

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your correspondence to the Al Denson Show and for tuning in every week to our program. My prayer for you is to be encouraged in your daily walk with Christ through the words of this booklet. Our hope is that in turn you will tell others of what God is doing through our ministry to youth and parents on TV. I am convinced you will not find another program on any network anywhere that deals with issues today's youth and their parents are facing, and provides answers from a Godly perspective.

In addition, we would love for you to help us by going to our web site at [www.aldenson.com](http://www.aldenson.com). Here you can write to us, order additional material like this booklet, check out all my music, have a daily bible study, and stay up to date on the ministry. You can also send us a prayer request and questions for the TV show. But more importantly, please continue to be in prayer with us as we work together to help those that are in need.

Thanks for watching and God Bless!

Sincerely,



**An Outreach of Celebration Ministries**

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Most artists create for only a brief moment in time. That phenomenon was once known as “15 minutes of fame”. Yet even in a fickle world, there still emerge a talented few that transcends time and trends. With nearly 15 years as a major label recording artist and seven hit

albums to his credit, Al Denson is that kind of artist.

But the attention and acclaim his artistry has brought him over the years are anything but the routine rewards of worldly success. Rather, they are the fruits of a life of purpose and passion, and a mission that has always reached far beyond merely making music.

The millions of young people Al has performed for, befriended, counseled, consoled and clowned around with in his career already know that. And thousands more are finding out every day.

This past year has seen Al expand his efforts to a global audience through the reach of his daily syndicated television production, “The Al Denson Show.” “You’ve got to reach out to people where they are with the most powerful means and this form of media allows you to build trust and a rapport,” says Al. “This has all been so amazing. I can’t imagine what lies in store when the Lord finally calls me home, but I don’t have to wait for heaven to receive rewards. I get them every time a kid comes up to me and says, ‘I heard what you said, and I accepted Christ.’ You can’t ask for anything more or better than that.”

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# Servanthood: *Gaining Through Giving*

Every day of our lives we are constantly being bombarded with books, articles, radio and TV shows, commercials and advertisements that shout, “You’re number one. Be good to yourself. Don’t let anyone take what is rightfully yours. Get all you can, can all you get, and sit on the can!” We are hounded with marketing which wants to show us how to be richer, smarter, more attractive, or how to get by with less effort. All of these things, we are told, will bring us happiness and fulfillment. How sad that all these philosophies are totally opposite from the teachings of Jesus.

Jesus taught that true fulfillment and happiness in life would never come through self-gratification but through sacrifice. He said in Mark 8:34-35, “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it.” And in Mark 10:43-45 He said, “Whoever would be great among you must be your servant...for the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”

The way to gain satisfaction and fulfillment in life, Jesus said, is to give. Gaining through giving—a strange concept to the world. In fact, the teachings of Christ always seemed to be in direct opposition to the world. To live, you

must die? To have you must give? To be first, you must be last? It all sounds very weird to most people today. These are hard concepts for even some Christians to understand because our society has embraced a “me-ism” way of thinking:

- What is in it for ME?
- What will it cost ME?
- How will it affect ME?

This “me-ism” has spilled over into the church. We have made it sound like following Christ is all about what we can “get.” What Jesus can do for ME? As a result, we have produced very shallow, self-centered Christians who know nothing of service or of giving

their lives away. Jesus modeled for us with His life what it means to be a servant. Servanthood is in a word, LOVE, and love in a word is SACRIFICE. To follow the example of Jesus will involve not just giving but sacrificing your time, energy, and money because true love is always sacrificial.

John 3:16 defines love in God’s terms: “God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” God so loved the world He gave and Jesus so loved He sacrificed His life for us. What Jesus did should be enough to make us want to serve Him and follow His example with no thought of “what’s in it for me.”

Whoever  
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# Servanthood will really divide the committed from the casual Christian.

