

DAY 4

There are lots of ways we measure ourselves in life to see how we're doing. And we feel great when we know we're doing a good job!

Let's think about a few of those "measurements" for a minute.

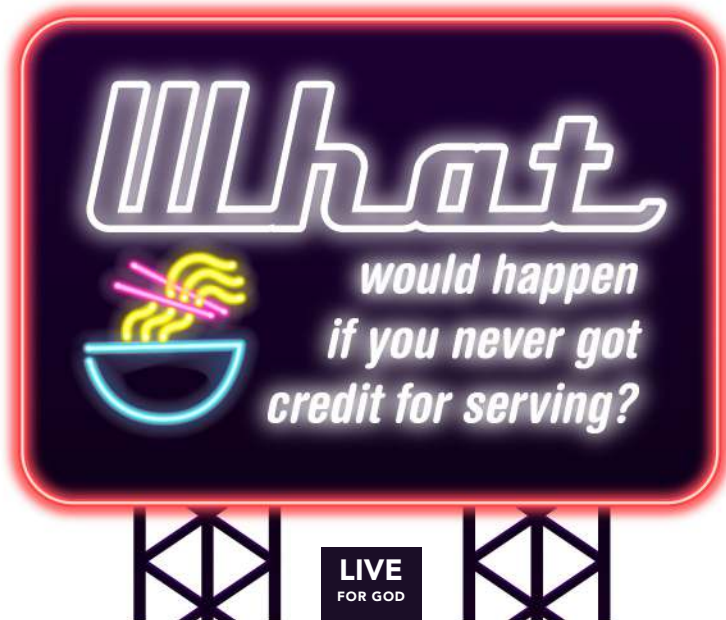
Obviously, at school you get a report card. Your teacher is paying attention to lots of things—correct answers, for sure—but also how well you interact with others in class, and your attitude toward learning.

What if you never got a report card? Would you still try your best at school?

If you play a sport, you have statistics and scorecards to keep track of your progress. The same thing is true if you're learning dance or a musical instrument. Your coach or teacher wants to see improvement. She wants to see effort, too.

What if no one was in the stands when you played the game? What if you didn't have a recital full of people to play for? Would you still practice just as hard?

Every day, we get the chance to serve others. But like Jesus said, we should serve in order to serve—not so that others will see us doing it. We don't serve to get the credit. We serve because we genuinely want to lend a hand—to live out what Jesus modeled for us as we serve the people around us.



DAY 1

READ MATTHEW 6:1-4

Serving feels good. It feels good to do something for someone. We're happy because we did something to help them out.

Serving also feels good because it makes us feel good about ourselves. That doesn't have to be a bad thing. But it can have a bit of a dark side. If we're not careful, we start to serve because we want other people to see how awesome we are. We might not want to admit it but we like to get the applause.

Serving is supposed to be about the other person. But serving can easily start to be about you. And here's the thing. Service was never supposed to be like that. Jesus made it super-clear:

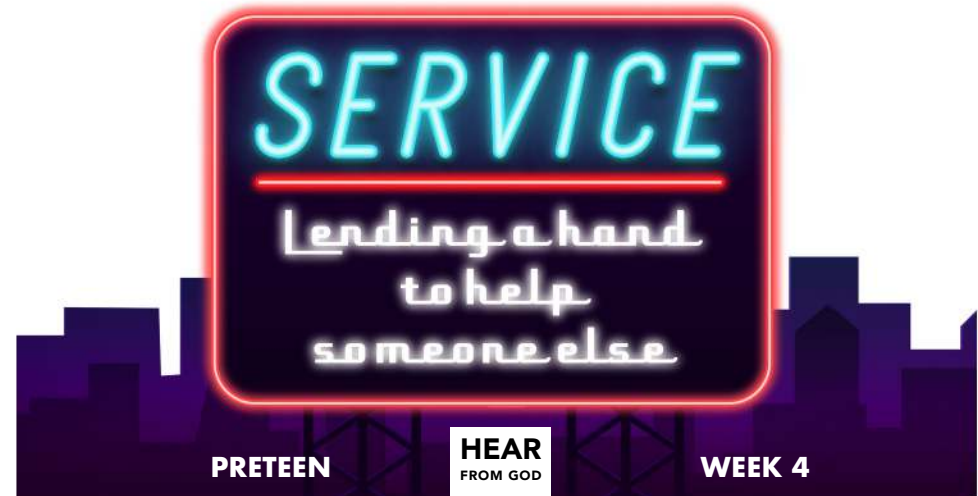
"Don't do those deeds to be seen by others." (Matthew 6:1, NIV)

Instead . . .

"Don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing." (Matthew 6:3, NIV)

When we serve, we should be so secretive about it that it's like we can't even see ourselves do it. It's not about being seen lending a hand. It's about lending a hand. Period.

The truth is, people can tell when you're doing something for the applause. They can also tell when you sincerely just want to help. Our challenge is to put aside the desire to be seen as the hero, and just be the hero—no matter who's watching.



DAY 2

So what are we supposed to do with that part of us that wants to be noticed?

Well, it's part of being human. But here's the good news. You always have a safe place and an outlet for your feelings. You can always talk to God about them.

He sees what you do, even if no one else does. He's proud of you for making the wise choice and treating others with love and compassion. He's cheering you on when you choose to serve.

He can also help you "flip the switch."

He can help you turn your focus away from yourself and back where it belongs: on helping others.

Go ahead and write down a few things you've done recently that have helped someone else. It feels good to see them and know that you were a part of what God did in those situations.

Then talk to God about it. Ask Him to help you choose to serve for the right reasons—to help others, and to be a part of the good work He's doing all around you.



DAY 3

Have you ever been to an "always open" kind of diner? A restaurant that's open 24 hours a day?

It's pretty amazing, when you think about it. Every hour of every day—whenever you want waffles or a burger or a vanilla shake—they're open. Ready to serve you.

People have come to expect it. You can be sure that no matter when your craving hits, they'll be there for you. No one really gives their staff team a round of applause or thanks them for being open when they come in at 2 a.m. (although they probably should). It's just what they do.

WE'VE GOT TWO QUESTIONS FOR YOU.

- 1. What's your favorite thing to order at an "always open" diner? and**
- 2. What do you think it would take to be an "always open" kind of person?**

In other words, what's stopping you from being ready to serve, 24/7?

Your parents will be able to tell you, if you're brave enough to ask. Start up a conversation with them and remind them you're talking about service this month. Ask them if they ever see you getting caught up in yourself and not able to see the things others need.

That's something all of us need to know, so you'll be one step ahead of the game if you can ask that honest question.

Actually, why not ask if you can go to an all-night diner to have that conversation together? It'll go much better over a hot fudge sundae!

