THE IMPORTANCE OF INDUSTRY

INTRODUCTION

When my dad was 15, he worked after school in a men's haberdashery. Do you even know what that is? It's a store with men's clothing and accessories. He was a dapper young man—oops, there's another old-fashioned word, meaning he was really into clothes, looking pressed and all put together. So it was the perfect store for him.

One day, wanting to make a teaching point for me, he told me about the day his boss said, "Howard, you do good work. I notice that when you get your chores done, you're always refolding the shirts, reorganizing the shelves, dusting or finding something else to do that's helpful without me having to tell you. You are industrious."

COMMENTARY: THE IMPORTANCE OF INDUSTRY

For reasons far beyond the scope of this devotional, there has been a serious decline in this character trait of industry, which we will define this way: ***Industry is working as hard as necessary to finish a task and then looking for more to do.***

Our technology-rich, comfort-oriented culture has made daily life more user-friendly, so that much less hard work is required of people, not just young people. Consequently, most people need remedial help to develop the habit of industry.

And that's too bad, because Christ-like love definitely requires that people be industrious. It's true that love is very often a good feeling, but it is always hard work.

- *Loving people enough to forgive them 70×7 is hard work.*
- *Just when you've stepped in to help one person deal with their problem, another need for help crops up.*
- *And then there's this thing Jesus says about going an extra-mile beyond what someone is expecting, even forcing, you to do.*

The spirit of industry really shines when you volunteer to help, and you do what you were asked to do, but then come up to the leader and ask, "What else can I do to help?" Industrious people are immensely helpful and indispensable.

Stop and think about it. That very question— *What else can I do to help?*— seems to be the posture that our Lord is always assuming, and way more than we ever recognize. He doesn't wait. He's paying such careful attention that He knows what would be helpful before we even ask. Like Psalm 139:2-4 says..

> ***You perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD.***

What else can I do to help? That's His posture. So, once again, do you see how this trait of industry and all the other character traits are key ingredients of Christlike love and therefore something we can pursue and practice?

REFLECTION:

So let's take some time for reflection with a two questions of examination and confession.

- **When you fulfill a responsibility or finish a task, especially when you do it really well, do you tend to think, "Good, I'm glad that's over," or do think about something else you could do that might be helpful?** (Think about things your spouse, or parents, or boss, or co-workers, or neighbors might need you to do or hope you will do to help them.)

- **Are you even interested in being that kind of person?**

- **Who is the most industrious person you know? What are they like? In what ways are they indispensable?** While you're thinking about it, this would be a good time to practice the trait of gratitude and tell that person in a note or phone call, "Thank you for being an industrious person."

But now let's close in prayer.

PRAYER:

Dear Lord, I'll admit. I have a tendency sometimes to do as little as possible, so I can get on with doing what I feel like doing, or just kicking up my feet and taking a break. I'm sure that's not always wrong, after all, You were the One who established the Sabbath day of rest principle. But I'm getting a fresh vision of Your love that is calling me to live life with more effort directed toward service, putting the interests of others ahead of my own so that I am always on the lookout for how I can do more to help. I know I'm not supposed to burnout, but I'll trust You to put on the brakes when I need. I'm nowhere close to being as industrious as I could be. And now that I see it as an important ingredient of love, I'm willing to take this fresh vision and make a fresh commitment to love like You. Help me, Jesus, please. I ask in Your name. Amen.