

## **Living in the Spirit of Service**

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Good morning folks. Many thanks for your kind invitation to address this conference.

I love your theme for the conference - Peace through Service. As Rotarians your main objective is service – be it in the community, in the workplace or around the globe. And to this end you have deployed worldwide a service army of more than 1.2 million Rotarians in some 34,000 clubs - laudable and an overwhelmingly impressive achievement.

Your current motto, “Service before Self”, is pregnant with meaning.

Further, your Code of Conduct is as exemplary as your Four-Way Test is poignant.

The Rotary Foundation has as its mission, “Doing Good in the World”. Again, service is loudly implied.

Your mission is clear - service

In this presentation, “Living in the Spirit of Service”, I will explore the concept of Service and how you can better develop yourself to pursue life in the true spirit of service.

What is Service?

Before we can answer this question, we must first answer some more basic but related questions?

What is the purpose of your existence?

Why are you alive?

Is it just to satisfy your self-interest and sensual pleasures?

Or, is it about living in the service of others?

What is it that brings value and worth to your life?

I put it to you that there is only one reason for your existence and that is to serve others. It is the only true measure of your life's worth. There is no nobler purpose for your individual or collective existence. To put it bluntly, you live to be of service to humanity.

Service is your divine duty to others (humanity) in gratitude for your own human existence. It is the essence of what we commonly refer to as the *Golden Rule* - One should treat others as one would like others to treat oneself - and which exists in the scriptures of all the major religions. It is beautifully expressed in what the Africans refer to as *Ubuntu*, which means: "I am because you are". In 2008 Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa captured its meaning in the following words:

"One of the sayings in our country is Ubuntu - the essence of being human. Ubuntu speaks particularly about the fact that you can't exist as a human being in isolation. It speaks about our interconnectedness. You can't be human all by yourself, and when you have this quality - Ubuntu - you are known for your generosity. We think of ourselves far too frequently as just individuals, separated from one another, whereas you are connected and what you do affects the whole World. When you do well, it spreads out; it is for the whole of humanity."

As Rotarians you are essentially involved in advancing humanity through spreading the message of *Ubuntu* and the *Golden Rule*. Here you are on solid ground.

In response to the question; “What is the purpose of your existence, I am often told, “To serve God”. Then my follow up question is: “How can you best serve God or how does God want you to best serve?” Again the answer can only be – to live in the interest of others through service.

I continue with a story. It happened in one of my leadership workshops, which I was conducting here in Grenada in collaboration with the Grenada Chamber of Industry and Commerce. In one of our sessions we were discussing the concept of the moral dimension of profit when one of the participants shot out of his chair as he experienced an “ah hah “ moment and announced: “Now I understand! I’ve been looking at my cash register for all these years, but now I realize that I should have been looking at my customers. Wow! Now I see that if I take care of my people by providing a great service – quality goods and fair prices - people will always be in my shop and my cash register will take care of itself.”

Why are some of you in business?

Is it to provide a service?

Or is it just to make money?

Business is the corporate form of being of service to society. Business is intended to provide a quality service that demonstrates care and love for other human beings. Profits should be the fruits you reap from the service you provide. I believe that if you care for your customers they will take care of your profits. But, you must do it with honesty, fairness, integrity, and compassion. On its own, the profit motive is a form of selfishness and greed. Business should extend genuine love and show love through action, not so much words.

I remind you of the Rotarian motto of “Service before Self”.

So, being in business is an opportunity to serve the people. Profit is your moral reward for service to humanity. Whenever profit and the pleasure derived therefrom becomes your ultimate goal, you are liable to exploit others unfairly.

The greater good must always be the ultimate objective in all aspects of your life – be it personal, professional, business or community. Everyone must be committed to growing each other through service. This is the only sure path to human development.

It is the one sure way of achieving your objective of: “Peace through Service”.

You can best serve others in the area of your divine purpose. Service comes naturally with the recognition of the purpose of your existence and living in keeping with your life’s purpose. Service is acknowledgement that you live in the pursuit of the fulfillment of your divine duty. Service is acknowledgement that you are a vital part of the brotherhood of humanity. It gives value and dignity to life. It provides a reason to be alive. It is the best way of expressing your thanks for life. It is expressing your spirituality.

To repeat, giving service is the only reason for your existence. And you must do so joyfully and thankfully, despite the many challenges that you may face.

Unfortunately you live in a world where you can be induced to stray from your noble intentions as you become more self-focused. Pursuits in the interest of self dilute your humanity and integrity. Service then becomes an economic transaction as you look for selfish rewards in return.

Life is like a balance sheet. Living life in the ‘red’ is taking more from the world than you are giving. It is losing sense of your true humanity and becoming spiritually bankrupt. You become a parasite (or a leech) on humanity.

You only add value to humanity and to your existence when you contribute more than you receive; when you are in the ‘black’; when your life is in surplus.

What is the status of your life's balance sheet! Are you in the black or, are you in the red?

Being of service to others begins with genuinely caring for the welfare of others. True caring is an emotional state of mind that results in the expression of love, generosity and compassion to others. You help others to bring out the best in themselves. You help them to live more fulfilled lives. You are both loving and empathetic.

