The Core Values of Service and Sacrifice

We will look at two values:

1. The Principle of Servanthood

- **The Biblical Root of Servanthood**
  - **The Example of Jesus**

    A Jewish rabbi was served by his disciples. They waited on him. Jesus insists that He did not come **to be served** but **to serve** and to give His life as a ransom for many. (Mk. 10:45) He washed His disciples' dirty feet as a demonstration that His concept of leadership was by example and through service. The only time Jesus uses the "example" model is in the context of service.

    "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord', and rightly so for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you should also wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant (doulos) ***is greater than his master nor is a messenger*** (apostolos) ***greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things you will be blessed if you do them."*** (Jn. 13:13-17)

    Jesus instruction to His disciples on the difference between ordinary secular leadership and Christian leadership is very counter-cultural and underlies the centrality of service.

    "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant (diakonos) ***and whoever wants to be first must be your slave*** (doulos) ***- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many."*** (Mt. 20:26-28)

    Both passages give strong encouragement to serve others. In both the example of Jesus is the incentive for His disciples to follow. A third passage reinforces the motivating factor of Jesus' example:

    " … the greatest among you should be like the youngest and the one who rules like the one who serves (diakonon). ***For who is greater, the one who is at table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at table? But I am among you as one who serves."*** (Lk. 22:26-27)

  - **The New Testament teaching that we are slaves**

    The concept of disciples and slaves is well developed in the New Testament. We are purchased by God through the blood of Jesus Christ (Rev. 5:9), not with silver and gold (1 Pet. 1:18), but at the price of His life (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23). The redeemed are no longer their own (1 Cor. 6:19), but are slaves of God (Rom. 6:22) and of Christ (Rom. 1:1; Eph. 6:6). They are forever His possession (Titus 2:14), His slaves that can never be sold (for we are branded) "sealed" with His Spirit (Eph. 1:13; 4:30; 2 Cor. 1:22).

    This purchase imposes an obligation:

    - ✓ personal ownership – 1 Peter 2:9
    - ✓ obedience – Rom. 6:17-18
    - ✓ protection – Gal. 6:17; Jn. 10:28-29

    Aristotle said, **"A slave is an animated tool. A tool is an inanimate slave."** We are slaves and not servants. A servant belongs to himself and so receives his own wages. A slave belongs to his owner and has no right to a wage. (Lk. 17:9-10) A servant sells only his labour to his master and usually only for a limited time. A slave belongs to his master as

a person and perpetually. Paul saw it as "his glory" to be not merely a servant but a slave of Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 9:15-18)

Paul gives us a beautiful demonstration of "a slave" on Malta after his ship was wrecked. When people would have been in post-traumatic shock, we find Paul collecting sticks for a fire to warm the survivors who were soaked to the skin. (Acts 28:3) The great apostle doesn't shrink from menial tasks. Neither should we!

- **The implications of these truths**

  - **In our attitude to God:** the success of our service will be our faithfulness as His servants. (1 Cor. 4:1-5; Mt. 25:21-23) This is the sum total of our life. It is the product of our development – not only our deeds but our possibilities; not only what we were but what we might have become; not only our actions but also our omissions (James 4:17); not just the work but the worker himself/herself; not the number but the weight of our deeds (1 Sam. 2:3); not only what we attained but what we strove after.

    In our work suffering counts for most. In our attitudes only selfless love counts. Of our possessions those employed in His service count. In everything He will take account of the inner attitude of all our service – of the impulses and motives – of our heart motives. (1 Cor. 4:5; 1 Sam. 16:7; Ps. 139; Heb. 4:13) Teaching what Christian ministry is all about by example and in our training programmes must include this principle.

  - **In leadership:** this is key in any choice appointment and evaluation of leaders. Is he/she seeking to be the greatest? Leaders must be willing to make themselves of no reputation. Are they marked by a girded towel that stoops low to serve? Is there a meekness of spirit? Do they dominate or develop those under them? How do they react to their own failure? They may give their best – unsparing of self – and still know what it is to be rejected by others! How do they deal with rejection and disappointment?

  - **In our attitude to the church:** an attitude of service is the **root** of the **principle of accountability**. What is our attitude to the church that sends out workers into the harvest field? We affirm:

    - ✓ It is the prerogative of the local church, in response to the leading of the Holy Spirit, to send out workers. (Acts 13:1-4) It is the responsibility of these workers to return and report faithfully God's doings with them. (Acts 14:26-28) Sending agencies serve as a link between the needs of world mission and the available resources in local home churches.

    - ✓ It is the role of the local church to screen, approve, commission and support those who God calls out from their midst to cross-cultural communication of the Gospel.

