

While setting the table for dinner one evening, a little girl entertained herself by bringing the utensils to life. Her mother listened as knives, forks, and spoons carried on conversation and wrestled their way onto the table. Suddenly the girl looked over at her mother and declared, “If I had to choose – I’d be a spoon!”

“A spoon,” her mother replied, intrigued. “Why would you want to be a spoon? What would be wrong with being a knife or fork?”

“Well,” the girl explained, “forks are too grabby – always stabbing stuff and taking it like it’s theirs. Like in school – I hate it when somebody takes a piece of my dessert with their fork and eats it.”

“Okay,” her mother agreed, “what about being a knife?”

“No, knives are scary – like, they cut things, and you can’t really eat with them, just slice stuff up,” she responded.

“But,” the little girl continued, holding a shiny spoon in front of her face, “spoons can scoop up lots of stuff and even pass it around.”

Her mother understood. “They’re nice and round and smooth and friendly, right?”

“Right!” answered the daughter. “I’d rather be a spoon!”

Be a spoon? It’s not just a childhood game of make believe. It is a great image of the Christian lifestyle, of ministry in motion. The little girl’s analysis of silverware was right on target. But it is also a revealing insight into the way various types of people operate in this world.

Wanna be a fork? We’ve all known plenty of ‘forks.’ These are the ‘gimme’ people, those who never seem to have enough on their own plate to satisfy themselves. They are

constantly on the lookout for something more, something better, something different. In their greed, ‘gimme more’ folk folks can’t stop to savor the morsels they are collecting.

Wanna be a knife? Knife people are fixated on what lies before them - but only because they are trying to figure out how they can carve it up into a new shape – especially a new form that they will wholly determine. Knife people are control freaks. Knives try to reconstruct reality so that it will serve their purposes, so it will suit their preferences. No matter what is placed before knife people, it is never quite right. The sharp blade of the knife goes to work, slicing off anything they find offensive, cutting down any big goals into tiny piecemeal projects, dissecting the heart out of ideas, never leaving anything whole.

Wanna be a spoon? Spoons are distinctly different, because instead of taking, spoons are designed to serve. A spoon offers sustenance to others. It is not just concerned with scooping up everything in its path for itself, or reconstituting everything to fit into a preconceived image. Spoons exist for one purpose only: to serve and save.

Of course, it is not easy to be a spoon. There was a certain woman who accompanied her husband to the doctor’s office. After his checkup, the doctor called the wife into his office alone. He said, “Your husband is suffering from a very severe disease, combined with some horrible stress. If you don’t do the following your husband will surely die.

“Each morning, fix him a healthy breakfast. Be pleasant and keep him in a good mood. For lunch, make him a nutritious meal. For dinner, prepare an especially nice meal for him. Do not burden him with chores and don’t complain to him. It will only make his stress worse. Basically, just strive to satisfy his every whim. If you can do this for the next ten months to a year, I think your husband will recover nicely.”

On the way home, the husband asked his wife, “Well, what did the doctor say?”

She replied, “Honey, you’ve only got a few days to live.”

True spoon people are adaptable – they can operate in a variety of venues. Whether it’s hot soup or freezing ice cream, they can scoop it up. Spoon people serve others, but they are also the best at stirring things up.

Ever notice that in good silverware sets there are always more spoons than anything else? That is because everyone, including the utensil manufacturers, knows that spoons get used for more things and in more ways than do knives and forks. Because their shape is less specialized, spoons are more adaptable. You can eat steak, spaghetti, or soup with a spoon. If necessary, a spoon can even do some cutting. Who hasn’t sliced through a reluctant, rock-hard cantaloupe with the edge of a spoon? Being a spoon – a server, a saver – sometimes means dishing up some pretty tough stuff. But a well-balanced, sturdy spoon can do it.

The Apostle Paul, author of today’s Epistle to the Philippians, used to be a knife person. As a zealous Pharisee, he tried to surgically cut off Christianity, which he deemed an offensive growth on the body of Judaism.

But after his Damascus road experience, Paul relinquished his confidence in the flesh and committed himself to Christ. In today’s Epistle, Paul says, “I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” Paul’s new commitment resulted in his honed edges being beaten flat and smooth. His narrowness was pulled into a wide bowl and his rigidity was bent into a gentle curve. And Paul was transformed into a spoon.

In his new spoon form, Paul became committed to serving Christ by serving others. The sharp, pointed attacks of Saul the knife became the nurturing, nourishing scoops of service dished up by Paul the spoon.

What kind of changes would we have to make in our souls to stop all the frantic fork-stabbing and nasty knife-slicing that pierces our lives?

Instead of being in competition with strangers and others, we can be in service to our brothers and sisters. Instead of trying to ‘have it all,’ we can try ‘sharing it all.’ Instead of carving up others, we can adapt our attitudes to meet their needs. Instead of worrying about what is on our own plates, we can start paying attention to the nutritional needs of others.

Paul recognized that spoon spirituality is the essential ingredient for effective ministry. Wanna be a spoon? Dish up some of Paul’s ‘one another’ helpings and heap them on someone’s plate: live in harmony with one another (Rom 12:16), welcome one another (Rom 15:7), greet one another (1 Cor 16:20), agree with one another (2 Cor 13:11), encourage one another (1 Thes 4:18), bear one another’s burdens (Gal 6:2), bear with one another in love (Eph 4:2), be subject to one another (Eph 5:21).

When we spoon up these ‘one anothers,’ there will no longer be any need for knives and forks. So go ahead – be a spoon!