The definition of a servant is “one who is governed by the desire of another.” This is a term given to a slave. For 33 years, Jesus was the perfect example, in both attitude and actions, of what a servant should be. When He came to the end of His life here on earth, Jesus knew He had only a few, precious hours left with the 11 men who would be responsible for taking over where He was leaving off.

If you knew you were going to die in a few hours, what would you share with your loved ones who were gathered around you? I doubt you would talk about the weather or make small talk because you would understand your last words would be the ones which those you love would remember the most. Jesus was very aware that He must make every moment and every word count. There was no time left to share anything with His disciples except what was most important. One of the last things that Jesus spoke about and modeled to these men on the night before His crucifixion was servanthood.

In Matthew 20:20-26, we see Jesus assembled with his disciples at what would later be referred to as the “last supper.” He knew that his death was close at hand. He had gathered with them in an upper room for the Passover Supper. After they had finished their meal, Jesus got up, took out His outer robe, and began to wash the feet of His disciples one by one. The disciples had probably never been as moved or as uncomfortable as they were at that moment. In verse 26 Jesus said, “I say unto you, whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.” John recorded these words from that special night in John 17:15. Jesus said, “For I have given you an example that you should do as I have done unto you.”

Could there be any lowlier job than kneeling down and washing the dirty, dusty, smelly feet of another? It sounds very spiritual to say that we want to be like Jesus. How about washing feet—do we still want to be like Jesus? Most Christians want to be called servants; we just don’t want to be treated like one. Servanthood will really divide the committed from the casual Christian. We can’t give lip-service to Christ and say we want to be Christ-like unless we are willing to take being a servant seriously.

Why would Jesus consider being a servant so important? He knew some things about serving and giving our lives away for others that we need to know. Satan wants nothing more than to devalue life. If he can take from the human race purpose, meaning, and hope, then Satan knows

we will self-destruct when that happens. One way He has tried to accomplish it in this generation is by convincing us that life is not about giving; it is about getting. To a large extent, he has been very successful because this may be the neediest generation which has ever lived. Historian Eugene Genovese said, “It would be difficult to point out a set of values about which you could say that most Americans could agree. I think our society has become largely purposeless.”

It has been said that our culture today is suffering from a full-blown case of “anhedonia.” This is a Greek word which means “without pleasure.” Americans have more stuff, better technology, and are living longer but are finding these things are bringing them little or no pleasure. They are restless and unsettled, and asking themselves, “is that all there is?” If Christians aren’t careful to avoid this same, worldly mind set, the emptiness will rub off on them, too. How tragic this is when Jesus has shown us that real fulfillment comes through a life characterized by service and putting others first.

We all serve something or someone. If we chose to always be serving ourselves then that choice is going to result in an empty life. To really know true satisfaction and be fulfilled in life, we must realize those things come through serving others. There are millions of people who get up out of bed and face every day totally unmotivated and unexcited about life. A commitment to something larger than ourselves gives us an energy level and enthusiasm for life and for work that makes each day interesting and worthwhile.

Gordon McDonald tells the story about Nelson Pendergrass, an Oklahoma rancher, who understood this kind of commitment. “The commitment was made the day that he, along with his wife and two sons, invited David, a sixteen-year-old boy, to come and live in his home. Repeatedly David had been in trouble with the law, and the expectation was that the brand of love practiced in the Pendergrass home would melt what seemed to have become a very hard juvenile heart.

But it didn’t seem to work. David did not respond to the relational climate of the Pendergrass home or any attempt to cross over into his life. In fact, he appeared, if anything, to grow more resistant to relationships than ever. Things became so bad that Nelson Pendergrass began to seriously consider the possibility that David would have to be returned to juvenile court. It was a terrible decision, and each day the possibility that it would have to be made came closer.

Then Nelson had a serious ranching accident that sent him to the intensive care unit of the local hospital. While there recovering from his injuries, a blood clot suddenly entered his heart. In a matter of minutes Pendergrass was fighting for his life. Later he would admit that the pain in those moments was so great that he had to fight the temptation to give up and welcome death as a relief. What kept him going?