    - ✓ Sending agencies should serve local churches by keeping in constant communication regarding strategy and the progress of the Gospel. As servants we owe the churches an account for our stewardship of all entrusted resources. We will avoid wasteful duplication and unseemly competition.

  - **We also sense our servant role as we seek to strengthen existing churches.** Mission today is from all continents to all continents, so many teams will work under local churches in mutual respect, love and understanding. The task of the sending agency is to facilitate their work and not to control it. We must be committed to consultation and collaboration with church leaders. We should offer financial help in a way that honours God and encourages Christians to depend on God and not on human resources. As servants we should consult widely with church leaders in channelling funds. We recognise that the provision of funds does not buy the right to dictate policy.

- **In an attitude of mutual submission on our teams:** The old monastic vows still have something to say to us – vows of obedience, chastity and poverty. We want to live in submission and service to each other. We recognise that our love for the Lord Jesus is demonstrated by our love for our brothers and sisters.
- **The place of submission is:**
  - ✓ The place of authority (Mt. 8:9)
  - ✓ The place of security and protection
- **In cross-cultural mission:** A servant attitude will preclude ugly ego-centrism and culturally superior attitudes that have been so prevalent in Christian mission over the last 200 years. We will reflect the good in all cultures and service will be part of our evangelism and discipleship. This implies a more holistic ministry – meeting the needs of the whole man.

If Jesus could gird Himself with a towel and wash the feet of the rough fishermen who followed Him, who am I that I should seek great things for myself? Can I shun even the most menial service which He calls me? It is easy to say (and sing) that we offer up ourselves in complete consecration to the Lord who bought us. But how often is there a secret reservation we don't even admit to ourselves? If there is, it is a denial of the whole act of consecration! If we are honest, we often say, *"Lord I am ready to do anything, go anywhere, provided that I am given a task worthy of my gifts and abilities – some important ministry through which the world will know how I have devoted myself completely to you."*

It may be that, in God's sight, the humble person who waits at table and cleans up afterwards is performing a worthier service than the senior leader on the platform earnestly delivering what he believes to be God's message, if that leader is eager to receive honour from men – to be congratulated on the power and spirituality of his message. It is not until I am ready to take the lowest place, to 'pour contempt on all my pride' that I can truly be "well pleasing to him". I must be constrained by the love of Calvary to undertake with equal selflessness any task to which I am assigned whether it leaves me in safe obscurity or brings me into the dangerous glare of comparative prominence.

2. The Principle of Sacrifice and Suffering

- **The Example of Jesus**

  We are to be ***"Imitators of God … as dearly loved children"*** and to ***"Live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us."*** (Eph. 5:1-2) We are to walk the way of the Cross. We are to allow God to draw us into ***"The fellowship of His sufferings"***.

  There are several levels to this:

  - ✓ **It is a call to deny self.** (Mk. 8:34) Every day we should consciously take up our cross the symbol of death to self. To deny self is just the same as when Peter denied Jesus. Peter disowned him, turned his back on Him. So denying self is disowning ourselves, renouncing our supposed right to go our own way – the idolatry of self-centredness. (Gal. 5:24 – see also Rom. 8:13; Col. 32:43; 1 Pet. 2:24)

    This is a moral death that leads to a life of righteousness and power in fellowship with God.

  - ✓ **It is a call to suffering service.** Jesus, as the Suffering Servant from the "songs" of Isaiah, gives us an example. ***"As the Father sent Me, so I send you."*** (Jn. 20:21) Jesus was meek in character and conduct, never ***"shouting in the streets"***. He was gentle in His dealings with people, never ***"breaking a bruised reed"***. But He was called, chosen and appointed by His Father and filled with the Holy Spirit to bring Israel back to God so that she could be a light to the nations.

In this task Jesus persevered ***"setting his face like a flint"***. He was beaten, mocked and spat upon. He was ***"led like a lamb to the slaughter"*** and He died. We see a complete integration of suffering and service. The mission of Jesus is to be fulfilled by the church. (Acts 13:47) Suffering and service go together. This is the inescapable implication of the example of Jesus.

- ✓ **It is a call to follow the only path to effectiveness.** (Jn. 12:23-26,32-33) Death produces fruitfulness! If you stay alive, you stay alone! If you die, you multiply yourself. This is the principle of effective service. Like Jesus, those who follow Him must 'lose their lives' – not necessarily in martyrdom, but in self-giving, suffering and service.

