

A person is walking a tightrope, balancing a tall, precarious stack of five large, dark, irregularly shaped rocks on their head. The person is wearing dark clothing and boots, and is leaning forward slightly to maintain balance. The background is a hazy, mountainous landscape under a soft, overcast sky. The overall mood is one of struggle and weariness.

O What a Weariness!

Servants Retreat | 9.2.2024

Outline



- Context
- The Descent
- The Sneering Servant
- The Impact of a Sneering Servant
- A Renewed Sincerity in Service

Context: Malachi

- Malachi prophesied during the days of Nehemiah
- The people were plagued with corrupt priests
- After his prophecy, God was silent for 400 years until the coming of the forerunner, St. John the Baptist.
- “For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, My name shall be great among the Gentiles; In every place incense shall be offered to My name, And a pure offering; For My name shall be great among the nations,” Says the LORD of hosts. (Mal. 1:11)



Context: Malachi 1:13-14

- You also say, 'Oh, what a weariness!' And you sneer at it," Says the LORD of hosts. "And you bring the stolen, the lame, and the sick; Thus you bring an offering! Should I accept this from your hand?" Says the LORD. "But cursed be the deceiver Who has in his flock a male, And takes a vow, But sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished— For I am a great King," Says the LORD of hosts, "And My name is to be feared among the nations.
- They complained about the service to be wearisome
- How does this happen?



The Descent: From Joy to Sneering

- **Phase I: The initial spark**
 - “Your first love” (Rev. 2:4)
 - Serve with a heart full of zeal, enthusiasm, and a deep love for God and His people.
- **Phase II: Slow drift**
 - Various distractions begin to creep in—busyness, personal struggles, or the pressures of life
 - *“The distractions of life are like dust in the eye, blinding the vision of the heart.”* (St. Gregory the Theologian)

