
All About Me? by Olivia Stewart

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**Chastain Horse Park
Atlanta, Georgia
Youth Family Social**

I finally have my 15 minutes of fame! When asked to give the sermon, I'll admit, I was a little nervous. But, I soon thought about all the things I would receive tonight. My 15 minutes of fame would include, attention, possible admiration, respect, and clearly my popularity with the church would shoot through the roof! For once I could be sure that all eyes were on me.

I've only neared my 15 minutes of fame on three different occasions. I remember the first time. It was the regional track meet where I competed for pole vaulting. All my teammates and coaches were focused on cheering me on. The first place gold was mine! All eyes were on me when I had to make my VP speech for Student Council in front of my entire class of six hundred people. I had the spotlight shining on me- figuratively and literally. In case you were wondering, I won the election! My last occasion was when I was mistaken for a celebrity, country star singer Taylor Swift. My wild, huge, curly hair and I played along pretending I was someone famous and important. I'll be available for autographs after the service. :) In the end, these events all had one thing in common: they left me with a temporary high, which quickly faded away to emptiness. When I look back on all my fame, I feel absurd, shallow, and foolish, caring so much about the attention I was receiving. What makes me feel this way?

As Paul tells us this evening, "Let love be genuine, love one another with mutual affection; outdo one each other in showing honor." I realize that I was not at all loving others with mutual affection because I was too busy loving myself. My love was not genuine, for it was shallow and based on selfish desires. I was trying to outdo others in winning honor to build myself up. I was forgetting my equality with all of God's creation. Paul goes on to say, "Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve The Lord." Through my actions I have been serving myself; attempting to make myself feel better. My focus on serving God was blurred.

Before I found a home at the Cathedral I was constantly switching churches trying to find a stable church community. The problem was that I was church shopping for all the wrong reasons. I was looking for a church that would enhance my social life; a place where I was comfortable and "cool". I wanted to feel better about myself, to feel proud for simply attending church. I was looking to receive new friends. I was looking to receive attention and affection. I was looking to receive a better relationship with God. It was still all about me. Again, I was left with an empty feeling. What makes me feel this way?

I continue to receive, yet I feel empty! This seems to make no sense. 15 minutes is only 15 minutes. But when my timer runs out, then what? Will you remember my words after

tonight? Paul goes on to say, "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another." When I stop to think, I realize there have been times in the youth group where it was not all about me. I had the opportunity this summer to lead a Bible Study at Fellini's. Through God I guided, assisted, and learned with the youth group. Suddenly, I had become an offering. It is not all about me when we sing at the top of our lungs to worship; for we are lifting our voices up and "rejoicing with those who rejoice." Sometimes I've even gone so far as standing up and teaching hand-motions to the songs. Without even noticing I've become an offering.

As Paul reminds us, I've tried to "extend hospitality to strangers." It is not all about me when we serve meals to the homeless at Peachtree Pine Shelter, or when we worked in the Alzheimer's Clinic on the Memphis Mission Trip. On the mission trip we all quickly caught on to our new catch phrase "We are here to serve!" We all needed a wake up call that it was not only about us, but what we were there to do for others (especially at 4 in the morning!) "We are here to serve" reminded us and emphasized that we were all working together as an offering.

Wait a second, what happened to my 15 minutes of fame? If it is no longer all about me and my fame then what makes me stay motivated to be an offering? When we forget about receiving everything, we grow, focusing on what we have to give and offer. There's only one thing that makes it all worth while, makes every moment precious, and makes all the memories unforgettable, the rewards. I don't mean temporary rewards that have fading glory, such as medals, trophies, or fame. It's all about the imperishable rewards that can't be touched, but can be felt and cherished. On our Memphis Mission Trip for the homeless and elderly, we realized that we were all doing the work of God. What a great reward! We also felt an indescribable emotion of joy from seeing the smiles, appreciation, and thankfulness across the faces of those helped. What a great reward! At the end of the night just one less person would go to bed hungry because of our offerings. What a great reward! Serving others also puts our own life back in perspective. It shows us how fortunate our lives truly are; reminding us to appreciate all our many blessings. What a great reward!

One of the greatest rewards through the youth group offering together is the strong unification it causes. If we offer our hearts together through worship, studying scripture, serving the homeless, and attending church activities we act as offerings for not only others but also for each other. Our offerings enhance strong relationships because we can begin to see God in everyone. We begin to recognize the offering of others. We begin to realize that we are not coming to church or youth group activities just for ourselves, but also for everyone else. We come to church to offer support. We come to offer friendship. We come to offer encouragement through God. We may not notice the effect our offerings have on others, or the cycle of motivation and inspiration we may cause bringing forth more offerings.

This sermon is my offering tonight. I'm not looking to receive my 15 minutes of fame and glory, but the reward is great! The reward is that my offering may inspire and lead to more offering. In the end, I have so much to gain from being in front of you tonight... NOT popularity, NOT attention, NOT admiration, and most of all, NOT fame. But the hope that through God my offering will be received and someone else will decide to become an offering. AMEN.