Holy Habits: Serving – week 2

When thinking about ‘serving’ and ‘service’ a familiar comment is that lots of people serve who aren’t Christians, and they do it just as well, if not better, than Christians do. This is quite true. It is certainly not just Christians, or indeed people of any faith group, who act in a selfless way to help their communities or support individuals. So, what is the difference with Christian service?

A key point is that I know whatever I am doing, I am not doing it alone, Jesus is there with me. His Spirit may prompt me to give somebody a call, or send them a card – I may not realise this is what has happened – perhaps I thought it was my idea – but then I find out that the person really needed somebody to talk to that day.

And when I am listening to somebody I may also be listening to God. In this way the Spirit may give me insight into a situation and guide me to say something helpful or supportive. And, of course, we have the benefit of being able to pray for people and situations and this is the real difference between service done in faith and that done in a person’s own strength, however skilled that may be. In Romans 8:26 we read “*In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans*.” We don’t even need to know what to pray for – we can lift a person or situation to God trusting that he will know best how to work in that situation.

Are some forms of service ‘better’ than others? Of course they are not!

1 Corinthians 12: 4-6 tells us “4*There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. 5There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work*.”

And in Ephesians 4:11-13 we read “11*So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13until 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*.”

So, is there anything we should do differently? I wonder if it is to be more willing to speak out about Jesus while we are serving. I often have a conversation with someone and go away and pray about their situation but I don’t very often tell them that is what I will do! Sometimes it is just because I don’t think about it at the time, but sometimes it is because I am not sure how they will react.

Of course, the best thing is that we don’t need to feel responsible for the outcome when we are concerned about a situation – we can pray then leave it in God’s hands.

*Produced by Daphne Wilkins on behalf of the Bents Green Holy Habits Planning Group (Debs Barnett, Glenn Evans, Martyn Read, Graham Wassell, Daphne and John Wilkins).  You can find more information on the Circuit Holy Habits Programme on the Sheffield Methodist Circuit website and also the Sheffield Methodist Circuit Facebook page.*