

The Way of Jesus

Week 8

*A 12 Week Seminar for Students of Jesus
St Stephens/Sewickley
January-March 2010*

Service and Submission

Key Verses on Service:

... Whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant.

Matthew 20:26

... I am among you as one who serves.

Luke 22:27

Key Verses on Submission:

Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Paul in Eph 5.21

Genesis 50.15-21 The reconciliation of Joseph with his brothers, who had grievously wronged him years before.

Psalm 32.8-9 The importance of voluntary submission to God's instruction and guidance

Mark 8.34-35 Jesus' teaching on self denial that leads to self discovery

Philippians 2.3-9 Jesus' life of servanthood and death that serves as a model for our lives

1 Peter 2.13-25 Submission to all forms of human authority, following the example of Christ's submission

Reflections (‘Celebration of Discipline’ Leaders Guide p.148)

As the cross is the sign of submission, so the towel is the sign of service.

Richard J. Foster

Learn the lesson that, if you want to do the work of the prophet, what you need is not a scepter but a hoe.

Bernard of Clairvaux

We are called to serve through the many little deaths of going beyond self. And as we live our lives for the good of others, amazingly, we find ourselves...

Richard J. Foster

A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none.
 A Christian is a perfectly free servant of all, subject to all.
 Martin Luther

Prayers

Dearest Lord, may I see you today and every day in the person of your sick, and while nursing them, minister unto you. Though you hide yourself behind the unattractive disguise of the irritable, the exacting, the unreasonable, may I still recognize you, and say: "Jesus, my patient, how sweet it is to serve you."

Mother Teresa of Calcutta

Father,
 I abandon myself into your hands;
 Do with me what you will.
 Whatever you may do, I thank you;
 I am ready for all, I accept all.
 Let only your will be done in me,
 And in all your creatures –
 I wish no more than this, O Lord.

Charles de Foucauld

Some Key Principles on Submission:

- Submission is the most abused of all the spiritual disciplines
- Submission is not a natural process, but a supernatural process.
- In submission, we are at last free to value other people. Their dreams and plans become important to us. We have entered into a new, wonderful, glorious freedom – the freedom to give up our own rights for the good of others. For the first time we can love people unconditionally. We have given us the right to demand that they return our love.

Richard Foster, Celebration... p.112

- Every discipline has its corresponding freedom. What freedom corresponds to submission? It is the ability to lay down the terrible burden of always needing to get your own way.

Richard Foster, Celebration... p.111

Richard Foster on Service

(Richard Foster, 'Celebration of Discipline' Video Curriculum)

- Service is the Discipline of the many "little deaths" of going beyond ourselves, and it has to work itself out in practical life. "Active helpfulness... means, initially, simple assistance in trifling, external matters.... One who worries about the loss of time that such petty, outward acts of helpfulness entail is usually taking the importance of his own career too solemnly" (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, quoted in *Celebration of Discipline*, p. 135).
- Like submission, service is a supernatural, not natural, process, It is the grace of God that empowers us to move beyond ourselves and into service.
- Differences between self-righteous service and true service:
 - Self-righteous service
 1. Comes through human effort.
 2. Is impressed with the big deal.
 3. Requires external rewards.
 4. Is highly concerned about results.
 5. Picks and chooses whom to serve.
 6. Is affected by moods and whims.
 7. Is temporary.
 8. Is insensitive and insists on meeting a need.
 9. Fractures community.
 - True Service
 1. Comes from a relationship with the divine Other deep inside.
 2. Finds it almost impossible to distinguish the small from the large service.
 3. Rests contented in hiddenness.
 4. Is free of the need to calculate results.
 5. Is indiscriminate in its ministry.
 6. Ministers simply and faithfully because there is a need.
 7. Is a lifestyle.
 8. Can withhold the service as freely as perform it.
 9. Builds community.
- To arrive at true service, we must get beyond the feeling that we deserve a reward for our efforts for others.
- A way to become more involved in the Discipline of service would be to pray each day, "Lord, lead me today to somebody whom I can serve."

Thomas a Kempis, The Imitation of Christ Obedience and Subjection

IT IS a very great thing to obey, to live under a superior and not to be one's own master, for it is much safer to be subject than it is to command. Many live in obedience more from necessity than from love. Such become discontented and dejected on the slightest pretext; they will never gain peace of mind unless they subject themselves wholeheartedly for the love of God.

Go where you may, you will find no rest except in humble obedience to the rule of authority. Dreams of happiness expected from change and different places have deceived many.

