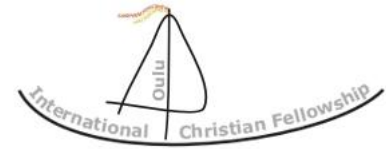


International Christian Fellowship of Oulu



Date & Time: Sunday, 9.8.2009 at 15.30

Place: Chapel of St. Luke

Topic: Serving for a Cause

Author: Bastian Fähnrich

Sources: Holy Bible New International Version, others see links below

Welcome Words & **Opening Prayer** (Bastian)

Music & Songs

Here I am to Worship (Praise Song No. 19)

Great is Thy Faithfulness (Praise Song No. 12)

One or two songs (Congregation's Choice)

Message

The Truth evangelisation event will be carried out this year 28-29 August. Its aim is to tell the Good News to all people in and around Oulu by various means, and as a joint effort of Oulu's Christian ministries (see websites):

Recruitment for volunteers: <http://www.yksitotuus.fi/rekry/english>

Information for wider public: <http://www.yksitotuus.fi/english>

An important part of the Truth event is to offer free services for all kinds of people. That is, Christian believers will gather together and show people Christ's love and mercy by means of serving for free. They will reach out to others by offering a helping hand, just as Jesus did so many times (see [poster](#)).

For instance, Christian believers will offer such free services as washing cars, repairing bikes, washing feet, cleaning up the city centre and market square, serving free food or drinks on the streets, visiting old people's homes and the refugee centre in Heikinharju etc.

Thus in this message I'd like to reflect on the activity of "serving" in the context of evangelisation – we have looked at "evangelising" and "serving" as a spiritual discipline and spiritual gift already during the summer camp (see [workshop document](#)).

To start with, I think there are (at least) three important purposes for Christian believers of serving others. These are (1) Sharing the Gospel of Jesus, (2) Building Up the Church and (3) Growing in the Christian Faith.

Let's explore these purposes in more detail with reference to Scripture, and after that I'd like to share my testimony of serving at last year's Truth event. In the end of this worship meeting we will pray, and sing a few songs related to "evangelising" and "serving".

(1) Sharing the Gospel of Jesus

The purpose I'd like to mention first is based on Jesus' Great Commission, and it marks the one of the greatest causes of serving and living a Christian life: "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation." ([Mark 16:15](#), see also [Matthew 28:19-20](#)).

It rests on God's dedication to provide salvation for everyone who repents and turns towards Christ: "God wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth." ([1 Timothy 2:3-4](#)).

Of course, the Gospel may be shared in many ways, either directly or indirectly (see last year's [message on evangelising](#)), perhaps most efficiently through teaching and studying God's Word and the Holy Spirit etc.

However, here I'd like to focus on telling the Gospel by showing mercy in concrete ways and through practical acts of love.

Let's remind ourselves that "God is love", and that we as believers "love because he first loved us." ([1 John 4:16,19](#)). And "he [God] has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother." ([1 John 4:21](#)).

We find this commandment also elsewhere in the Bible, and with its application to all people: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." and "Love your neighbor as yourself." ([Mark 12:30-31](#)).

So, we must love another, and are called to express this like Christ in practical ways, for, as we read in the Bible, "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." ([Mark. 10:45](#)).

Paul writes in the letter to the Roman church: "Offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God." ([Romans 12:1](#))

And in the letter to the Galatians Paul states: "You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love." ([Galatians 5:13](#)).

This may be rounded off with a Scripture reference from Paul's letter to the Ephesians: "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." ([Ephesians 5:1-2](#))

Of course, we may not need to serve sacrificially and Christ-like ([Philippians 2:1-18](#)) up to the point of becoming a martyr, nor do we have to offer services by our own power but with and through the Holy Spirit and the strength of God:

"Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit," says the Lord Almighty." ([Zechariah 4:6](#), see also [John 15:26](#)), and: "If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ." ([1 Peter 4:11](#)).

Also, we may serve by means of our God-given gifts ([Exodus 4:11](#), [1 Corinthians 12:4-31](#)), and tell the Gospel through accompanying words and possible conversations with people about Christ ([Romans 10:17](#)).

Lastly, I'd like to say that by acts of love, practical services and other ways of testifying about Jesus we ought to glorify God and help to draw people closer to accepting Christ into their lives:

"Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" ([1 Corinthians 10:31](#)), and: "Live such good lives among the pagans that (...) they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us" ([1 Peter 2:12](#), see also [Matthew 5:16](#)).

Let's remember that we as believers in Jesus are called to act on behalf of Christ:

"God reconciled the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him [Jesus] who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." ([2 Corinthians 5:19-21](#)).

(2) Building Up the Church

The second purpose I'd like to mention is that Jesus calls us "for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" ([Ephesians 4:12](#)).

That is, by serving we may build up the church of Christ, as we are united with Jesus as one body, with Him as the Head, and us as members, each having a particular function, foremostly within but also outside the Church ([Romans 12:3-8](#), [1 Corinthians 12:12-31](#)).

This means also that no one is asked to serve alone but together, for in and through Jesus Christ "we may be perfectly united in mind and thought" ([1 Corinthians 1:10](#)), as well as "in spirit and purpose" ([Philippians 2:2](#)).

