

A Journey of Stories



Staff Retreat

23 January 2015



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ACTION

Write or draw here

PART 1: What is Spirituality?

Some quotes to ponder

READ / REFLECT (AND HIGHLIGHT)

Anything you think is really important

Anything that raises questions for you

Anything that challenges your ideas about spirituality



What we're talking about is the Christian life. It's following Jesus. Spirituality is no different from what we've been doing for two thousand years just by going to church and receiving the sacraments, being baptised, learning to pray, and reading the Scriptures rightly. It's just ordinary stuff'.

Eugene Peterson

'Being in the world without being of the world'. These words summarise well the way Jesus speaks of his spiritual life. It is a life in which we are totally transformed by the Spirit of love. Yet it is a life in which everything seems to remain the same. To live a spiritual life does not mean that we must leave our family, give up our jobs, or change our ways of working; it does not mean that we have to withdraw from social and political activities, or lose interest in literature and art; it does not require severe forms of asceticism or long hours of prayer ... What is new is that we are moved from the many things to the Kingdom of God. What is new is that we are set free from the compulsions of our world and have set our hearts on the only necessary thing.



What is new is that we no longer experience the many things, people, and events as endless causes for worry, but begin to experience them as the rich variety of ways in which God makes his presence known to us.

Henri Nouwen

Christian spirituality provides a story to enter, a language to speak, a group to which we belong, a way to pray, a work to undertake and a face of God to see.

Fr Claude Marechal,
Assumptionist

... by 'spirituality' I do not mean any kind of content-free, theologically-vacuous quest for transcendent experiences for their own sake. Rather 'spirituality' has to do precisely with the content, what fills abstract theology, mundane institutions, and the everyday life of the Christian with their real substance.

Veith, Gene Edward Jr

[Spirituality] is the lived dimension of faith. It is how faith looks in everyday relationships, attitudes, values and behaviours. It is the set of assumptions an individual lives out of, and where he or she chooses to locate meaning. For the Christian, this works on both a communal and personal level. The meaning of life is centred on a God who sent the Son and the Spirit to save his people and be with them. A personal spirituality emerges in the dialogue between this communal faith story and the concrete events of each individual's life experience.

Tuohy, David SJ

A spirituality is a lived faith plus a path.

Hanson, Bradley

... spirituality will be taken to mean intentional practice of the Christian faith, both corporate and individual, in so far as it seeks to build up Christian identity and nurture "life in the Spirit" in the multiple dimensions of personal existence.

Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary

NOTE: What are important key words and messages about spirituality?

What is Spirituality?

What image or metaphor best captures my thinking?



PHOTO SEARCH
CREATE A
METAPHOR



Exploring Christian Spirituality

Words from the Bible

QUOTE SELECT:

What words capture my thinking?

In the book *A Spiritual Formation Workbook*, Smith and Graybeal describe four main ways that Jesus can function.

Jesus Christ as my Saviour: He forgives my sins and sets me free.

Jesus Christ as my Teacher: He teaches me wisdom and guides me into truth.

Jesus Christ as my LORD: He lives at the centre of my life.

Jesus Christ as my Friend: He understands and comforts me.'

Smith, J and Graybeal, L.
A Spiritual Formation Workbook, p25

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

Hebrews 11:1 (NIV)

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with GOD through our LORD Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:1 (NIV)

'I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one goes to the Father except by me.'

John 14:6 (GNB)

'I have told you this while I am still with you. The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and make you remember all that I have told you.'

John 14:25-26 (GNB)

Since you have accepted Christ Jesus as LORD, live in union with him. Keep your roots deep in Him, build your lives on Him, and become stronger in your faith, as you were taught. And be filled with thanksgiving.

Colossians 2:6,7 (GNB)

For the Spirit that GOD has given us does not make us timid; instead, His Spirit fills us with power, love and self-control.

2 Timothy 1:7 (GNB)

Let the Spirit change your way of thinking and make you into a new person.

Ephesians 4:23, 24a (CEV)



And you also became GOD's people when you heard the true message, the Good News that brought you salvation. You believed in Christ, and GOD put His stamp of ownership on you by giving you the Holy Spirit He had

promised. The Spirit is the guarantee that we shall receive what GOD has promised His people, and this assures us that GOD will give complete freedom to those who are His. Let us praise His glory!

