

Cost of Service, The

Mike Treneer

Introduction.

- A. It's a joy to share with you about the cost of service to the Lord.
- B. It is great to serve the Lord.
- C. Most of us have been served by others and it is frustrating when the servers do things wrongly.
- D. I want to cover two areas today.

- 1. What does it mean to serve the Lord?
- 2. What does it cost to serve the Lord?

I. What does it mean to serve the Lord? (Ephesians 4:11-16)

- A. Jesus ascended on high as a victor and gave gifts to his servants.
 - 1. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to build up the body of Christ.
 - 2. The body of Christ is blessed by gifted people.
 - 3. Preachers, writers, singers, others bless the body of Christ.
 - 4. God has given the body gifted people.

B. Why did Jesus give us gifted people?

- 1. Gifted people are to prepare God's people for service.
- 2. This is a misunderstood idea.
- 3. Many people watch as others minister.
- 4. All the people of God are to serve the Lord.
- 5. Preparing or equipping is a fishing term meaning mending nets.
- 6. Shepherds don't have lambs; sheep have lambs, and shepherds care for them.
- 7. Those with skills in the body are to help others to be prepared to serve the Lord.

C. What is the aim of Christian service?

- 1. To build up the body of Christ.

2. The focus of Christian service is to extend the kingdom of God.
3. One way this is done is by adding members to the body through evangelism.
4. Another way of serving God is by building up the believers, making them firm in faith.
5. Paul said he proclaimed Christ, warning and teaching everyone to present them complete in Christ. (Colossians 1:28-29)
6. I am motivated by seeing people reach their full potential.
7. Strengthening of the corporate life is also important. (Ephesians 4:16)
 - a. Helping Christians to work together is important.
 - b. This requires every person to work together.
 - c. Anything that builds up the body of Christ is Christian service.

D. Two other things about Christian service.

1. There is variety of service. (1 Corinthians 12)
 - a. There are different kinds of gifts, service, and workings but one Lord.
 - b. I find this variety to be encouraging, as God prepared good works for each of us. (Ephesians 2:10)
 - c. Each of us will make unique contributions to the body of Christ.
 - d. A woman especially goes through many changes and makes different contributions at different stages of her life.
 1. If she has children she makes one contribution.
 2. If she has a career she makes another contribution.
 3. Deborah was a political leader in Israel.
 4. Leah was the mother of several significant children, though she was unloved by her husband.
 - i. Her fourth child was Judah for she praised God in spite of her situation.
 - ii. God used her in various ways.
 5. Hannah struggled over her barrenness and God used this.
 6. Ruth looked after her mother in law.

7. Esther helped to keep the Jews in exile alive.
 8. Phoebe was a full-time Christian worker.
 9. Lydia helped found the first church in Europe.
- e. We all need to discover our unique contribution for the body of Christ.
 - f. How can we help at this stage in our lives to build up the body?
2. Growth takes place in a body as cells multiply.
 - a. If one place takes over by itself disease like cancer results.
 - b. Growth needs to be in harmony with the function of the body.
 - c. Every one of us needs to trust God to help us reproduce in harmony with God's will.
 1. Who are some people you can influence for Christ because of who you are at this stage of your life?
 2. Can you write down some names?
 3. Are there some Christians you are in a position to encourage?
 - i. You can pray for them.
 - ii. God answers prayer.
 - iii. George Muller prayed for the conversion of the sons of one of his friends and they came to faith lat in life.
 - iv. We give up too quickly in prayer.
 - v. I prayed for a couple in Kenya who had no understanding of the Bible and just prayed for then; years later they came to faith.
 - vi. We can have the joy of reproducing our lives by remaining faithful to Christ.

II. What is the cost of service?

A. Paul gives seven metaphors of Christian service. (2 Timothy 2)

1. The metaphor of calling Timothy his son.
 - a. This speaks of the depth of relationship between Paul and those he leads to Christ.

b. When new help someone spiritually a deep bond develops. (1 Thessalonians 2:11; 1 Corinthians 4)

c. Having a physical son costs pain and hard work.

d. Many parents spend sleepless nights with their young children.

e. Paul went to Troas but had no peace because his brother, and son in the faith, Titus was not with him. (2 Corinthians 2:12-13)

f. Programs can help people but personal involvement is essential.

g. We need each other.

2. The metaphor of a soldier.

a. Soldiers avoid getting involved in the affairs of life so they can be on the front lines.

b. Even women are to maintain this attitude of battle. (Revelation 12)

c. The devil hates and fears women who fight in the battle.

d. We are called to spiritual battle. (Romans 16)

e. We don't all need to be in full-time Christian service, but to be in the battle wherever God places us.

1. Most people spend most of their time in the world.

2. We need to engage them in the world.

3. The metaphor of an athlete.

a. Athletes win gold metals by training and competition.

b. Christians need to train and compete.

c. We don't want to burn out but we don't want to rust out either.

d. We don't take it easy but get involved.