Thus let's don't forget to support each other in service: "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!" ([Ecclesiastes 4:9-10](#)).

(3) Growing in the Christian Faith

Last but not least, by serving we may also meet a third purpose, that of growing in faith.

That is, through serving we can gradually "grow in the knowledge of God" ([Colossians 1:10](#)) and "become mature", and eventually "attain to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" ([Ephesians 4:13](#)).

This process of growth in faith comes with trials, challenges, temptations etc., and it certainly requires perseverance, endurance, patience, hope and joy ([2 Corinthians 12:10](#), [Colossians 1:9-13](#), [James 1:2-4](#)).

However, let's remind ourselves that in service we may always rely on the leading, help, counsel, teaching, strength and encouragement of the Holy Spirit ([Romans 8:14,26](#), [John 14:16,26](#), [Acts 9:31](#)):

"Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God (...) the Spirit helps us in our weakness" ([Romans 8:14,26](#)).

"I [Jesus] will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever (...) the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name [Christ], will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." ([John 14:16,26](#))

"Then the church (...) was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit." ([Acts 9:31](#))

We are not left alone in the midst of serving, and everything will work for the best, for "we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" ([Romans 8:28](#)).

Furthermore and to conclude, we may also fully trust our Heavenly Father and His beloved Son, our Saviour:

"I [God] said [to Israel, and to the gentiles through Jesus Christ], 'You are my servant'; I have chosen you and have not rejected you. So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." ([Isaiah 41:9-10](#)), and eventually: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me [Jesus Christ]" ([John 14:1](#)).

Testimony

I'm sure that there are many examples in the Bible that may illustrate the three purposes for Christian believers of serving others.

However, I'd now like to give my personal testimony, or my experience of arranging and carrying out a free service for people in the Truth event 2008.

My testimony illustrates the services' purposes of (1) Sharing the Gospel of Jesus, (2) Building Up the Church and (3) Growing in the Christian Faith:

To give you some background information, I arranged and served in repairing bikes at a stand downtown Oulu in the Otto Karhi park with fellow Christian believers. We also had a stand with Bibles, Christian literature and refreshments, and offered all the services for about 5 hours from 11.00-16.00.

(1) Sharing the Gospel of Jesus

Based on the reflections mentioned before/above, I could be a help, using my gifts, giving people I/we met a glimpse of God's love by doing good works for them. Quite a few people stopped to get their bikes fixed or maintained, and mostly I/we succeeded in repairing them, or giving tips of how to keep the bikes in better shape.

I didn't really share the Gospel directly by words and Scripture but had some talk with people passing by, and handed out the tract in Finnish and English ("[A few things God wants you to know](#)"). I prayed that my/our good deeds and the tract will make people think and move them a bit closer to God and the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

(2) Building Up the Church

We were quite a lot of people (12 or so), and the presence of the Lord was obvious, as we started and ended the day in prayer and helped each other in case a problem occurred. There were Christian brothers and sisters from different countries and denominations and we all experienced unity in Jesus Christ.

At one point I helped someone at the bike repair stand who had brought an old bike. But suddenly an important bolt in the fork (which was rusty inside the frame of the steering unit) broke. As a result of that there was basically nothing to do, as there was no other way than to destroy the fork and pull it out of the frame of the steering unit. I began to get worried, thinking and reasoning about how to come up with a solution. At the same time I comforted the one to whom the bike belonged with words, and prayed silently to God. But admittedly I was more worried and concerned, trying to use my own wisdom and knowledge to sort out the problem...

So, I found myself in a very unpleasant situation – I wanted to do something good, and it turns into something bad! Well, after a while of trying out different things with the tools available to me/us at the stand a Christian brother came along. He phoned another believer who has a workshop at home with spare bikes, parts and tools. Lord willing this guy even happened to stroll through the park when he got the phone call, and thus approached the scenery ;-) To cut a long story short, in the end everything turned out fine, as it was possible to replace the whole fork of the bike at the workshop!

(3) Growing in the Christian Faith

Through the difficulties that occurred with the broken bolt of the old bike and the support of the Holy Spirit and fellow Christian believers I learned a great lesson. I really think that the Holy Spirit intervened by bringing all the necessary people, tools and facilities together to save the situation of the ones who were involved in it.

I'd like to conclude by boldly stating that I grew spiritually, foremostly in trusting God that He is in control and provides help in many ways, of course in His timing and location. I also learned to endure the uncertainty of the situation and to be patient, hoping for the best, not being worried too much! And truly God didn't disappoint me nor anyone else, and the relief and joy (admittedly after the good ending) was easy to share ;-)

Music & Songs

There is a Redeemer (Praise Song No. 18)
Christ is the Hope of the World (Praise Song No. 23)

Thanksgiving & Prayers

Closing Prayer

Announcements

* Bible Study
Wednesday, 12 August at 19.00
Bastian's place

* Truth Event
Friday, 28 – Saturday, 29 August 2009
Info & Registration
www.yksitotuus.fi/rekry/english

Invitation to Fellowship Time

Fellowship Time

Voluntary Offertory
(for God-child & Missionaries)

Cleaning Up