Ephesians 1:13,14 (GNB)

This [GOD] did so that [people] would look for Him, and perhaps find Him as they felt around for Him. Yet GOD is actually not far from any one of us.

Acts 17:27 (TEV)

SUMMARY SENTENCE:
Can I write a summary sentence or phrase?

Do not conform outwardly to the standards of this world, but let GOD transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of GOD – what is good, and pleasing to Him, and is perfect.

Romans 12:2 (TEV)

REFLECTION TIME: *What is central to Christian spirituality?*

PART 2: Stories – My Story

“My life in a shoebox”

NOTES AND REFLECTIONS



REFLECTION TIME:

- Who have been important people and what have been important events in my story?
- How have your experiences and relationships shaped what you believe about life, GOD and your relationships with others?
- Do you think a person's story and spirituality are interconnected?

SHARE STORIES TOGETHER:

- My story
- My favourite Bible words
- My School's story
- The local Lutheran Church story

Each of us has been shaped by the stories we have lived and heard.

Stories give our lives meaning.

Stories connect us to others.

Christians are people who have been caught up in God's story.

All of the stories that make up our life journey have brought us to here and now.

Our stories have feelings attached to them

Our spiritual stories reveal God's presence in our lives

Our spiritual stories provide the opportunity for gratitude, even when we consider the more painful ones

Our stories are about a journey, a journey that continues as we allow God to transform our lives each day

Stories – My Story

Words from the Bible that connect with my story

In You O LORD I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame, deliver me in Your righteousness. Turn Your ear to me, come quickly to my rescue; be my rock or refuge, a strong fortress to save me. Since You are my rock and my fortress, for the sake of Your name lead and guide me. Free me from the trap that is set for me. For You are my refuge. Into Your hands I commit my spirit; redeem me, O LORD, the GOD of truth. I hate those who cling to worthless idols; I trust in the LORD. I will be glad and rejoice in Your love, for you saw my affliction and knew the anguish of my soul. You have not handed me over to the enemy but have set my feet in a spacious place.



Psalm 31: 1 – 8 NIV

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside still waters; He restores my soul. He leads me in the right paths for His name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff – they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.



Psalm 23: NRSV

I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

John 10: 10b (NIV)

The LORD is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid?



Psalm 27: 1

Through the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,” says the LORD who has compassion on you.

Isaiah 54: 10 (NIV)

But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on winds like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Isaiah 40: 31 (NIV)



For I am certain that nothing can separate us from His love: neither death nor life, neither angels nor other heavenly rulers or powers, neither the present nor the future, neither the world above nor the world below – there is nothing in all creation that will ever be able to separate us from the love of GOD which is ours through Christ Jesus our LORD

Romans 8: 38, 39 (GNB)

Israel, the LORD who created you says, ‘Do not be afraid – I will save you. I have called you by name – you are mine. When you pass through deep waters, I will be with you; your troubles will not overwhelm you. When you pass through fire, you will not be burned; the hard trials that come will not hurt you. For I am the LORD your GOD, the holy GOD of Israel, who saves you... I will give up whole nations to save your life, because you are precious to me and because I love you and give you honour.

Isaiah 43 1 – 3a (GNB)

Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies.’

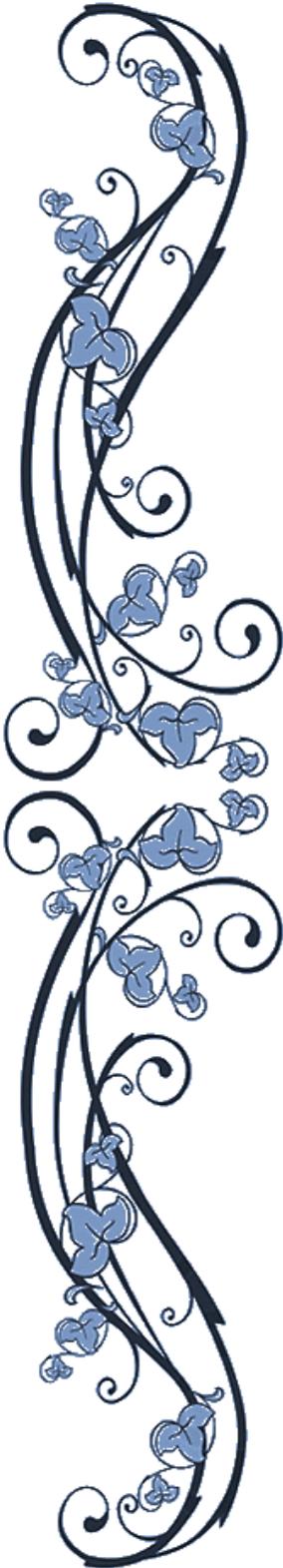
John 11:25, 26

ADD TO THIS BOX: My Favourite Bible Verse



PART 3: GOD'S Story with His People

Who is this GOD at the heart of Christianity?



