



## Are you being served... or are you serving?

by Pastor Robert M. Reid

On the PBS channel there is a quirky British TV program entitled, “Are You Being Served?” The half-hour program revolves around the experiences of employees who work in the clothing section of a London department store called Grace Brothers. The show’s title comes from the question the salespeople greet customers with: “Are you being served?” The question is supposedly asked in order to learn how the employees might meet the needs of shoppers in their department. As the show progresses, however, it becomes obvious that the employees are more concerned about their own needs than those of their customers.

The question that really epitomizes the attitude of many 21st century westerners is, “Am I being served?” As with the Grace Brothers employees, that question has nothing to do with meeting the needs of others; it has to do with getting one’s own needs met. Sadly, the Christian culture also has become very self-focused rather than other-focused or—even more important—God-focused. Self-focused Christians see the church and its ministries as existing primarily to meet their personal needs. They do not see the church essentially meeting to glorify God, to be equipped to witness to the unbelieving world, and to serve other believers in a variety of ways.

Jesus Christ’s disciples were very self-focused rather than other-focused. Jesus told them, “He who is greatest among you shall be your servant” (Matthew 23:11). They had been focused on getting positions in the kingdom, receiving some benefit by ministering with Christ, and displaying power so those around them would take notice of them. Christ wanted them to have a different focus. Oswald Chambers suggested that we serve Christ “by being the servants of other men.” He noted,

Jesus Christ out-socialists the socialists. He says that in His Kingdom he that is greatest shall be the servant to of all. The real test of a saint is not one’s willingness to preach the gospel, but one’s willingness to do something like washing the disciples’ feet—that is, being

willing to do those things that seem unimportant in human estimation but count as everything to God.

Chambers concluded that Christians needed to become “broken bread and poured out wine in the hands of Jesus for other lives” (My Utmost for His Highest).

When Jesus described His life He said, “the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). He definitely was not self-focused. He was other-focused. Even while on the cross suffering shame, pain, and ridicule, His focus was on a thief who wanted to be remembered when Jesus would come into His kingdom (see Luke 23:39-43). Jesus did not say, “I can’t be bothered now. Look at what I have to endure.” Christ did not say, “I am tired of the treatment I have been receiving on planet earth. I am out of here.” No. He saw a man in need and ministered to him, a thief and murderer who had physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. Jesus served a sinner even as He suffered for the sins of the world.

How different our world would be if we walked as Jesus walked on planet earth. We would not ask how we could use people, but how we could serve people. We would want to see the needs of others and ask the Lord to show us creative ways to minister to those needs. We would see meetings with other believers as service opportunities. We would view a walk through our local community as a ministry survey trip. A ride on the plane would be seen as an opportunity to make your seat mate’s trip more enjoyable. A night at the local restaurant would be a chance to show a waiter or waitress that they are people of value and worth, not just someone to wait on you. The spirit of service for others would begin to pervade all of life, providing a platform for a verbal witness of the gospel.

“Are you being served?” That’s a question asked not for our benefit. It’s a question that should flow from us to the world around us. May the love of Christ and the example He displayed move us to serve others in our homes, communities, churches, and the world.