4. The metaphor of a farmer.

a. We must work hard and sow a crop. (Psalm 126:5-6)

b. We must sow in prayer.

c. We must trust God.

5. The metaphor of a workman, or craftsman.

- a. We need to learn to be skilled workmen.
- b. This takes study.
- c. The tools are prayer and the word of God used in love and compassion.
- d. Medical students work hard, and this pays off in the surgery room.
 - 1. I want someone who knows some things to work on me.
 - 2. The hard work they put in is profitable.
- e. If we are doing spiritual surgery we need to understand the word of God.
- f. Someone taught me how to share the Gospel and this led to opportunities to share with others.
- g. Can you share the Gospel with competence?
- h. You must take the responsibility.
- i. Could you take someone further in their spiritual walk?
- j. I took John 15:1-17 and noted the key things about growing in relationship with Jesus.
 - 1. The word of God is essential.
 - 2. Prayer is essential.
 - 3. Bearing fruit is essential.
 - 4. Obedience is essential.
 - 5. Love is essential.
- k. On the road to Emmaus two disciples were discouraged when Jesus spoke to them about the Scriptures, as a skilled workman.
- l. A friend encouraged me to pray two things every time I read the word:
 - 1. For God to open my eyes to truth. (Ps 119:18)
 - 2. For the chance to help someone else to see truth. (Luke 24:32)

Cost of Service

Mike Treneer

I. What does it mean to serve the Lord? Who can serve the Lord and what is Christian service?

In Ephesians 4:11-16 Apostle Paul talks about Jesus who ascended on high as a victor after rising from the grave conquering death. As He rose on high and ascended to God's right hand, he gave gifts to His people. v11-16: "It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will be no longer infants tossed back and forth by the waves and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."

A. Aim of Christian service: God has given very gifted people to his church. Every where we go, in the churches we see gifted people being busy, serving the Lord and the other people watch them. The people who are gifted by God with gifts, skills and talents are supposed to prepare, equip, encourage and to enable God's people for works of service to the Lord, so that the body of Christ may be built up. This is one of the most misunderstood and unapplied truth in the Bible.

B. Purpose of Christian service: this is to build up the body of Christ and extending the kingdom of God. Body of Christ is built up when new members are added to the church and also it also involves the building up of each member of the body, bringing them into full maturity in Christ, helping them to reach one's maximum potential for the Lord as a person.

The way to build the body of Christ is by strengthening the co operative nature of the body, by helping Christians to work together, to serve together, and to use one another's gifts and strengths to extend and build up the body. Every person who knows the Lord should be serving the Lord. Every heart without Christ is a mission field and every heart that knows Christ is a missionary.

C. Variety of service of the body: Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12th chapter that "there are different kinds of gifts but the same spirit, there are different kinds of service but the same Lord, and there are different kinds of working, but the same God works in all of them in all men." Ephesians 2:10 says "we are His workmanship created to do in Christ Jesus the good works, which God prepared before hand, for us to walk in them." God has made and given us special gifts to play a special role in His body and our ways of serving the Lord will be different.

The challenging thing in the life of a woman is that the circumstances and the phases of her life change so much; the situations are so demanding physically when she gives birth to child with sleep less nights and when the children are growing. Woman has a variety of service and roles to be played in building up the family. It is encouraging to study and know about the women of the Bible, the way they served the Lord in different positions.

Deborah's contribution to the purposes of God was being a prophetess and exercised significant leadership. Leah contribution was taking care of the children God gave her. Leah struggled with fact that her husband did not love her. Every time she gave birth to a child she thought that her husband would love her and named her children after her expectations. The fourth time, she

praised God and named him Judah and we can look back through history and see that Jesus came from the tribe of Judah and how God used her. Hannah and her barrenness led her to have her purposes in God through the birth of Samuel. Ruth took care of her mother-in-law and contributed to the purpose of God and she became the great grand old mother of David and Jesus. Esther's major contribution was her influence over her ungodly husband. She in her humble, skilful, godly and prayerful way influenced her husband. Lydia who was a business lady was the first lady who was used to found the first church in Europe. We can see the variety of service in the lives these women in which they served God and we need to realize that God has a variety of ways to serve Him.

D. Growth of the body of Christ: the cells of different organs of the body multiply causing the growth of respective organs leading to the healthy development of the body. Whatever our field of service and our contribution for a particular service is, every one of us should be trusting in God to see our lives reproduce, enabling the growth of the body of Christ. When we don't find a field of service, at the most we can commit our lives to pray. George Muller who was the founder of orphanages in Bristol committed himself to pray for the sons of one his friends regularly; one of them got saved at his funeral and the other one got converted to Christ after the death of Muller. We as god's children give up on prayer easily but we can trust God to see that our lives produce two or three people for Christ through our commitment of prayer.