So what GOD or GODS do Christians worship? In one sense it is the GOD without a name, a GOD who responds, when asked for a name, 'I am there whoever I am there', who frustrates every effort to be named. In another sense it is a GOD with three names: Creator, Redeemer, Spirit – that lives-in-us. In another sense it is the GOD with only one name, Love – Love that embraces the world in a way that takes the shape of a cross, a love that, in turn, transforms everything and can be shared by each of us by embracing our world and those in it.

That's the story at the heart of the Lutheran telling of the Christian vision, which is itself a telling of an old Hebrew story of a loving GOD. That's the story about which we ask 'How does this story inform knowing, learning, teaching and human becoming in the contemporary world? What kind of college or university should be built and maintained by those who tell such a story? What kind of work is there for us to do in such a place?'

Tom Christenson, *The Gift and Task of Lutheran Higher Education*

So he decided long ago to adopt us as his children. He did it because of what Jesus Christ has done. It pleased GOD to do it. All those things bring praise to his glorious grace. GOD freely gave us his grace because of the One he loves. We have been set free because of what Christ has done. Through his blood our sins have been forgiven. We have been set free because GOD's grace is so rich. He poured his grace on us by giving us great wisdom and understanding.

Ephesians 1:5-8 (NIRV)

Jesus did many other miraculous signs in front of his disciples. They are not written down in this book. But these

are written down so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of GOD. If you believe this, you will have life because you belong to him.

John 20:30,31 (NIRV)

Israel, listen to me. The Lord is our GOD. The LORD is the one and only GOD. Love the Lord your GOD with all your heart and with all your soul. Love him with all your strength. The commandments I give you today must be in your hearts. Make sure your children learn them. Talk about them when you are at home. Talk about them when you walk along the road. Speak about them when you go to bed. And speak about them when you get up. Write them down and tie them on your hands as a reminder. Also tie them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses. Also write them on your gates.



Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (NIRV)

Dear friends, let us love one another, because love comes from GOD. Everyone who loves has been born again because of what GOD has done. That person knows GOD. Anyone who does not love does not know GOD, because GOD is love. How did GOD show his love for us? He sent his one and only Son into the world. He sent him so we could receive life through him. What is love? It is not that we loved GOD. It is that he loved us and sent his Son to give his life to pay for our sins. Dear friends, since GOD loved us that much, we should also love one another. No one has ever seen GOD. But if we love one another, GOD lives in us. His love is made complete in us. We know that we belong to him and he belongs to us. He has given us his Holy Spirit. The Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. We have seen it. We give



witness to it. GOD lives in anyone who agrees that Jesus is the Son of GOD. That kind of person remains joined to GOD. So we know that GOD loves us. We depend on it. GOD is love. Anyone who leads a life of love shows that he is joined to GOD. And GOD is joined to him. So love is made complete among us. We will be bold on the day GOD judges us. That's because in this world we love as Jesus did. There is no fear in love. Instead, perfect love drives fear away. Fear has to do with being punished. The one who fears does not have perfect love. We love because he loved us first. Anyone who says he loves GOD but in fact hates his brother or sister is a liar. He doesn't love his brother or sister, whom he has seen. So he can't love GOD, whom he has not seen. Here is the command GOD has given us. Anyone who loves GOD must also love his brothers and sisters.



Jesus did many other miraculous signs in front of his disciples. They are not written down in this book. But these are written down so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of GOD. If you believe this, you will have life because you belong to him.

John 20:30,31 (NIRV)

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- What is your understanding of the message of GOD's story?
- How could GOD's story inform knowing, learning, teaching and human becoming in the contemporary world?
- What kind of college or school should be built and maintained by those who tell such a story?

God's Story with His People

The Bible as God's Story

PUZZLE THE
PASTOR. PUZZLE
THE PRINCIPAL

Place the questions
you have always
wanted to ask in the
retreat question box



DRAFT QUESTIONS / NOTES

REFLECTION TIME

- What is your understanding of God's story?
- How could God's story inform knowing, learning, teaching and human becoming in the contemporary world?
- What kind of school should be built and maintained by those who tell such a story?

