

# Serving – we are men who honor the earth and serve the whole human community

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Leo Tolstoy said through a character in *What Men Live By*, “I know now that people only *seem to live* when they care only for themselves...it is by love for others that they really live. He who has Love has God in him, and is in God—because God is Love.” Certainly, a circle drawn too close to the body is too small for love. Love always extends our borders and boundaries beyond and beyond. This is partly why all Wisdom traditions invite us to move beyond the concern for the small me to the larger Other, found not only in God, but also in our neighbor and even in the more-than-human world. Like the Na’vi, in the epic film *Avatar*, we greet the entire world and all its inhabitants with, “I see you,” humbly acknowledging the other as one with us. Our boundaries are enlarged to include everyone and everything, and, in the process, love has its way with us.

Our concern that inner work makes a difference in the world suggests that we cannot be satisfied with simply being good men—we must do good, because our inner and outer transformation are vitally intertwined. If our inner work has any meaning, we will leave a healthy footprint wherever we go that brings with it healing, reconciliation, forgiveness, peacemaking, generosity, kindness and generativity. We do this in every small act done with great love: a smile, making room for another, extending a helping hand, sharing resources, bringing our personal presence, feeding, clothing, giving water, as well as promoting systems of justice for all those who are hurting and oppressed. This includes a radical shift away from much that drives consumerism, materialism, war, inequality, poverty, and pollution to a more sustainable, just and ethical lifestyle. Simply put, serving is a loving way to move through the world.

In our spiritual work, an “urgent and persistent question” will always be, “What are you doing for others?” (Martin Luther King, Jr.). We cannot transform ourselves without transforming the world. Giving our lives away and finding our true selves in the service of others (Gandhi), we are serving to build a world that celebrates the beauty of all beings. We are men who know how to serve others.

## Helpful Resources:

- Gary Morsch and Dean Nelson, *The Power of Serving Others: You Can Start Where You Are*
- Mitch Albom, *Tuesdays with Morrie: An Old Man, a Young Man, and Life's Greatest Lesson*

- Harold Kushner, *Living a Life That Matters*
- Leo Tolstoy, *What Men Live By and Other Tales*
- Rachel Naomi Remen, *My Grandfather's Blessings: Stories of Strength, Refuge, and Belonging*
- Sally Bingham, *Love God, Heal Earth: 21 Leading Religious Voices Speak Out on Our Sacred Duty to Protect the Environment*
- Brian McLaren, *Everything Must Change: When the World's Biggest Problems and Jesus' Good News Collide*