It was a nurse that made the difference. He said, ‘I gasped for air. But it hurt too much to breathe. Better just to drift away, I told myself.





Away from the fear, from the pain. But there was the nurse, her face not six inches from mine.' 'Breathe. You've got to breathe,' she said. 'Leave me alone, I wanted to scream. Let me die. But no, she was still there.' 'Breathe,' she said, 'Breathe...breathe...breathe.' 'I was willing to give up but she was not. Again and again, I fought to take a breath as she called to me.' Nelson Pendergrass made it through the crisis that day, but thanks, he says, belongs to that nurse who insisted that he keep on breathing when he wanted to quit.

Not many days afterward the powerful lesson of those terrible moments when he had wanted to die came home to the rancher's heart. Nelson began to connect the experience in the intensive care unit with what was going on back at the ranch with David, the unresponsive teenager. Pendergrass had come close to sending the boy back to juvenile court. David showed no evidence of caring what happened to himself; so why should anyone else care? But, when it came to David's situation, wasn't he, Nelson asked himself, in the same position as the nurse in the ICU who had prodded him back to life? Wasn't it his turn to confront this boy and shout the equivalent of 'BREATHE!' That blunt question caused the foster-father to postpone his decision and give David another chance.

Then one night when the relationship between David and Nelson seemed to reach a peak of stress, Nelson found a way to apply the lesson he'd so painfully learned. David had been arrested for stealing a car, and Pendergrass had to go

to the police station to face him. When they met in the holding cell, David's first reaction was to tell Nelson to leave him alone, that he didn't care any longer. But Nelson, remembering his own experience with the nurse, told David that he found that unacceptable.

'David,' he said to the boy, 'as long as you're under my supervision, you're not giving up on life. And I'm not giving up on you either. WE'RE not quitting. You're coming home. And you and I are going to get through all of this.' The crisis passed, and as the months went by Nelson Pendergrass and his foster son, David forged a new relationship. Today David is a husband and a father, all because one man made a commitment to teach another how to breathe." Nelson Pendergrass gave his life away to another and gained through giving.

There are two seas in the Holy Land. The northern sea, called the Sea of Galilee is beautiful. It is fed by the Jordan river and it waters valleys and helps produce harvests. Fishermen profit from these waters. Jesus taught and worked miracles on the banks of the Sea of Galilee. The southern sea is very different. It has a horrible smell because its waters are filthy and filled with debris. It is so polluted that not even animals can drink from these waters. It is called the Dead Sea. Both seas are fed by the same river, so what is the difference? The Dead Sea has an inlet to receive the fresh waters but no outlet to send them on. The water comes in fresh but becomes stagnate and lifeless because it never gives its water away.

There are two kinds of Christians, too. Those who only know how to take in this life and never give become like the Dead Sea. Their lives stagnate and become polluted with lifelessness and selfishness. They become so focused on themselves and their own needs that they have little purpose and meaning in their lives. Then there are those who are like the Sea of Galilee. They give freely of what they have and as a result they give life, hope, and health to everyone around them. Proverbs 11:25 says, "A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed." Jesus knew the way to experience life fully was to give ourselves away in service to others; otherwise life becomes just a meaningless existence.

Please don't misunderstand; this is not about trying to please God with our works or about performing to be accepted by God—NOT AT ALL. Because we have been saved and are "in Christ," we are already pleasing and acceptable to God. Nothing we do or don't do can ever change that. We were not created to serve God. We were all recreated in the salvation

experience to have a personal relationship with Him; not that we might serve Him, but that we might glorify God and enjoy Him forever. One way that we can glorify and minister to God is by serving others.

If we are Christians, God has been molding us and shaping us for service since before we were born. Psalm 139:14-16 says, "Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! It is amazing to think about. Your workmanship is marvelous...You were there while I was being formed...You saw me before I was born and scheduled each day of my life before I began to breathe." Each of us is special, wonderfully made, and has a unique role to play in this world.

