

Improving Your Serve

Lesson 12

II Kings 4 and 5

The Perils of a Servant

In this study, we will examine the **dangers** that accompany the calling of a servant. In his book, *Improving Your Serve*, Chuck Swindoll reminds us that every calling has its own unique set of **risk** that come with the position and being a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ is no different. According to his book, while the perils of the servant are subtle, they are just as dangerous as the occupational hazards of **firefighters**, **police officers**, **air traffic controllers** and a number of other high visibility people oriented occupations. However, the irony of the servant calling is that we often come to it believing it is safe. After all, what could possibly be **dangerous** about serving other people? Despite the fact that this new digital age provides a more transparent level of access and openness in communicating, the servant is still not free from the temptations of the flesh. Yet, Swindoll suggests that the greatest temptation for a servant will always come in the spiritual realm. As servants we should not be deceived, our enemy is relentless in the quest to “steal, kill, and destroy” our witness for Christ, our testimony of faith, and our effectiveness for the kingdom. No matter how spiritual, how dedicated, how effective we maybe not one of us is totally secure from the schemes and tricks of the enemy. Just listen to some of the fallacies out there that, for the most part, leave us vulnerable and exposed to the dangers of servanthood.

I. **Some General Fallacies:**

This chapter of the book points our three erroneous beliefs that are common mistakes concerning servanthood. Using Paul’s warning in **2 Corinthians 4:7-11**, Swindoll highlights the common mistakes that all servants should be aware of.

1. **“Servants have special powers of themselves.”**

2Cor. 3:5-6 _____

2Cor. 4:7 _____

2. “Servants don’t struggle with everyday problems.”

2Cor. 1:8-9 _____

2Cor. 4:8-9 _____

3. “Servants are protected against subtle dangers.”

2Cor. 4:10-11 _____

Rom 8:36-37 _____

Paul reminds us that the life and work of a servant is costly, that we are fragile, we are in harm’s way, and we will suffer danger and maybe even die. Yet, while we are but clay pots, our strength and value come from Christ. This scripture demonstrates that the servant’s power is of God and cannot be taken or destroyed even though it is contained in weak earthen vessel. Because of God great power, what He has stored in cheap clay pots no one can break. Paul teaches us that even spirit-filled servants have no power apart from God; like everyone else, we struggle in everyday life and are not exempt from danger and trouble. Nevertheless, the power we have from God will enable us to endure the danger and remain faithful.

II. A Biblical Example – Gehazi the servant of Elisha

Swindoll highlights a biblical example of our erroneous beliefs about servanthood from the Old Testament story of Gehazi, servant of the prophet Elisha. Let’s see what dangers we find lurking in the heart of the servant to one of Israel’s greatest prophets. Our story is found in 2 Kings 4 and 5.

A. Overview and Function

Gehazi lived and served during a very difficult time in the history of Israel. The nation founded by God to glorify and make His name know had experience hundreds of years of ungodly rulers. One bad king after another had led the nation into a state of “**compromise, murder, gross immorality and idolatry.**” Into this backslidden state, God raises up

two prophets Elijah and his successor Elisha. Just as Elisha served Elijah, God raised up a servant named Gehazi, to serve and assist Elisha in the work of ministry. In the beginning, Gehazi served Elisha well with integrity and character. In 2 Kings 4:8-17, Gehazi was instrumental in Elisha blessing the Shunammite woman. However, where there is a heart not fully committed, there will always be a crack somewhere in the shield of faith or a chink in the breastplate of righteousness.

B. Enticement and Responses

Gehazi's position as assistance to the man of God was not only a privilege, but also it was also unique in that day. Gehazi would often go and perform miracles on behalf of the prophet. He was living in the spotlight that Elisha cast, he enjoyed all the fame, power, and privileges afforded the prophet. The only problem was that he was not Elisha. Gehazi was living in the shadow of Elisha. Living in the shadow of a celebrity can be a vulnerable position. Let us examine some of the enticements and how Gehazi responded to the dangers, they present.

1. "The danger of jealousy and selfishness."

2Kgs 4:18-25 _____

2Kgs 4:25-28 _____

2. "The danger of feeling used and unappreciated."

2Kgs 4:29-36 _____

2Kgs 4:37-41 _____

3. "The danger of feeling disrespect and resentment."

2Kgs 5:1-11 _____

2Kgs 5:12-19 _____

4. “The danger of hidden greed.”

2Kgs 5:13-22 _____

2Kgs 5:23-27 _____

III. Lessons for the Servant

Gehazi’s life provides the warning that even servants are vulnerable and capable of falling victim to the traps of the enemy. When we have hidden sin linger in our heart know that our enemy will take advantage of every opportunity in any way possible to bring us down. The servant’s greatest weapon is a surrender life totally committed to prayer and the council of God’s word. Swindoll encourages us to remember always these three truths.

1. “As servants none of us are completely safe.”
2. “Our deeds will mostly go unrewarded.”
3. “We must always examine and honestly search our motives.”

Now that we have examined “**The Perils of a Servant**,” where are you? Has our study taught you to “keep your heart with all diligence, knowing that out of it spring the issues of life?” In all things as servants remember to “**check your motive.**” Why are we doing what we are doing, does it glorify God or satisfy self. Could it be that there is a little Gehazi in each person, that God wants us to deal with as both leaders and followers? While humility will deal with your Gehazi, pride will bluff it. Do not live in denial. Listen and do what you know is right for you as you are “**Improving Your Serve.**”