

5: THE HIDDEN MOTIVE: WHEN YOU WANT TO BE NOTICED

By John
In Character, Faith, Identity

4 Min Read



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Faith in Action Series: The Call to Serve

Note: The Unseen Servant: When No One Notices looks at the kind of serving that often flies under the radar—unseen by people, but never overlooked by God. The Hidden Motive: When You Want to Be Noticed digs a little deeper, exploring the good and not-so-good reasons that may drive some to serve.

OPENING THOUGHT

Every man wrestles with the question of why he serves. The truth is, our reasons aren't always as clean as we'd like them to be. Some of us serve out of gratitude — because we're thankful for what God's done. Some serve out of love — wanting to make life a little lighter

for someone else. Others serve out of obedience, seeing it as a natural response to Jesus' call. Those are the good motives — the honorable ones.

But if we're honest, there are other motives too — the ones we'd rather not admit. We serve because we want to be noticed. We want to feel needed. We want to be a part of something bigger than ourselves. Sometimes guilt or obligation creeps into our service, or because we think saying no will make us look less spiritual among our peers. Some men serve for control, others for validation or position, and some simply because they've always done it and can't stop.

Let's not be quick to condemn these motivations. These are not bad people—they just reveal how easily our hearts drift. It's easy to start out wanting to bless others and end up looking for applause. This world demands it. What began as an act of worship can slowly become a performance.

Think about it: the need to be noticed can disguise itself as devotion. And until we bring that motive into the light, it will keep draining the joy out of our serving.

SCRIPTURE

"so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

—Matthew 6:4 (ESV)

Jesus is not condemning public service; He's confronting self-promotion. Serving in secret doesn't mean don't let anyone see you—it means having the pure motive of wanting God's approval, not man's. When you serve quietly, with no one watching, God sees it all.

APPLICATION

There's nothing wrong with being recognized for doing good. However, if you cause a traffic jam while handing a homeless person a few dollars when leaving the Lowes parking lot—check your heart. God put needy people in our lives because they need help and because God is trying to perfect our identity in His Son. God gives us every opportunity to be more like Christ—it's part of being made in His image.

The world tells us that recognition matters more than our service. Even in church, we sometimes fall into that recognition trap. We praise the visible roles and forget the quiet ones — the janitors, tech volunteers, coffee brewers, and nursery workers who keep the body functioning week after week. When applause is our success gauge, our service becomes about us instead of Him.

When you serve for attention, you'll find service will tend to feel empty. When you serve for God, you'll find enjoyment because He's wired us that way.

So, before you serve next time — whether it's teaching a class, running sound, or sweeping floors — ask yourself: *"Who am I doing this for?"* If the answer is "for God," then you're already right where you need to be.

TODAY'S CHALLENGE: CHECK YOUR MOTIVATION

Do one act of service this week that costs effort but earns no credit. Don't post it. Do it in secret. Let it be your offering to God.

Then pray this:

"Father, teach me to serve for Your eyes only. Help me let go of my need to be noticed and instead rest in being known by You. Purify my motives and give me joy in hidden obedience. Amen."

FINAL THOUGHT

The world says, *"Make your mark."* Jesus says, *"Carry your towel."*
The world shouts, *"Be seen!"* Jesus whispers, *"Be faithful."*

The applause of men fades quickly, but the approval of God lasts forever. The older I get, the more convinced I am that some of God's greatest heroes will never be recognized here on earth — the ones who prayed in silence, mentored faithfully, and served without fanfare.

This week's step: Write down a short phrase that captures *why* you serve. Keep it somewhere visible this week — on your desk, dashboard, or mirror.

Let it remind you that obscurity with God is better than fame without Him.

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