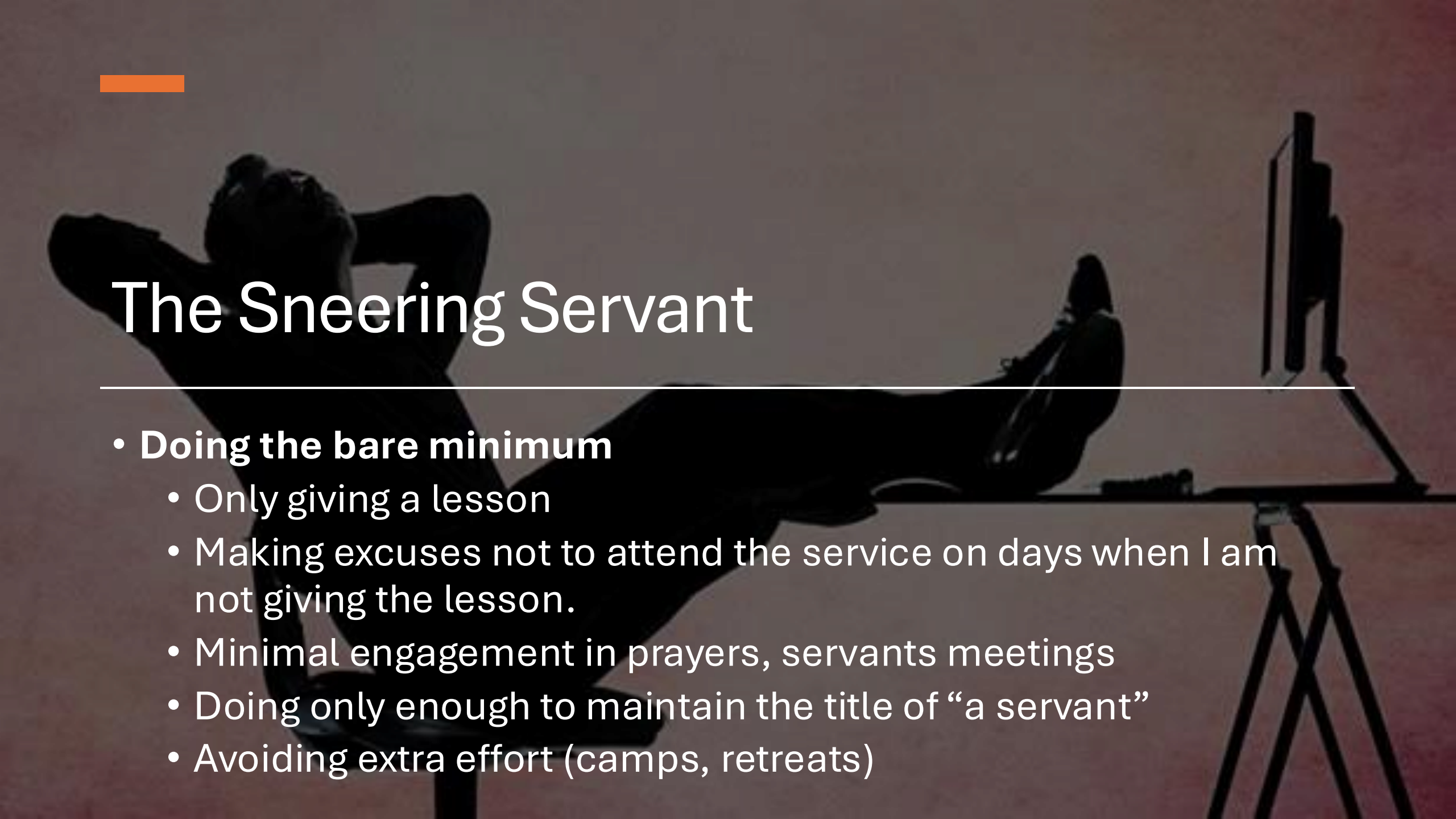
The Descent: From Joy to Sneering

- **Phase III: Spiritual Apathy**
 - Diminished joy – what was once an honor and privilege is an obligation
 - Resentment and weariness
 - The servant starts to feel weary and burdened by their responsibilities
 - Begin to question why they should commit when it no longer brings them joy
 - Sneering at service
 - What was once a sacred duty tied to one's salvation has now become despised and disdained.

The Sneering Servant

- **Compromised Commitment**