- **Pauline restatement of the Principle of Suffering Service**

"For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for the sake of the Gentiles; ask you … not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are for your glory."
(Eph. 3:1,13)

"This is my Gospel, for which I am suffering … therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect that they may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory."
(2 Tim. 2:8-10)

"Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of His body which is the church." (Col. 1:24)

> **"The Cross is what happens when a love like God's love touches a world like ours."**
> Kenneth Cragg

What does Paul mean in Col. 1:21, ***"I rejoice in … suffering"***? What is lacking in Christ's suffering? Nothing was lacking in the death of Jesus as far as producing forgiveness of our sin and guilt or in the whole issue of overcoming Satan and his power. We can add nothing to this. The phrase 'fill up' or 'complete' is only to be found in one other place in the New Testament – Phil. 2:30. Epaphroditus almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to 'fill up' or 'make complete' – i.e. 'make up for the help that you could not give me'. The Philippian believers had sent Paul a gift. Epaphroditus 'completed' the gift. These believers were poor but they had sacrificially collected money as a 'love offering' for the time that Paul was imprisoned in Rome. The thing that was impossible for them was the presentation of the gift in person. So Epaphroditus, personally and at great personal sacrifice, made up that which was lacking – the presentation in person of the love gift.

The price of missions is a Cross. There are no closed countries, but some countries demand a high price. Most unreached peoples live in the hard parts. We live in an increasingly volatile world. Persecution against the church will grow – Rev. 12. Satan will get angrier as he knows his time is getting shorter. World Mission is going to get increasingly hard with greater and greater problems. We measure the worth of hidden treasure by what we will gladly sell to buy that treasure. If we will not sell, we are saying that what we have is treasured more than what is out in the "field".

"The Kingdom of God is like a treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again. And then, <u>in his joy</u>, went and sold all he had and bought that field." (Mt. 13:44)

The extent of his sacrifice and the depth of his joy is measured by the value he has put on the treasure in the field. So our loss and suffering joyfully accepted for the Kingdom of God shows the supremacy of God's worth and God's will (world evangelism) more clearly to the world that all our celebrations, conferences and church meetings.

- **The Place of Suffering and Sacrifice in Mission History**

  The secret to missionary effectiveness is the willingness to suffer and die. It nearly always means death to popularity. The narrow way of human beings only having access to God through Jesus is always going to be attacked. It means death to all pride and complete dependence on the Holy Spirit. It means death to racial and national prejudice – i.e. cultural identification with others. It means enduring hardship – death to material comfort and adopting a simple lifestyle. It means death to selfish ambition. It means death to a selfish home life.

  In the history of missions, 'taking up the cross' has always meant a self-imposed discipline. A wave of enthusiasm won't do! Part of this discipline is the discipline of secret prayer that no one else knows about – the prayer that costs. Dying to self releases resurrection power to be effective in the task – crucified in weakness and living by the power of God. (2 Cor. 13:4)

  In missions the choice has always been between the crowd and the Cross. Where we have chosen the Cross, then eventually there have been breakthroughs. If we are prepared to live as He lived, serve as He served, then it is gloriously true that we will share with Him the joy of the harvest. There were many who rejected Him – many who wouldn't receive His testimony, but then there were Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, Zacchaeus, the woman of Samaria, the man born blind, Mary, Martha and Lazarus and many, many more. It is the same with us. We will reap the harvest in patience. The suffering servant sees the travail of His Master's soul and will be satisfied.

- **The Implications for us as Servants of the Living God**

  - **We are called to spiritual poverty.** (Mt. 5:3) We have renounced our rights to everything the world has to offer. Anything that comes to us is pure gain and is accepted as God's good gift. If things that others prize don't come to us, we will never feverishly seek them whether they be money, property, reputation, loved ones, health or even life itself.
  - **We commit ourselves to regular, sustained self-discipline** because we know that, ***"all is permissible, but not all is helpful."*** (1 Cor. 10:23)
  - **We commit ourselves to a simple, modest lifestyle.** We hold everything we own in real stewardship. We want no self-indulgence. The Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. For our sakes he became poor. If we set our affections on things of this earth, if we think of material comfort as essentially important, if we are not content to be poor in this world's goods and without the luxuries which others from our background enjoy, then we are demanding better treatment than was given to Jesus – better conditions than the Lord of Glory experienced during His ministry on earth.
  - **We want our ethos to be one of generous giving of ourselves and all we possess.**
  - **We will remember the principles of suffering and service** in decisions over policies of crisis management and risk assessment.
  - **We won't talk of "our rights".** [See the book **Have We No Rights** by Mabel Williamson.] In some countries we may be received with courtesy but less pleasant experiences are the norm and often petty insults outrage our dignity – especially when there is also a tendency to treat our house and our possessions as public property. Sometimes there may be suspicion on the part of the national church. Tiny irritations are often harder to bear than serious trials! We won't court popularity or seek to have a good reputation. If we are hurt when other slight us and refuse to give us honour, we won't get angry or stand on our rights. To do so would be to refuse to accept the implications of our relationship to Jesus.