

'THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP' – 2010 LENT NOTES FROM THE LEPROSY MISSION

WEEK FIVE - BEING A SERVANT

Mark 10: 45 'For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many'

One definition of a servant is:

'One who expresses submission, recognisance or debt to another'

As a starting point for this study it may be worthwhile looking at (or singing) the song 'From Heaven You Came' by Graham Kendrick, often referred to as 'The Servant King'.

The last verse is particularly challenging:

'So let us learn how to serve
And in our lives enthrone Him
Each others' needs to prefer
For it is Christ we are serving'.

Talking of service and of being a servant suggests that we are under someone's authority; we are subservient, having no will of our own. This is a concept many people would find difficult. Perhaps we all have a little bit of a rebellion within us.



DISCUSS:

What does it mean to be a servant of Christ?

Responses may include that we must:

1. Recognise God's authority
2. Be prepared to lay aside our own desires and put others first
3. Be a good citizen
4. Be prepared to get involved in the world
5. Act with humility



DISCUSS:

If we are subject to God's authority what about earthly rulers? Do we disregard their power and authority?

Bible passages: Romans 13: 1-7 , 1 Peter 2: 13-16, Titus 3: 1, 2, Matthew 22: 15-22.

These passages state that we have a duty to our country – to pay our taxes, obey the laws, show respect. By doing so, we are not only honouring the State but also God.

Note - In the early days of Christianity, Christians were seen as a subversive group as they pledged allegiance to God. Any state – both then and now – worries about groups who speak of allegiance to another authority. The writers of the New Testament were anxious to show that Christians also had a duty to the State. By being good citizens and also contributing to society, Christians were being a witness to their faith and God.

However, for Christians living under repressive regimes, this presents a problem. Do they submit to such regimes or fight for change? Of course, change does not necessarily mean violence – there are other ways.

There is also the question of when Christian values conflict with the State, e.g. questions regarding abortion, euthanasia, genetic engineering and so on. However, there are ways in which the Christian ‘voice’ can be heard but, all too often, we remain silent. (This was covered in Week Two - The Cost of Being Different.)



DISCUSS:

What does it mean to live under God's authority?
(Ask the group for their ideas first)

Some ideas:

1. We acknowledge and are thankful for what God has done for us and our acceptance of His authority arises out of our appreciation of His goodness.
2. We keep His commands. Is **Matthew 22: 34-38** the best summary of what God requires from us?
3. We need to live close to God so that we can know more of His will and trust in His authority.
4. Subjecting oneself to God's authority does not mean giving up our personalities and becoming zombies. It means using our talents, skills and abilities in His service.
5. We are servants. To some, being a servant means being a ‘dog's body’, being weak, allowing people to walk all over us. As servants of Christ we are to love God and our neighbours. As Graham Kendrick puts it ‘each others’ needs to prefer’.

How can we show service to God?

Through:

- Worship
- Being thankful
- Obedience
- Using our goods, talents etc. wisely

How can we be of service to others?

By:

- Showing compassion and kindness
- Going that ‘extra mile’, putting others first

Our service can be given:

- In church
- In the home
- At work
- In our local community
- In the wider world



DISCUSS:

Church :

- How can we be servants in the church?
- Do we leave everything to the faithful few? If we have a particular skill or talent, are we ready to use it?
- How supportive are we of those in positions of authority in the church or those who have a particular responsibility?

- Do we just want to attend services and not get involved?
- How could we encourage more people to share the tasks? Try to develop a practical approach to this.

The home:

- Who does what? Are jobs and responsibilities shared? Is one person perhaps overburdened? Do we really think of each others' needs in the home?

Work:

- Would you ever do anything that is not part of your contract or in your job description? For example, would you help a colleague out or say 'it's not my job'?
- How can a Christian offer a practical example of servanthood in the workplace?

The local community:

- Are any members of the group involved in volunteer activities – share experiences of how your faith has influenced this role.
- Do you want to be involved in local issues?
- How can Christians make their local neighbourhood a Mission field?
- What opportunities are there to be of service in your local community?
- Could the group take on some practical task to show care for the community, e.g. litter picking, visiting older people at home?

Make a list – and act on it!

The wider world:

- Should we just be concerned about our own community, country and situation?
- How valid is the phrase 'charity begins at home'?



DISCUSS:

Trevor Huddleston said, 'The cliché "charity begins at home" has done more damage than any other in the English language'.

If we do feel we should be involved in global and world issues, the discussions of the previous weeks should have given some idea as to how we can become involved and what we can do.

PRAY

Father God, we thank you for the perfect example of service given in your Son Jesus. We ask that you will open our eyes and our hearts so that we can see opportunities for service. Help us to be pro-active in our homes and communities, our workplaces and leisure activities in offering our time and talents in the service of others.

Help us, Father, to have a true servant's heart, not looking for recognition or reward other than that we do Your will.

Bless all those who set us an example of service and are so often overlooked and undervalued by society. May their quiet devotion to others be rewarded in Your Kingdom.

Amen

Some useful quotations

Thomas Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924 President of USA) 'The object of love is to serve, not to win.'

Sheila Cassidy (English doctor imprisoned in Chile) 'o we not owe it to those we serve to accept our limitations and cherish our minds and bodies so that we will be available to serve them a little longer? I have learned to be very wary of the famous prayer of St Ignatius, "to give and not to count the cost".'

Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910 Russian novelist) 'The vocation of every man and woman is to serve other people.'

Suggested hymns/songs

From heaven you came (Graham Kendrick)

Ye servants of God (Charles Wesley 1707-88)

Master speak thy servant heareth (Frances Ridley Havergal (1836-79)