

Living for Jesus

Jesus died for me (and for us) so that I can (and we can) live for Him. This is deeply personal, but it is also essentially corporate: I cannot do it on my own.

When we read the New Testament, we see that the Christian life is not primarily about going to Heaven but about bringing Heaven down to Earth. Faith in the New Testament is practical, life-changing and world-changing.

Jesus calls us not to be converts and attendees, but to be followers and disciples: as learners, to join Him in His mission, recognising that we don't have all the answers but trusting Him to guide us and empower us. We are offered freedom from the past and power to live today if we embrace the new life He offers.

Jesus' mission is stated in Luke 4, quoting Isaiah 61. Our calling, if we follow Him, is to join Him in His mission, to bring good news to the poor.

How do we do this? Jesus summarises the OT law like this: we are to love God with everything we have, and love our neighbour as we love ourselves. We are offered a joyful life: not joy in selfishness but joy in sacrificial love and service to our neighbour – to the person who needs our help. It's that simple, and that hard. We cannot do it on our own, but we have the Holy Spirit to give us the strength we need.

As an integral part of my discipleship, my goal is to see people's lives (including my own) transformed through love, to see broken lives (including my own) made whole; to play my part in building a new world – a world in which God's justice, love and goodness are seen in all things, and in every aspect of our lives.

Loving my neighbour is not an optional extra: it is the core of my Christian life; it is the way I express my love for God. This is very different from the usual go-to-Church-and-be-good understanding of the Christian life: it is exciting, challenging and very, very worthwhile. It is a calling I can give my life to.

This does not mean we can or should stop all the usual Church activities. Sunday services, prayer meetings, worship and teaching are still needed, but they now have a different place in our corporate life: they are needed because they enable us to do what we are called to; they are the means to an end, not an end in themselves. In this new life, worship, teaching and prayer are a vital need, not a religious duty: they enable and strengthen us to live and love and serve the way Jesus wants us to.

Teaching people what to believe and what goals we should be aiming for is good and helpful as far as it goes, but just telling people what to do is not enough: they need to be equipped to serve; they have to see the Christian life being lived out, and provided with the opportunity to take part. Christian Social Action has two goals: to bless the people being served, and to enable the people serving to grow – to grow personally, and to grow together as a united body. This is the main way in which we are equipped: through on-the-job training, just like Jesus did with His disciples.

Next steps

This was written by Paul Hazelden as a contribution to the *Strong Foundations* exploration. You are welcome to use it and distribute it how you like, but feedback would be appreciated.

- Is it helpful?
- Would you change anything?
- Would you like to talk about how we can learn from each other about how best to follow Jesus where we are?

You can contact me through the web form at mad-bristol or join the conversation on the *Strong Foundations* site.

- Web form: <http://mad-bristol.org.uk/contact/>
- Strong Foundations: <http://strongfoundations.pbworks.com>

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