Testament?" The biblical concept of the tithe goes all the way back to Abram.

And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.  
**Genesis 14:20**

The commentary in the Reformation study Bible says this, "The practice of paying a tenth to a king or to a god was widespread in the ancient Near East, and predates the Mosaic Law. Abraham's gift to Melchizedek was probably not the payment of the "king's tithe", but rather was an offering that reflected Abraham's regard for Melchizedek as a priest of the true God." **4**

The tithe in the Old Testament was used to care for the Levites who were set apart for the priesthood, the work of caring for God's people. They were not to be encumbered by the necessities of daily living so the tithes offered by the people were used to support them. When we understand the WHY of the tithe...it's all God's anyway and the first portion should be given for

His work in this world...we need not question if it still applies in the New Testament. God's work is still going on today and we must see it as a privilege to participate in it, especially in our financial giving. When teaching the kids, I tell them to look at it this way: should we who have a far greater understanding of the "cost" of our salvation (looking back to the cross), give less than those who had less understanding of it (looking forward to the cross)? May God forbid! Dr. Ron Kovack provides great insight into this matter in his book, *A Gift That Changed The World*, which I highly recommend to everyone from the pew to the pulpit.

Recently, I heard someone say, that the New Testament does not teach tithing and Jesus never taught tithing. Nothing could be farther from the truth! On the contrary, the Lord of the Old Testament is the Lord of the New Testament also, "I the Lord do not change" (Malachi 3:6). The very chapter in Malachi where God says, "Return unto me and I will return unto you" (Malachi 3:7) is preceded by the statement, "God does not change." If he did away with tithing in the New Testament he would have changed his mind, but it never happened, never will. "will a man rob God?" (Malachi 3:8). The question is as applicable today as the day God asked it of Israel through the prophet Malachi. Like the nation of Israel the people of God, we the people of God today will ask the same, "How did we rob you?"

The notion that tithing is not required in the church today and that Jesus never taught tithing is rebutted in Matthew 23:23. The context is when Jesus is addressing the crowds. You may recall the question and answer time between the Pharisees and Jesus on the subject of taxes. The Sadducees had a question for him on the topic of the resurrection, and one expert in the law questioned him regarding the greatest

commandment. Then Jesus asked a question of the Pharisees regarding the Christ, "Whose son is he?" When the Pharisee's answered, "The son of David." Jesus then points out that David called him Lord (Psalm 1:10). "If then David calls him Lord, how can he be his son?" We read then, "No one could say a word in reply" (Matthew 22:46). The point was not lost on the Pharisees; they knew the implication of the answer. The Messiah-Christ was God incarnate as the son of David. Jesus then addresses the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and pronounces seven woes that are found in Matthew 23. The specific woe in verse 23 is on the subject of tithing. "Woe to you teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law, justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter without neglecting the former." In other words, you did what you were supposed to do when you tithed your herb garden's yield." 5

If we needed even more evidence of the Scriptural significance of giving to the church, God's Word reveals that a monumental part of Scripture itself may look vastly different if not for a gift to the church. As Dr. Ron explains in the above mentioned book:

"Instead of visiting Rome, which was Paul's original plan, he writes to the church there instead, a gift given to the early church was the reason Paul changed his travel plans—and this letter is then used by God to change the world!"

I will never forget the first time I heard from the Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church pulpit back in the late 1990's these words from Dr. Kennedy, "Let us now worship our God with His tithes and our offerings." This was my first exposure to the fact that giving to God financially was an act of worship. Once we understand this truth,



sacrificial giving is the natural next step. Puritan preacher and writer John Bunyan wrote, “A man there was, and they called him mad; the more he gave, the more he had.” **6** By God’s grace may we never be like the person who is willing to give God all the *credit* in the world but none of the *cash* in our pockets.

## CONCLUSION

Disciples of Jesus Christ give of their time, talent, and treasure sacrificially, not because they feel a duty to do it, but rather because they simply delight in doing it. To be like our Master is the end goal of every disciple. Through a life of sacrificial service, Jesus gave up every treasure (including His relationship with His Father in heaven), while He hung on that cross dying in your place, to make you His treasure.

Because our time here on earth is short compared to eternity, the disciple of Christ is to base their investment of talent, time, and treasure on eternal values and not earthly (temporal) ones. Sacrificial service in every area of life becomes the currency of our character when this truth sets us free. C. S. Lewis summarizes this week with these words:

Christ says, “Give me all. I don’t want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work: I want you. I have not come to torment your natural self, but to kill it. No half-measures are any good. I don’t want to cut off a branch here and a branch there. I want to have the whole tree down. I don’t want to drill the tooth, or crown it, or stop it, but to have it out.” **7**

## REFERENCE NOTES:

1. Dr. Les Carter, *Reflecting the Character of Christ*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995, 29.
2. Dr. Kennedy, *Turn It To Gold*, Servant Publications, 1991, 118.
3. Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*, Zondervan 2002, 251.
4. The Reformation Study Bible, Ligonier Ministries, 2005, 34.
5. Dr. Ron Kovack, *The Gift That Changed The World*, Xulon Press, 2005, 130-131.
6. John Bunyan, *Pilgrims Progress*.
7. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Harper San Francisco.

## *Driving the Roots Deeper – Questions for Discussion*

1. The most satisfied people on the face of the earth are the ones whose lives are marked by sacrificial service.  Agree  Disagree Please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Why is the picture of the “body of Christ” helpful in understanding the importance of sacrificial service? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What is the “Menace of Mediocrity” as it relates to members in the body of Christ?

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4. What are the three areas of sacrificial service in the life of the disciple?

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5. Which area are you the strongest? Which area are you the weakest? Please explain

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6. How does sacrificial service become the currency of our character?

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7. What is your most important take-away from this lesson?

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