PART 4: GOD’S Message for Me

Key themes of the Bible

GROUP INVESTIGATION / WHOLE GROUP ART-PIECE
 Pick a theme. Summarise what your group found out about your topic. Share key words and phrases.

1. God’s people	2. God’s Forgiveness
Genesis 2: 1 - 24 Isaiah 43: 1-4, 54:10 Jeremiah 31: 1 – 6 John 3: 16 John 15: 12,13	Luke 15: 1 – 10 Acts 10: 43 Romans 5: 1 – 11 John 3: 36 John 10:10 John 14: 6 2 Corinthians 5: 17 – 20
3. GOD’S relationship with people	4. Living as GOD’S people
Deuteronomy 6: 4 – 9 Exodus 6: 2 – 8 Psalm 36: 5 – 7, 9 Psalm 139: 1 – 18 Romans 8: 31 – 39	Matthew 22: 34 – 40 Luke 12: 22 – 31 Acts 2: 43 – 47 1 Corinthians 13 1 John 4: 7 - 10
5. Jesus is the centre of the Bible	6. Prayers in the Bible
John 3: 16 John 10: 11 – 16; 25 – 30 John 11: 25 – 27 John 14: 6 Romans 3: 21 - 26	Psalm 100 Luke 2: 29 – 32 Philippians 4: 7 – 9 Acts 4: 23 – 30 Luke 1: 46 – 55 Matthew 6; 9 – 13 John 17: 1 - 5 2 Chronicles 6: 18 - 21

What we learnt about...
 Our group contribution to the ‘Themes of the Bible’ collage...

God's Message for Me

My questions. My quiet time

PICK ONE BIBLE
PASSAGE.

REFLECT ON
HOW GOD
SPEAKS.



Reflection Stimulus

O LORD Jesus, Your words to Your Father were born out of Your silence. Lead me into this silence, so that my words may be spoken in Your name and thus be fruitful. It is so hard to be silent, silent with my mouth, but even more, silent with my heart. There is so much talking going on within me. It seems that I am always involved in inner debates with myself, my friends, my enemies, my supporters, my opponents, my colleagues, and my rivals. But this inner debate reveals how far my heart is from You. If I were simply to rest at Your feet and realize that I belong to You and You alone, I would easily stop arguing with all the real and imagined people around me. These arguments show my insecurity, my fear, my apprehensions, and my need for being recognized and receiving attention. You, O LORD, will give me all the attention I need if I would simply stop talking and start listening to You. I know that in the silence of my heart You will speak to me and show me Your love. Give me, O LORD, that silence. Let me be patient and grow slowly into this silence in which I can be with You. Amen.

Henri Nouwen, Writings selected with an introduction by Robert A Jonas, p 11

PART 6: GOD'S Special Creations

What GOD says about our value and worth

“Living from Belovedness”

When Jesus was baptised in the Jordan, He heard a voice from heaven, saying, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased’ (Matt.3:17). These words revealed the true identity of Jesus as the beloved ... I know now that the words spoken to Jesus when he was baptised are words spoken also to me and to all who are brothers and sisters of Jesus.

My tendencies toward self-rejection and self-depreciation make it hard to hear these words truly and let them descend into the center (sic) of my heart. But once I have received these words fully, I am set free from my compulsion to prove myself to the world and can live in it without belonging to it. Once I have accepted the truth that I am GOD’S beloved child, unconditionally loved, I can be sent into the world to speak and to act as Jesus did.

The great spiritual task facing me is to so fully trust that I belong to GOD that I can be free in the world – free to speak even when my words are not received; free to act even when my actions are criticized, ridiculed, or considered useless; free also to receive love from people and to be grateful for all the signs of GOD’S presence in the world. I am convinced that I will truly be able to love the world when I fully believe that I am loved far beyond its boundaries.

Henri Nouwen, Modern Spiritual Masters Series, p72

QUIET READING QUESTIONS

What does God say about our value or worth?

How does Nouwen suggest our value impacts on the way we live?



