

What does it mean to be "*in the service of God*" or "*in the service of Christ*"? I mean, we have all heard it said, and we may even have said it ourselves a few times. "I'm here to serve God the Father;" "I'm serving Jesus"

But what does it mean?

Well, we have several examples within scripture, so let's put on our spiritual running shoes, and take a quick look at a few examples.

Mary & Martha: Here are two sisters and friends of Jesus. As we see in **Luke chapter 10**, both are serving Jesus when he arrives at the home of Martha (**verse 38-40**):

Luk 10:38 Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house.

Luk 10:39 And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word.

Luk 10:40 But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me."

*Martha is busy serving him Him by welcoming Him into her home, then preparing the house and meal for Him, and the enterage with Him.

*Mary is also busy serving Him by being single-minded and focusing upon Jesus as He shared his word with everyone within the house.

Both served Him- one focused on busyness of service, and another focused on studying. Neither is wrong- perhaps differing priorities, but not wrong. The Life Application Study Bible Commentary reads:

"Mary and Martha both loved Jesus. On this occasion they were both serving him. But Martha thought Mary's style of serving was inferior to hers. She didn't realize that in her desire to serve, she was actually neglecting her guest.

Scripture teaches us that in those days one was to serve by welcoming others into the home, washing their feet, feeding them, and putting them up for the night (**Genesis 19:2, 1 Samuel 25:41, John 13:6 & 8**). But Jesus wasn't interested in others serving Him as much as he was interested

service to Him.

How about Moses: Here is a man who was charged with leading Israel out of Egypt, but it wasn't going to be an easy task serving God. (**Exodus**) Threatened with death when merely an infant (**Exodus 1:16**), brought up in the home of Pharaoh (**Exodus 2:6-10**), then threatened again by the same man whose home he has lived in (**Exodus 2:15**). He escapes to Midian, where he settles down (**Exodus 2:15**).

Then the encounter: He is minding his own business, serving his father-in-law, tending his flock, when he looks up to see the Angel of the Lord in the burning bush (**Exodus 3:1-3**). He is charged with returning to Pharaoh to bring Israel out of bondage and oppression at the hands of the Egyptians (**Exodus 3:10**). And after going head-to-head with Pharaoh, in miracles and plagues, the Israelites are sent out (**Ex 12:31-36**)- but not straight to the promised land. They are sent on a 40 year exodus to a place that was actually a few day's journey away (**Ex 13:17-22**). All during this time, they oppressed and challenged Moses and God. Talk about tough service- ended up costing Moses his life, before he was to enter the Promised Land (**Deut. 34:4-5**), because even he disobeyed God, in his frustration with his service (**Numbers 20:7-12**):

Num 20:7 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

Num 20:8 "Take the rod; you and your brother Aaron gather the congregation together. Speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield its water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals."

Num 20:9 So Moses took the rod from before the LORD as He commanded him.

Num 20:10 And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, "Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?"

Num 20:11 Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank.

Num 20:12 Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them "

The apostles in the book of Acts (chapter 6): The number of the disciples was multiplying. During this time the Hellenists- which were Jews skilled in, and using, the Greek language- were complaining against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.

Matthew Henry, in his commentary, writes: "The complaint of these Grecians was *that their widows were neglected in the daily administration*, that is in the distribution of the public charity, and the Hebrew widows had more care taken of them. Observe, The first contention in the Christian church was about a money-matter;"

How did the apostles handle this? They gathered the multitude together and said (**verse 2**): "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables." by this they were saying that their service of spreading the gospel of Jesus was of utmost importance.

(**verse 3**) "Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;" They are appointing these seven to be over the serving of provisions for the others.

(**verse 4**) "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." So serving God and others was important, but within the proper context. As Jesus said, in **Mat 4:4**:

Mat 4:4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE, BUT BY EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS FROM THE MOUTH OF GOD.' "

Ruth and Naomi: This is a story of a Moabite woman who forsakes her pagan heritage in order to cling to the people of Israel and to the God of Israel. We are introduced to this woman as she is wed to a son of Elimelech, after they have travelled to Moab during a famine. Now after having been a part of the family for ten years, her husband dies, along with all the men in the immediate family (**Ruth 1:1-5**):

Rth 1:1 Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of

and his wife and his two sons.

Rth 1:2 The name of the man *was* Elimelech, the name of his wife *was* Naomi, and the names of his two sons *were* Mahlon and Chilion-Ephrathites of Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to the country of Moab and remained there.

Rth 1:3 Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left, and her two sons.

Rth 1:4 Now they took wives of the women of Moab: the name of the one *was* Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth. And they dwelt there about ten years.

Rth 1:5 Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died; so the woman survived her two sons and her husband.

Naomi has determined to return to Moab, since she has heard God had visited His people by giving them bread (**1:6**). And she has allowed both her daughters to return to their land, because she knew she was too old to have another husband, and conceive male children for them to wed at the appropriate time. (**verses 8-13**)

One of her daughters, Orpah, accepted her mother's offer, and returned to her people. Nothing more is mentioned about her, throughout scripture.

Ruth is given the same opportunity, but she chose to remain with, and serve her mother-in-law, and God (**verse 16**). And in doing so, in due time, she came to the attention of Boaz, her kinsman redeemer (**Ruth 2:5**). That's a fancy title simply meaning he had the right to take her as his wife, and redeem the family name. Boaz took a liking to Ruth, and treated her, and Naomi very well. There was another who was a more direct descendant, who could have taken Ruth to be his wife, but when he learned land was involved in the taking of Ruth, he passed the privilege on to Boaz (**Ruth 4:8**). Here's the neat thing about this example of serving God... Ruth conceived, and bore a son. They called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, who is the father of...? **David**. (**Ruth 4:17**) She chose to stay with and serve Naomi, and became the great-grandmother of King David!

One last example... Jesus Christ: He left his holy abode with God the Father, came to earth, was born of a virgin (**Mat 1:20-23**), and spent 33 years on earth as a man. He was tempted as all of us, yet without sin (**Hebrews 4:15**). He was crucified, died, was buried, and rose again on the third day (**1 Cor. 15:4**). He ascended up to Heaven (**John 3:13**), and

knowing it was all going to happen to Him, but He did all this in obedience and servitude to His Almighty Father, and to the Father's plan for mankind. He did all of this to save all from eternal damnation, and separation from Him in Heaven (**1 Tim 1:15**), because he is not willing that any should perish but that all come to repentance (**2 Pet 3:9**).

What is this teaching us about being in the service of God? it teaches us we must die to self (**Rom 8:13**), take up our cross *daily* and follow Him (**Luke 9:23**). It means esteeming others above ourselves (**Phil 2:3**). It means He must increase, and we must decrease (**John 3:30**). But it also means coming away to rest and spend time at his feet as Mary did. And why was it so easy for her to do that? Because He was her Lord.

So if He is not your Lord and Savior tonight, it is necessary for you to do something about that. As scripture teaches, in **Psa 95:7-8**: "**Today, if you hear His voice: Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, as in the day of trial in the wilderness, when your fathers tested Me, though they saw My works.**" And in **Isaiah 49:8**: "**In an acceptable time I have heard You, and in the day of salvation I have helped You;**" Open your heart to Him tonight, invite Him to be your Lord and Savior. The time is now... Scripture teaches:

Rom 10:9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Rom 10:10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

And you may ask 'why?' Here's why:

Rom 14:11 For it is written: "**AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL CONFESS TO GOD.**"

Rom 14:12 So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.

And "every" means you as well as me.
Let's pray...