

sure! Our sins disqualify us from his service. The good news is that the cross has not lost its power—and it never will. Jesus' forgiveness is ever active in us, cleansing us and setting us back up on the road of active, joyful, acceptable service.

Those of us here today who benefit from that service want to thank you. But we want to do more. We want to encourage you by sharing with you the impact that Jesus is making in our lives through you. We want you to know that we're growing in the forgiveness of sins and in our own discipleship because of all you've done for us. And we want you to know of our commitment to pray for you as you serve in Jesus' steps—just as you pray for us as we follow him.

One of Christ's ambassadors, Paul, encouraged us to do just that: [*Read 1 Thessalonians 5:11 and 2 Thessalonians 3:1–2.*]

### Taking It Home

Let the *Serving in His Steps* item you take home today remind you of the high honor that belongs to you as Christ's ambassador. Let it remind you of the forgiveness that belongs to you in him. Let the Bible verse on it, "We are ambassadors for Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:20), remind you to follow, to serve, to pray, and to love his people just as he loves them! Thank you for all you've done and all you will continue to do!

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The Scripture quotation is from the King James or Authorized Version of the Bible.

#SHS9DA



Expanding the Impact of Your  
Gifts of Encouragement

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## Serving in His Steps

### Getting Started

*Mark the following passages in your Bible for easy reference during the devotion:*

*2 Corinthians 5:19–20*

*2 Thessalonians 1:11–12*

*Philemon 1:6*

*Psalms 50:15*

*1 Thessalonians 5:11*

*2 Thessalonians 3:1–2*

### Introduction

A crisis erupts in Ethiopia. Or Brazil. Or Vietnam. The President of the United States wants to know what's happening on the ground. So he calls our ambassador, the person who represents the United States in that nation. Sometimes, the president tells the ambassador what to say and do. Many times, though, the ambassador advises

the president on what can or should be done. After all, the ambassador has a close-up and personal view of all the events unfolding right there in real time.

Ambassadors serve as the official representatives of their country. They carry a very high rank. Usually, the host country even gives ambassadors control of the specific territory on which the U.S. embassy sits. It's as though little pieces of the United States are scattered all around the world and each of our ambassadors has authority over one of those little pieces.

International law governs the service of ambassadors. That law grants ambassadors “plenipotentiary authority.” We might say that ambassadors have “plenty of power.” Most ambassadors who serve as “head of mission” for their nation carry the full title “Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary.”

Wow! That's some title! And some power!

## Getting to the Heart

Now, consider this! In 2 Corinthians 5, Paul calls those who lead God's people “Christ's ambassadors.” Listen for that in these verses. (*Read 2 Corinthians 5:19–20.*)

Think about that, (*name the people/positions you are honoring today—elders, deacons, teachers, committee chairs, etc.*). As you serve God's people, you represent heaven itself. You speak for heaven's High King! What an honor! When you share the Good News of forgiveness and peace in Jesus, your words carry all the authority of heaven.

And when you (*give examples of the kinds of service your honorees engage in—deliver those groceries to the food bank,*

*visit with that shut-in, teach that class of 3-year-olds, etc.*), you become Jesus' hands and feet. Step by step, you follow your Savior, doing and saying what he would do and say; you are Christ's ambassadors! And you do it with all the power he supplies—plenty of power! You're a “Plenipotentiary”!

And there's more. International law recognizes ambassadors as “ministers”—servants. Just as Jesus served, step by step, minute by minute, person by person, so we—Christ's ambassadors today—do, too. Just as Jesus put others first, just as he acted in humility and love, we get to do that, too. We serve in his steps, with all the power he supplies.

But that's not all! When a crisis erupts here on earth—in our congregation, our community, or our world, your prayers carry great weight before the throne of God. Of course, our Lord knows all about everything that happens here on our planet. He doesn't need us, as his ambassadors, to brief him about the “situation on the ground.” He already knows all the ins and outs, the ups and downs, the people and the problems. We don't *need* to brief him, but he *wants* us to do that! He urges us to pray for the people we serve in his name, just as Christ's ambassadors down through the ages have prayed for those they served. And our King promises to hear us: [*Read 2 Thessalonians 1:11–12; Philemon 1:6; and Psalm 50:15.*]

Jesus has made us his partners in his work here on earth; in ways we don't fully understand, our words and actions as Christ's ambassadors matter—they matter eternally!

Of course, none of us are worthy of this honor. We all fail in our duties as Christ's ambassadors every day. If it weren't for the cross of our Savior and the death Jesus died there in our place, we would have our diplomatic credentials cancelled for