 - Rushed Preparations: lessons, activities, visits (not available)
 - Neglecting prayer
 - Focused on completing a task rather than discipleship
- **Offering leftovers**
 - Leaving only the leftover time for service
 - Not willing to sacrifice (i.e. suffer a loss)



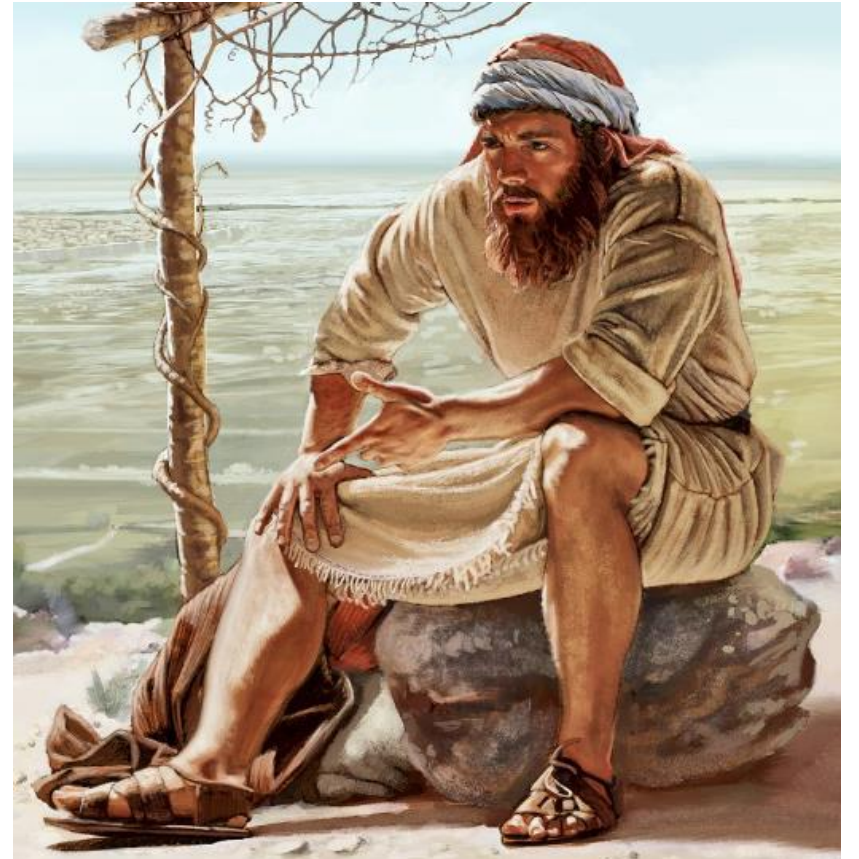
A silhouette of a person reclining at a desk, with their hands behind their head and legs crossed. A laptop is open on the desk, and a monitor is on a stand to the right. The background is a gradient of dark colors.