Caring is love. It is generosity. You see the humanity of others through the eyes of your own humanity.

When you care at the transactional level only, you extend care conditionally. There is an expectation of a return – that you will be rewarded materially, power-wise, relationship-wise or praise-wise – thus pleasing the ego and selfish or group interests.

True caring is exuding a high state of your human spirituality. True service is the natural outcome of a spiritual mind, not a transactional mind. It is not about looking for a selfish reward in exchange for the service. It is about giving of your self unselfishly. True service emanates from having the inner strength to allow the real truth of your human existence to emerge. It is about expressing your innate human goodness. It is about fostering your most innate desire to be moral and to live a life that reflects your human wholeness.

How can you strengthen your inner-self to better meet your goal of living a life of service?

Our leadership development programme, *Leading From Above The Line* offers a principle-grounded approach to personal development. It proffers a philosophy for the strengthening of the inner-self through the Five Sources of Your Inner Power.

Discovering your inner self opens the door to your self-improvement by tapping into the Five Sources of Your Inner Power. With this inner strength you are able to display a more positive leadership aura and thus win the trust, respect and admiration of others. Leadership follows as a consequence as you naturally motivate and inspire others to want to follow you as they pursue their own self-development.

In closing, I will like to elaborate on the Five Sources of Your Inner Power as the path to leading a life of greater self-control and stronger personal leadership. A service-oriented mind becomes a consequence.

You can see the Five Sources of Your Inner Power as the five fingers of your hand.

Take a look at your hand.

That's you!

Open and close those five fingers.

That's Your Inner Power!

When healthy, these five fingers can give you tremendous power to hold a cricket bat and hit a ball coming at you at over 90 miles per hour. Or, it can give you dexterity and control such that you can easily manipulate a pen and write effortlessly. However, when any one of your five fingers is swollen or painful, not even broken, your power is dissipated as you struggle to hit the ball or control the pen.

In the same way that five functioning fingers help you to have total control of your pen, the Five Sources of Your Inner Power help you to have greater control over your life and to display a more positive leadership aura including a penchant for service.

The first is Principle Consciousness, which is being conscious of the principles that define your human nature. It is recognizing the spiritual nature of your existence and that you are naturally endowed with human goodness. You have a conscience that constantly reminds you of what is right and what is wrong. You are a moral being with an intuitive understanding of fairness. Principle Consciousness is like your thumb; this is where you give your life a spiritual and moral anchor like the central role that your thumb plays in relation to your other four fingers.

Every human being comes into the world to do something unique and something special. That is your Purpose, the second of the Five Sources of Your Inner Power. You all have a gift that allows you to excel. It means that excellence is within the reach of all of you. But the interesting thing is that you have to discover that gift yourself. It is available only to you. This means that no matter how well meaning your parents, spouse, friends, teachers and bosses may be, they cannot determine what is best for you. However, your parents, spouse, friends, teachers and bosses can encourage you to embark on the journey of finding your purpose in life. Purpose is like your index finger pointing you in the direction of your destination in life. Purpose is key to pointing you to the area in which you can best serve.

The third of the Five Sources of Your Inner Power is Emotional Mastery. You are all emotional beings. You have feelings – some of which foster your peace of mind and others, which destroy your peace of mind. The latter, commonly referred to as the negative emotions, can destroy you. You are all challenged to train your minds to develop emotional mastery so that you can have greater self-control. Your negative emotions such as anger, malice, greed, lust, gluttony, fear and stress are under the control of your primitive brain. Control lies in your ability to rewire your cerebral cortex or higher brain such that you have earlier and greater conscious awareness of your negative emotions, thus giving you the

opportunity to effect greater self-control over time. Emotional Mastery is like your long middle finger reminding you that this is a lifetime activity.

Understanding Change is the fourth of the Five Sources of Your Inner Power and it involves understanding the nature of the continuously changing world that you are all a part of, so that you do not live in fear of your ever-changing environment. When you understand change you have a better perspective on life and you can live in greater harmony with your environment. When you understand change you also understand that you are not just a recipient of change but that you have the opportunity to be a change agent yourself.

Understanding Change is like your ring finger reminding you that change is continuous.

The final of the Five Sources of Your Inner Power is Knowledge Empowerment. This is what you would have received from the various educational institutions that you have attended. Also, it involves the knowledge that you acquire through your own private pursuit of knowledge. Knowledge Empowerment is like your little finger or pinky – flexible and always searching.

Together the Five Sources of Your Inner Power will nourish you internally to have the inner strength to power your way through a successful life while winning the respect, admiration and trust of others.

In the same way that you grasp your pen with five healthy fingers knowing that you have full control over your writing, I want you to take control of your life through the Five Sources of Your Inner Power so that you can become the scribe of your own life.

You must first lead yourself before you can expect to be a leader of others.

Let the five-fingered hand of yours be a permanent reminder of the importance of self-development in the roadmap to principle-centered personal development. And let it also be a reminder that there is always something that **you** can do to



transform your life for the better as you strive to achieve the Rotarian ideal of  
“Service before Self”.

We all have the ability to become better and to be of greater service to humanity.

Thank you.

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