God's Special Creations

The Bible's encouragement to me

HIGHLIGHT THE
WORDS AND
PHRASES THAT
ENCOURAGE YOU

GOD's gifts of grace come in many forms. Each of you has received a gift in order to serve others. You should use it faithfully. If you speak, you should do it like one speaking GOD's very words. If you serve, you should do it with the strength GOD provides. Then in all things GOD will be praised through Jesus Christ. Give him the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

1 Peter 4:10,11 (NIRV)

I think about the heavens. I think about what Your fingers have created. I think about the moon and stars that You have set in place. What is a human being that You think about him? What is a son of man that You take care of him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings. You placed on Him a crown of glory and honour.

Psalms 8:3-5 (NIRV)

For You created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from You when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are Your thoughts, O GOD! How vast is the sum of them!

Psalms 139:13-17 (NIRV)

There are different kinds of gifts. But they are all given by the same Spirit. There are different ways to serve. But they all come from the same LORD. There are different ways to work. But the same GOD makes it possible for all of us to have all those different things. The Holy Spirit is given to each of us in a special way. That is for the good of all.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7 (NIRV)

God's Special Creations

My gifts and how I use them

INDIVIDUAL THINK TIME

Who am I?

What are my gifts?

What do I love to do?

How do I like to spend your time?

What do other people say I'm good at?

What does God think of me?

What has God created me to do?

RECORD YOUR GIFTS

MY GIFTS AS SEEN BY OTHERS [Paste the sheet that was on your back here]

Reflection Time: What does GOD want me to do with these gifts?

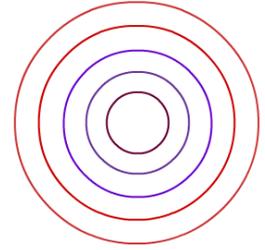
PART 7: Fulfilled in Relationship

Mapping my relationships

CREATE A MIND MAP

Draw a series of concentric circles to show the many different relationships in which they are involved.

Start with their closest relationships in the inner circles and extend this through to the less close relationships.



A large, empty rectangular area with a light blue background and a dashed blue border, intended for drawing a mind map of relationships.

Reflection Time

- How do relationships enrich my experience of life?
- What challenges do I experience through relationships?

Fulfilled in Relationship

The Calling of Humans

PAIRED READING:

'The Calling of
Humans

WALK / READ / TALK

As humans we are called by GOD. God has expectations of us. These expectations are as multidimensional as our identity. GOD invites us to answer his call with our lives. We are first of all called to be creatures, to recall our basic connectedness with the rest of the creation, appreciating and celebrating it.

How does this describe the interconnectedness of relationships?

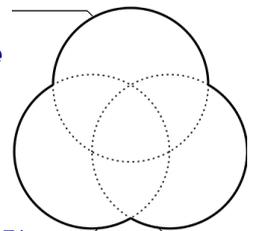
Why do you think it important to think about relationships in these ways?

Second we are called to be human, to be creatures in conversation, responsible because respons-able to GOD.

Third, we are called to be stewards, caretakers of the world that does not belong to us but to GOD.

Fourth we are called to be brothers and sisters with other humans, working for peace, for justice, for the basic respect that all humans need, that enables all human becoming, working to realise the kingdom of GOD that Jesus witnessed to as present in our midst.

Finally, we are called to serve where we are, those we are given to serve, with the gifts we have available to us for service. We are called not to be some generic human, but called to be our particular selves and to realise that self in particular and concrete service to the needs of particular others.



Tom Christenson, *The Gift and Task of Lutheran Higher Education*, p. 71

Fulfilled in Relationship

Bible words to encourage us. Human qualities to help relationships flourish.

READ AND
HIGHLIGHT
1 JOHN 4: 7 – 21
HIGHLIGHT the
sentence that
speaks to and
encourages you

Faith in Christ Jesus is what makes each of you equal with each other, whether you are a Jew or a Greek, a slave or a free person, a man or a woman.

Galatians 3: 28 (CEV)

If you want to be great, you must be the servant of all the others. And if you want to be first, you must be the slave of the rest.

Matthew 20: 26, 27 (CEV)

GOD loves you and has chosen you as his own special people. So be gentle, kind, humble, meek and patient. Put up with each other and forgive anyone who does you wrong, just as Christ has forgiven you.

Colossians 3: 12, 13 (CEV)

I give you a new command. Love one another. You must love one another, just as I have loved you. If you love one another, everyone will know you are my disciples.