The Sneering Servant

- **Doing the bare minimum**
 - Only giving a lesson
 - Making excuses not to attend the service on days when I am not giving the lesson.
 - Minimal engagement in prayers, servants meetings
 - Doing only enough to maintain the title of “a servant”
 - Avoiding extra effort (camps, retreats)

The Sneering Servant

- Feeling that service is a burden
 - Negative attitude: obligation or chore rather than a joyful offering to God.
 - Feeling unappreciated or overwhelmed
- EX: Jonah
- “But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. So he prayed to the Lord, and said, 'Ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm.'” (Jonah 4:1-2)



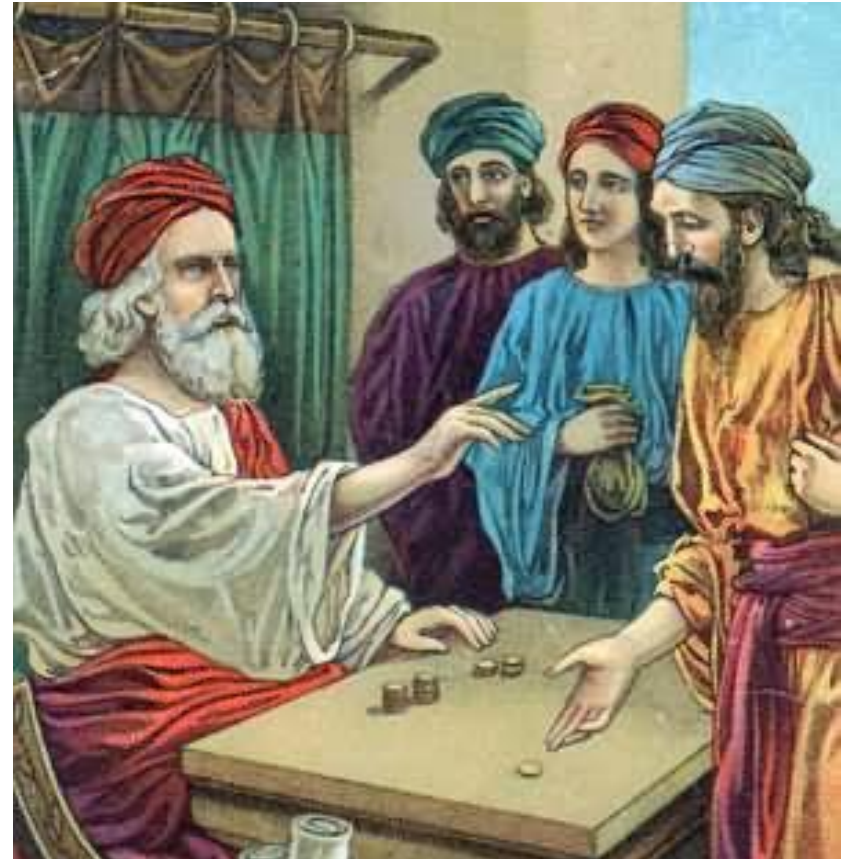
The image features a 3D rendering of numerous reflective, metallic spheres arranged in a grid-like pattern. Several blue arrows are superimposed on the scene, pointing away from a central point towards the top right, suggesting a diverging or spreading effect. The text "Impact of a Sneering Servant" is overlaid in the center in a large, white, sans-serif font.