Everyone, it is true, wishes to do as he pleases and is attracted to those who agree with him. But if God be among us, we must at times give up our opinions for the blessings of peace.

Furthermore, who is so wise that he can have full knowledge of everything? Do not trust too much in your own opinions, but be willing to listen to those of others. If, though your own be good, you accept another's opinion for love of God, you will gain much more merit; for I have often heard that it is safer to listen to advice and take it than to give it. It may happen, too, that while one's own opinion may be good, refusal to agree with others when reason and occasion demand it, is a sign of pride and obstinacy.

A Conversation between D Willard and R Foster on Submission

RF: Certainly, a parallel Discipline [to solitude] would be submission. There is something about solitude and experiences there that [point to submission].

DW: I think you can see the connection. Solitude is taking your hands off, and submission is simply putting that into practice.

RF: I don't have to get my own way.

DW: That's right. A tremendous burden [is] off [if] I don't have to get my own way. One of my standard parts of lecturing in ethics is to tell students that I hope they find something better to do in life than to be happy.

I remember a girl came up after that, and she was almost breathless, and she said, "You mean, I don't have to be happy?" Yes, dear, you don't have to be happy, and in fact, trying to be happy is one of the ways to be miserable. People think that submission is bad news, but it's really wonderful news. Of course, the scriptural teaching is that we are to be subject one to another in the fear of the Lord. Mutual

submission sets everyone free. Now, in submission also you receive the wisdom of others. And that's crucial for life, to learn to do that. So you stop charging down the path and say, *Well, what wisdom is there?* You listen to those around you, and perhaps you have a spiritual director (although I don't like that name), someone who will sit with you and listen to you and listen to God at the same time. And the idea of submission is a good one.

A Conversation With D Willard and R Foster on Service

RF: Now, submission fits well with service, doesn't it?

DW: It's amazing how well all these things go together, but they truly do. When you serve someone, you do good for them, turning loose the result. You don't ask for anything back; you just serve them. And Jesus, of course, has set this example over and over. In the Gospels you see his teaching about that.

RF: It's interesting; just a week ago, I was with a wonderful group of people, chaplains in the Coast Guard. They had been studying *Celebration of Discipline*, and they brought that passage about true service versus self-righteous service, where I discuss how true service can rest contented in just serving, whereas self-righteous service has to be known. And they were asking how that fits with the kind of culture they live in, where they make reports to their superior officers and try at least once a year to prove how wonderful they are, and it was a very helpful question because [it brings in this context—and not just people in a military context].

DW: You know, this is what Paul is addressing in Colossians when he talks about serving your masters. Using the old language, it's "not with eyeservice as men pleasers" but unto the Lord, because it's from the Lord that you will receive your reward, and I think that's the key in that kind of a situation. You do the report, and you do it truthfully, but you don't try to make yourself look good. You just state it the way it is and leave the recognition up to God, and then, whatever humans do, well, that's their job. But in service, you are looking to God and not man.

RF: It's very interesting in that context when they ask that question. Just to be humorous, I asked if there was anyone in the room with a high enough rank to answer that question. And the person in charge got up and spoke to this issue in much the same way as you shared. It was really quite beautiful. If we do our work well, and we report that honestly, the results will have their desired effects.

DW: That's right, and, you know, the meaning of life is service to others. That's why Jesus said that if you try to save your life, you will lose it. People are all around—in universities and churches—thinking about what is the meaning of life. The meaning of life is service to others, and anyone who will do that will find the meaning of life and [find] that their lives are good.

RF: The reality [is] that the Disciplines open us into such a life that we can love God and love our neighbors as ourselves.

DW: That's right, and you know that if you are mad at somebody, the best way to [deal with it] is to serve them. You won't be mad very long. You will have invested in them, and

that disciplinary connection will come into play. Service is just a part of life in the kingdom of God, and when we accept it as such, the disciplinary effects are just tremendous.

A Hymn of Submission:

Make me a captive Lord,
 And then I shall be free.
 Force me to render up my sword,
 And I shall conquerer be.
 I sink in life's alarms
 When by myself I stand;
 Imprison me within Thine arms,
 And strong shall be my hand

George Matheson

Homework for Week 8:

- Practice simple acts of submission and service this week, whenever possible in secret – and always without drawing attention to yourself.
- Identify an area in which you may be practicing a form of “self-righteous service.” Ask God to reveal to you how you may replace it with true service.
- Slow down long enough to practice the service of listening in a context in which you might normally rush past while preoccupied with tasks, time constraints, or your own needs and obligations.
- **Read 'Apprenticeship With Jesus' Chapters 1-6** (pp 27-70)