II. Seven metaphorical illustrations in serving the Lord (II Timothy 2).

A. Relationships: In v1 Paul calls Timothy as son; the truth of Christian service here illustrates the depth of relationships that are formed when we try to help people spiritually. Such relationships cost pain and hardship in life- the cost of loving and bringing up children. Paul focused his ministry on people and not on programs. In 2 Corinthians 2:12, 13 Paul talks about Titus when he came to Troas, that there was a door opened for the gospel but he had no peace of mind because he could not find Titus there and he addresses Titus as his true son in faith. For Paul, Titus, his son in faith, was more important than an opportunity to preach the gospel in Troas.

In Christian ministry, we tend to put programs before people, but we should know that the church, the body of Christ will grow when the people are reached and built up. Serving God is serving people and helping people. It is costly to do that.

B. Soldier: In V3 Paul says, "Endure hardships with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus." A soldier always tries to please his commanding officer rather than getting into civilian affairs. Serving the Lord means being a soldier.

Women have always been on the front lines serving the Lord as soldiers through out the Bible. Mary the mother of Jesus was on the front lines. In Revelation 12 we see the devil attacking the people of God – it has the illustration of a woman. When God spoke with the devil in the Garden of Eden, he said, "I will put enmity between you and the woman." The devil has a special hatred for women because it was through the woman a *Savoir* came into the world. Lot of problems that exist in society is due to the fact that devil hates women; and this is because he fears the service and dedication of women as soldiers in the battle for God. So women need to try their best in being soldiers for God undermining the kingdom of the devil in all possible ways they can. The God of heaven will soon trample the devil under their feet.

In Romans 16th chapter Paul says, "Let's be soldiers for the Lord in the spiritual battle." The cost of a soldier is that he can't get entangled in civilian pursuits. The world has a fantastic way

of materialism that strangles us with the delight of riches. As soldiers for the Lord we have to keep ourselves from being strangled by the materialism of the world. It does not mean that we all have to be full time ministers of the Lord leaving our work; the body of Christ is a lay movement –of ordinary Christian men and women permeating the society. Actual Christian service is something which takes place at schools, shops, factories, offices where the people spend 90% of their time. If we think that Sunday service at the church is the service of the Lord, we have lost the battle with devil. We need to realize that the service has to be rendered in our work places.

Jesus said that we cannot love two masters- God and Mammon at the same time. It is the love of the world, love of the riches and materialism that chokes us. As soldiers of Jesus we must renounce the desires of the things which we naturally have in this world, and work in favor of putting our priority for Christ.

C. Athlete: he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules. Part of serving the Lord is to compete. Pacing ourselves according to athletic terms is to compete through out the race, to keep the pace right all the time.

D. Hard work: 'the hardworking farmer should be the first to receive the share of the crops' –v6. Psalm 126:5, 6 talks about 'those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.' No farmer reaps the crop unless he puts the work into sowing. Serving the Lord means hard work: sowing in prayer, sowing in the lives of our children, friends, sowing when we see no response; hoping and trusting that God will bring the results of what we have sown as the rain of His working comes to bring life.

E. Work man: one of the challenging things in serving the Lord to be a skilled workman. The tools of our trade in serving the Lord are the prayer and the Bible. Cost of serving the Lord is to become a workman who correctly handles the word of truth. If we are to counsel people keeping in view their eternal well being, it costs for us to constantly immerse ourselves in the Bible, memorizing the scriptures and handling the word of God in an accurate way.

In our service to the Lord, we have to know how to present the gospel to an unbeliever, being equipped with the word of God; to know how to interact with a Christian and to take him/her to the next higher level of their walk with God.

Gospel according to John chapter 15:1-17 is a very important passage in the Bible telling what it means to grow as a Christian; where Jesus describes Himself as the vine and believers as the branches. Jesus after His resurrection met two men on the road to Emmaus who were discussing about the happenings of the death of Jesus. Jesus went down with them, asked them what they were discussing, listened to them and later explained everything from the scriptures that what all had happened was in accordance with the plan of God as prophesied in the scriptures. This is the skillful workmanship. We need to talk about the things of life in the same way as Jesus did so as to present the gospel and explain the things from scriptures to the people who are having problems in comprehending the situations in life. Scripture is the comprehensive equipment for the man and woman of God and fits for all branches of work. It costs us to be a skilled workman in rightly handling the word of God.

Every time you open the Bible to read and pray, pray at least two verses from the Bible and ask God to open the scriptures to you and pray for the joy of opening the scriptures for others; to be a skilled workman in your service for the Lord; opening the scriptures for the people that you meet, the people in your family, courteously, lovingly, graciously bringing something that the Lord

spoke to you and explain it. As we do these things, there will be a price but the joy and the privilege of serving the Lord far outweighs the price that we pay.