

Rendering Service

Written by Eric Shuster

Founder and Executive Director of the Foundation for Christian Studies



Jesus Christ epitomized the principle of Christian service, dedicating his life to helping and serving others—eventually giving his very life for each one of us so that we may be forgiven of a lifetime of transgressions. Everyone is called to give service in the building of the kingdom of God on earth, with Christian Churches responsible for motivating their members towards fulfilling this commission.

We are all Servants in the Kingdom

Jesus gave to us the ultimate example of service when he said, “I am among you as he that serveth” (Luke 22:27), telling his disciples, “Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister” (Matthew 20:28).

We are called to serve others, being motivated by our own love of the Savior and our love for our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, regardless of their race, religion, or social status. Service to others is not contingent on our age, our financial status, health, or our position in society. Jesus put to rest any thoughts of service-related discrimination when he said: “Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant” (Matt. 20:26–27).

While God is all powerful, and many of God’s children are self-sufficient, God’s work is accomplished by the hands of

men, women, and children. For this reason service becomes the work of the Lord. The prophet Spencer W. Kimball highlighted this principle when he wrote, “God does notice us, and he watches over us. But it is usually through another person that he meets our needs” (“Small Acts of Service,” Ensign, Dec. 1974, 5).

Types of Service that can be Rendered

We can render service through a variety of means that include social (a simple smile or friendly gesture); economic (a donation directly or indirectly); physical (performing labor on behalf of another); or spiritual (ministering to the spiritual needs of others). Service may involve a small and uncomplicated act, or something that requires great sacrifice on the part of the giver. We must always keep in mind the infinite act of service by Jesus Christ in giving up his life for us.

The Savior taught that when we are serving others we are actually serving him (Matt. 25:40). This principle was further taught by King Benjamin in the Book of Mormon when he told his people, “When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God. ...” (Mosiah 2:17–18).

Building a Culture of Service in a Church Community

It is important for Christian Churches to create a “culture of service” within their congregations, giving members an opportunity to serve and exercise faith in Jesus Christ. One Christian denomination that has built a strong culture of service is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Consider the following examples of service among the LDS Church:

Unpaid Ministry:

The culture of service begins with the Church’s policy of an unpaid ministry: All ward and stake level ecclesiastical positions for men and women, including nearly all regional and worldwide positions of ministry, are staffed by volunteers who are called to serve. Priesthood leaders for example maintain full time jobs to support their families, while attending to their duties in the ministry without compensation. This same principle applies for women leaders in the Church. Such an unpaid ministry is 100% service oriented and driven not by a paycheck, but by their love of God and for their fellowman.

Member Volunteers across the Globe:

The culture of service perpetuates itself from the local level to a grander global scale. In 2005, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had 3,512 humanitarian missionaries worldwide rendering a total of 738,821 days of volunteer labor in 163 countries (Welfare Services Fact Sheet—2005, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City). All of this is in addition to the service given at the ward and stake levels under the policy of an unpaid ministry.

There are numerous other examples of service oriented cultures in Christian Churches across the globe—both big and small. Service doesn't have to include huge projects, but rather it can and should be a continual process in order to maintain a strong spirit of giving and sacrifice among Christian congregations.

The Blessings of Service

Although we should never expect anything in return for rendering service, we are able to enjoy great blessings through our acts of selfless charity. These blessings may include, but not be limited to, increasing our capacity to love others; becoming more like Christ; and being able to focus less on ourselves and more on others, such that our own problems may seem trivial where they once seemed large. That being said, it is clear that service is critical in gaining eternal life and returning to our Heavenly Father.

Conclusion

We can find outstanding examples of Christian service such as Catholic Charities, United Methodist Voluntary Service, Presbyterian Services, and numerous other Christian organizations at both the denominational and ecumenical level—each one providing opportunities for service and serving those in need. A true Christian seeks out opportunities for service and does so for the Love of God and not to earn a great reward for themselves on earth or in the eternities. Christ is the ultimate example of service by which all Christians should pattern their lives in reaching out to those who are unclothed, hungry, lonely, incarcerated, and otherwise down trodden.

About the Foundation for Christian Studies

The Foundation for Christian Studies (FCS) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the study, teaching, and practice of Christianity in a way that inspires all people, regardless of theological differences, to come together in support of essential Christian values and compassionate service to God's children across the globe. The FCS accomplishes this by providing rich scriptural course study and spiritual commentary, interactive web forums for thoughtful discussion, an online store offering inspirational Christian media, and a charitable giving program that emphasizes individual and community self-reliance.

About The Sword Series™

The Sword Series™ is an ongoing collection of Christian theological essays that are freely distributed by the FCS for the education and enjoyment of all. For more information on the Sword Series™ visit the FCS website at www.studychristianity.org.

For online versions of all four standard works of scripture (Old Testament, New Testament, Book of Mormon, and Doctrine and Covenants) see: <http://scriptures.lds.org/>

Note: The views expressed in this paper are those of the Foundation for Christian Studies (FCS) and its theological advisors based upon their collective study and understanding of the scriptures under the influence of the Holy Ghost. All formatted content in this paper is the property of the FCS and may be distributed freely. Any modification of the content of this paper without the express written consent of the FCS is prohibited. Copyright 2008