Pastor Rick Warren, uses a word to explain what God has done to prepare us for service. Pastor Rick says that God has S.H.A.P.E. (d) us all and our shape will determine how we can best serve the Lord. Each letter of the word "shape" represents a part of our lives which God wants to use to bless others.

Jesus knew the way to experience life fully was to give ourselves away in service to others...



# ... “no one will care how much you know, ...

## 1. S-piritual Gifts

Each believer has special abilities given by the Holy Spirit to minister to others and therefore build up the body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:4-7)

## 2. H-eart & Passion

The Bible uses the “heart” to represent the center of our lives—our motivation, desires, and our inclinations. (Psalm 37:4)

## 3. A-bilities & Talents

These are both our natural talents and learned abilities that we have developed during the course of our lives. (1 Corinthians 12:6)

## 4. P-ersonality & Temperament

God has given each of us a special personality and a unique temperament that allows us to express ourselves in a way that is different from any one else on earth. Whether introverted or extroverted, God can use us all.

## 5. E-xperiences in Life

Some of the greatest, most effective tools we have to minister with are our past experiences. Many times our greatest life’s message comes out of our weakness, not our strength, so we should pay close attention to what we have learned in the “school of hard knocks.” (Romans 8:28)

It is exciting to know God has a place of service in this world for each of us. He is able to take all our experiences in life, both the good and the bad, the talents and abilities He has given us, our personalities and temperaments, and the things we are passionate about, to minister in His name.

Some Christians mistakenly believe the only people who can minister are those who have gone to seminary and have “Rev.,” in front of their name, but that isn’t true. Ministry is simply using whatever God has given us to serve Him and others. The Bible teaches that there are three directions in which we can minister:

### 1. To The Lord (Acts 13:2)

Everything we do, the Bible says, should be done “as unto the Lord.” Our desire should be to please God with everything we do and our service should be an expression of our love for Him, and our attitude should be an attitude of gratitude. Colossians 3:17 says, “and whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

### 2. To Other Believers (Heb 6:10)

Outside of our own families, our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ, should be the ones we minister to and serve first. We should care about each other deeply and always be encouraging and lifting each other up in the Lord. The early church was known for the way they loved each other and for the unity they shared. Acts 4:32 says, “all the believers were one in heart and mind.”

### 3. To Unbelievers (Matt 5:13)

God wants to use each of us in the lives of those who don’t know Him. Acts of service to unbelievers can become opportunities to share the Gospel. Sometimes we have to earn the right to speak into a person’s life and “win their

ear” before we can share the life-changing message of Christ. Someone once said that “no one will care how much you know, until they know how much you care.”

The Bible gives us an example of a man who had a true servant’s heart like Christ. This was a man who ministered, but not up front where others could see him. This guy didn’t sing the solo, play in the band, or preach a sermon to large groups of people. He just ministered week in and week out. His name was Andrew and his life should inspire us all.

We are introduced to Andrew in the gospel of John, Chapter 1. Andrew was a great disciple of Jesus. He is the kind of person who would make a church or a youth group great. Andrew’s ministry was characterized by three significant insights many Christians don’t seem to grasp:



# ... until they know how much you care.”

## 1. He understood the value of people.

Everywhere we find Andrew in the Gospels, we find him pouring his life into someone else. In John 1:41-42, we read about Andrew finding his brother Simon and telling him he had found the Messiah. The Hebrew word for “Messiah” means the same as the Greek word “Christ.” When Jesus saw Andrew’s brother he said, “you will be called Cephas,” which is translated Peter. Here is a beautiful example of Andrew, behind the scenes, going out and caring for his brother and bringing him to Jesus.

Remember the time when the Greeks wanted to see Jesus and they came to Philip? They recognized Philip as one of Jesus’s disciples and they came to him because he was Greek. The first thing that Philip did, instead of taking the Greeks to see Jesus, was to find Andrew and Andrew took the Greeks to see Jesus. Andrew was also the one who found the little boy with the five loaves and two fish. Andrew was always looking for people he could pour his life into because he understood what it meant to be Jesus’ representative in this world.