John 13: 34, 35)

Suppose I speak the languages of human beings and of angels. If I don't have love, I am only a loud gong or a noisy cymbal. Suppose I have the gift of prophecy. Suppose I can understand all the secret things of GOD and know everything about him. And suppose I have enough faith to move mountains. If I don't have love, I am nothing at all. Suppose I give everything I have to poor people. And suppose I give my body to be burned. If I don't have love, I get nothing at all. Love is patient, Love is kind. It does not want what belongs to others. It does not brag. It is not proud. It is not rude. It does not look out for its own interests. It does not easily become angry. It does not keep track of other people's wrongs. Love



is not happy with evil. But it is full of joy when the truth is spoken. It always protects. It always trusts. It always hopes. It never gives up.

1 Corinthians 13: 1 – 8 (NIRV)

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, GOD forgave you.

Ephesians 4: 32 (NIV)

Believing without loving is what gives religion a bad name.”

Eugene Peterson, Christ plays in ten thousand places p 261



IMAGING MY ROLES AND MY TIME
USE THE NEXT PAGE TO DRAW TWO IMAGES

PART 8: Vocation through Service

My roles and responsibilities

IMAGE 1

DRAW a picture of yourself surrounded by the various roles or responsibilities you have at home, school, local worshipping community, local community etc. SHOW THE STRENGTH OF THE RELATIONSHIPS and levels of commitment to these various roles.

IMAGE 2

REFLECT on your time in the last week. CREATE a pie graph to show how you have spent your waking hours. REFLECT upon how this reflects the priority you give to roles and responsibilities. COMPARE your pie graph and the picture you drew of yourself.

Vocation through Service

How do I understand 'vocation'?

Service is not a list of things that we do, though in it we discover things to do. It is not a code of ethics, but a way of living. To do specific acts of service is not the same thing as living in the Discipline of service. Just as there is more to the game of basketball than the rulebook, there is more to service than specific acts of serving. It is one thing to act like a servant; it is quite another to be a servant. As in all the Disciplines, it is possible to master the mechanics of service without experiencing the Discipline.

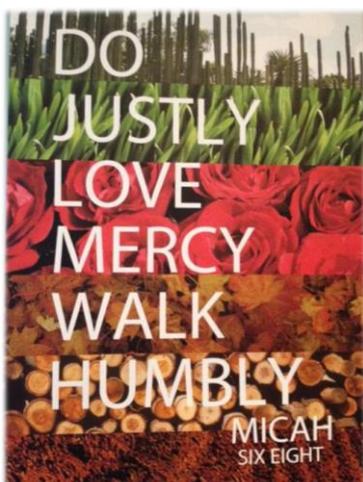


To stress the inward nature of service, however is not enough. Service to be service must take form and shape in the world in which we live. Therefore, we must seek to perceive what service looks like in the marketplace of our daily lives.'

[R Foster, Celebration of Discipline. p165]

The difference between servitude and servant hood is the difference between have to and get to. Servitude is imposed from the outside; servanthood grows from an inner identity, a core commitment to do what's best for those I serve.

Jesus' death on the cross illustrates true servanthood. Scripture tells us that he gave up his life for us 'of [his] own accord.' The sinless Son of GOD freely laid down his life so that we could receive the gift of eternal life – life forever with him.



Jesus loved. And in love, He served. Jesus' followers, in turn, served him and one another with hearts inspired, hearts set ablaze by his love. They served with a heart like Jesus' own heart. Some led and some followed, but all did what they did with servant's hearts.

(quote by unknown)

The Motivation for Service

A key question relating to service is the question of motivation. Selfless acts of service can be performed for many different reasons by Christians and non-Christians alike. Simply seeing what is being done does not indicate why it is being done.

Service may be motivated by a sense of care and responsibility for fellow human beings. While this may be based on a number of different motivations, theologically this can be seen as operating from an understanding of GOD as creator and all human beings as brothers and sisters of GOD as Father. Within the orders of creation, human beings serve each other in their various areas of responsibility in society.

Service can be the result of legalistic or moralistic motivation. Individuals can engage in acts of 'service' because they feel that it is their 'Christian duty', or because they feel that in this way they are somehow 'earning GOD's approval'.

However, for the Christian, the motivation for service arises from theology of the cross as a response to the love and forgiveness of God in Christ.

Christian Studies Curriculum Framework p.43

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

How can I balance my various vocations? What does this mean for the creation of a **collaborative** learning **community**?

CONCLUSION

REFLECTION NOTES