Impact of a Sneering Servant

On the Servant

1. Forfeiting of God's grace

- Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:24-28, 30)
- "Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, **I knew you to be a hard man**, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25 And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.' 26 "But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. 27 So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. 28 **So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents.**'"
- And **cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness.** There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'



On the Servant

2. Loss of joy and fulfillment

- St. John the Baptist
- “He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled.” (Jn. 3:29)



On the Servant

2. Loss of joy and fulfillment



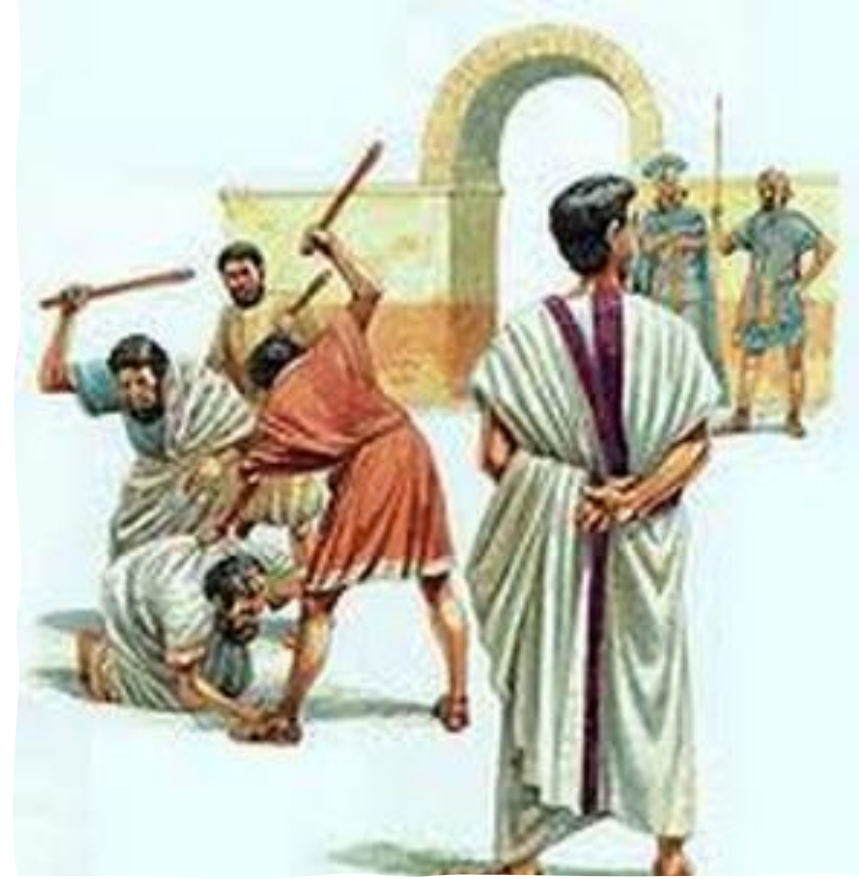
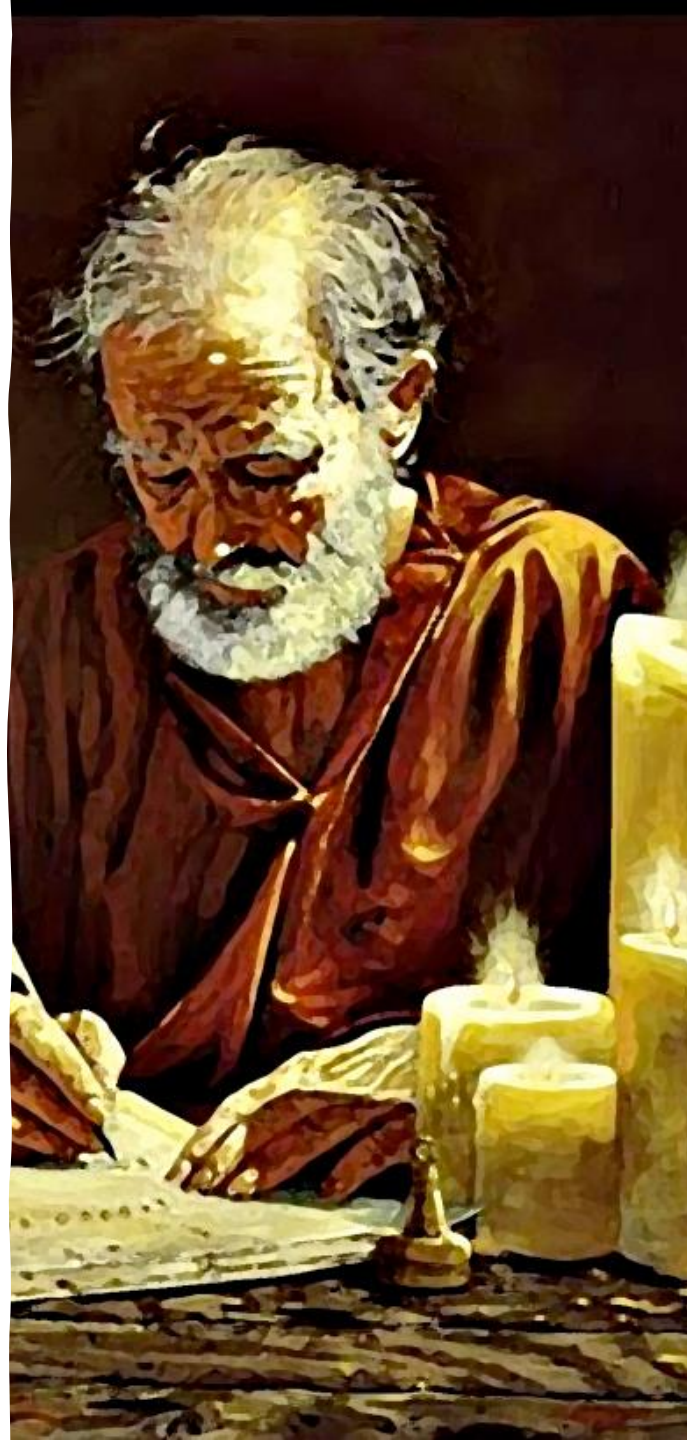
- Gehazi
- But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, 'Look, my master has spared Naaman this Syrian, while not receiving from his hands what he brought; but as the Lord lives, **I will run after him and take something from him.**'" (2 Kings 5:20)
- "Then he said to him, 'Did not my heart go with you when the man turned back from his chariot to meet you? **Is it time** to receive money and to receive clothing, olive groves and vineyards, sheep and oxen, male and female servants? Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and your descendants forever.' And he went out from his presence leprous, as white as snow." (2 Kings 5:26-27)
- Gehazi was not content with the blessing of being a disciple to Elisha.
- He was searching for fulfillment in material possessions.