### 2. He understood the value of invisible service.

Real servanthood is usually a “behind-the-scenes ministry.” Andrew, no doubt, grew up in the shadow of his brother Peter. When Andrew brought his brother to Jesus, he probably knew the moment Jesus saw Peter, He would see his leadership potential. But, that was OK with Andrew—he was content to stay in the shadows. “It’s okay; I don’t have to be up front; I don’t have to be in the inner circle; I don’t have to sing the solo; I don’t have to preach the message. It’s okay if others don’t see me.” Andrew’s motives were pure because he loved the Lord and loved his brother. He didn’t serve for the praise, applause, or the recognition of people.

### 3. He knew the value of insignificant gifts.

Remember the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand? Andrew knew that little becomes much in the Master’s hands. A little boy and his small lunch were not insignificant to Andrew because He knew the child and what he had to offer were not insignificant to Jesus. You may feel small and insignificant by the world’s standards, but you are important and significant to God.

Here are three things to remember as we are thinking about how we can become servants. We need to

#### 1. Do what we can.

We need to use the gifts God has given us, however great or small. God only expects us to do what we can with what we have—He expects no more. The liberating truth about ser-

vanthood is that God only expects us to give back to Him what He has already given to us. He is both supply and demand.

#### 2. Do that much.

Are we really giving God our best or are we holding the best back for ourselves? In John 12:1-8 and in Mark 14:3-9, the Bible tells us that Jesus was in Bethany having a meal in the home of a man He had healed by the name of Simon. Then his friend, Mary, came in with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on Jesus as a beautiful symbol of her love for Him. She spilled out every last bit of that costly perfume—she held back not one single drop. We need to make sure there are no drops left in our alabaster jar.

#### 3. Do it now.

Mary didn’t fully understand what she was doing. But in Mark 14:8 Jesus attached significance to this act when He said, “She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for My burial.” If Mary had not done what she did, when she did it, the Lord’s body would have not been anointed before He was buried. In John 12:3 the Bible says that Mary, unashamedly let down her hair and used it to wipe the Lord’s feet. When she did, the fragrance from the perfume got her. There will always be a beautiful fragrance about a person who has poured out their very best on Jesus.

Billy Graham tells the story of an eighty-year old blind lady who was praying one day and

said, “God, you know that I have served you my whole life, but now there is nothing else I can do. Please take me home to be with You.” God answered her and said, “No, not yet, I’ve got a ministry for you.” A few days later she remembered she had a braille telephone directory for the blind. From that day on, starting with the A’s, she called people on the phone every day for nine years and shared Jesus with them. By age 89, this little blind lady who only had a telephone, led over 3,000 people to Jesus Christ!

Sacrificial love has just one problem—it is extremely exhausting. After a certain amount of giving and serving we may begin to feel numb, as if we have nothing left to give. God doesn’t want us to burnout—there is nothing spiritual or godly about that. The Christian life is not a hundred-yard dash; it is a marathon; and in order to cross the finish line we need to know how to refuel ourselves when we get tired.

In I Samuel 30, David had been helping and serving people until he just couldn’t take it any more. He was sick of people and exhausted. So

what did he do? Verse 6 says, “David encouraged himself in the Lord.” He got away from the people and all their demands and went off to be alone with God. He stayed away until his energy, both physically and spiritually, was replenished.

Jesus did the same thing after long periods of serving and being with people. Even the Son of God knew He had to get away from people and get alone with His Father and rest. A balanced life is one where we are always watching our gauges, physically, spiritually, emotionally, and mentally to make sure we are not running low. Servanthood is not about abusing ourselves or pushing ourselves beyond our limits.

Service is love and love is sacrifice. It isn’t easy, but a life of giving will return to us more rewards than we could ever imagine. Life will have meaning and purpose and be full to running over. This is a life that honors and glorifies God and reflects the light and love of Jesus in a dark world. This is what it means to be a servant.

Real servanthood is usually a  
“behind-the-scenes ministry.”