

CHRISTIAN FOUNDATIONS VI

WITNESS AND SERVICE

Witness

We don't join a sports team, or the army or the police without putting on a uniform. We want to make it crystal clear that we belong. And it is the same with the Christian life. Some people are ashamed to admit they are Christians and deny their allegiance if they are in the company of non-believers. Some keep a low profile hoping that nobody will ask! But we are called to be unembarrassed about our love for Christ. Romans 10.9,10 makes it clear that public confession of Christ is as important as personal private commitment to him. It is only if we 'believe in our heart and confess with our mouth' that 'we shall be saved.' Secret disciples are a liability to the Christian cause. In places like Indonesia Christians may get killed simply for belonging to Christ, yet in the West we dare hardly mention the name of Jesus Christ outside a church service. The Lord calls us to something better than this. The New Testament makes it clear that all are called to be witnesses to their faith. Not preachers – that is the calling of some. But all are called to be witnesses. A witness must be able to say 'I have found this to be true in my own life' and nobody can argue with that! See Acts 2.32. Only Peter was preaching on this occasion, but all were giving witness. We need fewer indifferent preachers and more confident witnesses! Like Paul, every believer can say 'I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.' (Rom.1.16) After all, how can people know the reality of Jesus unless those who know him are prepared to say so?

Service

Every Christian is a minister or servant of Christ. Don't restrict the name 'minister' to missionaries and clergy. It includes you!
There are three main words for 'servant' in the New Testament, and all three are applied to every Christian.

The first means 'slave' (1 Pet. 2:16; Rev. 1:1). It describes the total surrender of every part of our lives – home, work, love life, ambitions, the lot, to Jesus who gave all for us. Ponder Romans 12:1-2 and 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. In ancient society the slave had no rights, but was totally at the command of his master. The New Testament writers deliberately chose this word 'slave' to describe their relation to Jesus. How does it fit you?

The second means 'worship leader' (the word from which we get 'liturgy'). It speaks of our worship (Acts 13:2). Worship is a big word. It includes our giving (2 Cor. 9:12), our faith (Phil. 2:17), the proper doing of our job (Rom. 13:6), even evangelism (Rom. 15:16). How important is worship to you? What does it cost you? Does it spill over into telling others about your Lord? If not, it will certainly grow stale.

The third means ‘helper’; our word ‘deacon’ is derived from it. It is widely used of practical help of all kinds. It describes our relationship to those who are fellow Christians and to those who as yet are not (2 Cor. 4:5). Prison visiting and personal service (Phlm. 13; Acts 19:22), handing out the soup and preaching, are all called by this word, ‘service’ (Acts 6:1, 4). Since the coming of Jesus into our world we must no longer insulate the sacred from the secular.

‘This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ’ (1 Cor. 4:1). Ask yourself what differences becoming a Christian has brought to you in these area of wholeheartedness, worship and practical service.

Verse to learn

Learn Romans 12:1 (NIV): ‘Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.’

Bible Study section

The Bible passage for study is Acts 5:40-6:8

1. What motivated these people to want to serve the Lord? How about you?
2. How many forms of service are mentioned here?
3. Are the ‘spiritual’ jobs more important than the practical ones?
4. What spiritual qualifications were necessary for those who wanted to serve lunches? Apply this to your church or group.
5. How was it that the disciples ‘multiplied’ in Jerusalem?
6. What service are you now engaged in which you would not be if you were not a Christian?
7. What new area of fellowship and service is each of you going to commit yourself to now that this short course has ended? Be specific!

Prayer time

Share with others in the group the sphere of ministry in which you feel yourself called to serve Christ , and pray for one another as we all move from this group to new areas of fellowship, witness and service.