On the Served

- **1. A Stumbling block and offense**
- EX: Sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas
- So he said to them, "Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people. No, my sons! For it is not a good report that I hear. You make the LORD's people transgress." (1 Sam. 2:23-24)
- Those whom we serve will emulate our sentiment towards service, the Church, and God.
- **2. Loss of trust**



A Renewed Sincerity in Service

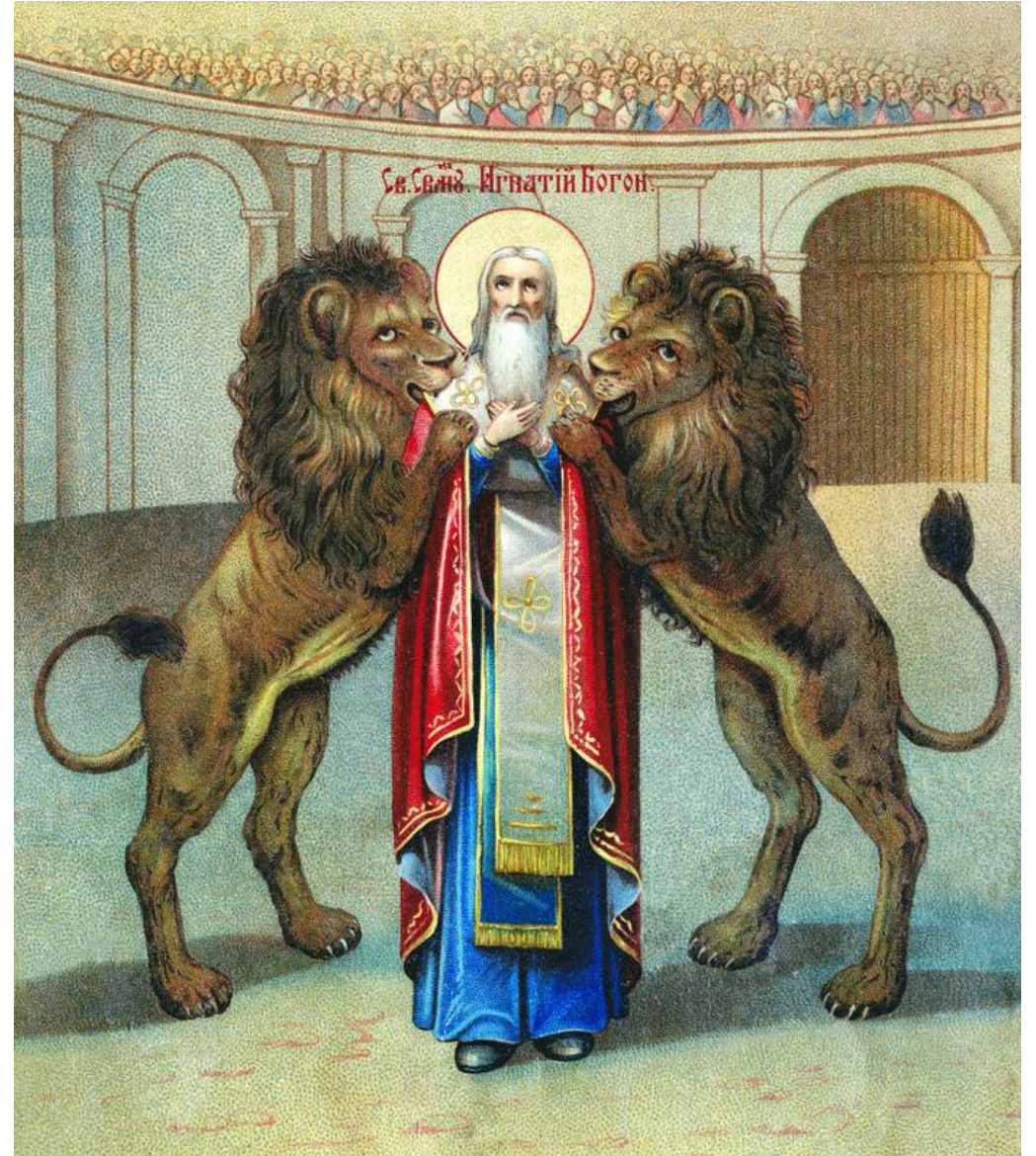


1. Prioritize your spiritual life

- Take time to connect with God
- It is through our relationship with God that we receive strength
- “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” (Phil. 4:13)
- “The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoices, and with my song I will praise Him.” (Ps. 28:7)
- *“Acquire the Spirit of Peace, and a thousand souls around you will be saved.”* (St. Seraphim of Sarov)
 - A healthy spiritual life overflows into all aspects of service.

2. Reframe your perspective on Service

- My salvation is tied to my service
- See service as worship
- "Let us therefore serve Him with fear, and with all reverence." (St. Ignatius of Antioch)



3. Seek support and fellowship

- Lean on fellow servants for support, encouragement, and sharing the load.
- EX: St. Paul was comforted by his disciple Titus
- “For indeed, when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside were conflicts, inside were fears. Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming, but also by the consolation with which he was comforted in you, when he told us of your earnest desire, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more.” (2 Cor. 7:5-7)
- *“None of us is as strong as all of us.”* (St. Cyprian)



4. Remember the Eternal Reward

“His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’” (Matt. 25:21)

“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.” (Col. 3:23-24)

The background of the image is a dense, overlapping field of 3D question marks. Most of these question marks are a dark grey color. In the center of the image, a single question mark is a bright yellow color, making it stand out prominently. Overlaid on this scene is the word "Questions?" in a white, sans-serif font. A thin, white, slightly wavy horizontal line is positioned directly beneath the text.

Questions?