

Key Images of Service

The New Testament describes the nature of Christian service with vivid imagery pulled from the cultures of the Bible. Hopefully, by focusing in these illustrations, we will be encouraged to more faithful Christian Service

A. The Warrior's Service

The Bible illustrates the Christian life military terms - the soldier, his army, his responsibilities, his relationships, the war, results of the war, the nature of combat, or so on. The Bible compares these military concepts to:

- the general Christian life (Eph. 6:10-20);
 - the conflict between believers (Jam. 2:11);
 - the conflict within the believer (1 Pet. 2:11).
- a. Paul describes his _____ as warfare (1 Cor. 9:1-7; 2 Corinthians 10:1-6)
 - b. Those involved _____ should be supported by that ministry (2 Cor. 10:1-6; 1 Corinthians 9:2-7)
 - c. Those who actively participate in Christian warfare should not use _____ accomplish God's goals. (1 Corinthians 9:2-7)
 - d. Believers working together in Christian ministry are referred to as _____ (Phlm. 2; Philippians 2:25)
 - e. The Christian life is called a good _____ and those involved in it are said to be at war. (1 Tim. 1:18-19)
 - f. 2 Timothy 2:3-4 is more specific about service and ministry. Name four qualities of a good soldier in Jesus' service.

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____
- d) _____

What implications of Christian service jump to mind from these points?

B. The Farmer's Service

The farmer and his work are the second illustrations of Christian service. In biblical cultures, everyone was close to the farm and more familiar with agricultural life. Farming well-describes Christian ministry, as well as God's work among His people.

- a. Farmers must have _____. James used the farmer's patience to illustrate the believer's attitude in waiting for the Lord's coming.
- b. In John 15:1-2, Jesus refers to Himself as the _____ and the Father as the vine-dresser. The Father is responsible for ministry results - _____ (cf. 1 Cor. 3:6).
- c. Christian ministry includes planting and _____ which are *necessary* for growth; yet Christians cannot produce growth. (1 Corinthians 3:6-9.)
- d. Paul called the Church God's building and His _____ (1 Cor. 3:9)

Depending on the verse, these depict Christians as either the farmer or the plant. Our service to one another is one of the means that God uses to grow believers. Below are listed three qualities of a good farmer. Why do you think they are important to Christian Service?

- a. Patience - James 5:7
- b. Hard work - 2 Timothy 2:6
- c. Accountability – Mat. 21:33-46; 1 Cor. 3:10-15

C. The Athlete's Service

Athletics is a frequently used illustration of Christian life and service. Biblical athletes could be unspecified – “*athlete*” or “*contestant*” (1 Cor. 9:25); or more precisely as a “*boxer*”, “*runner*”, or “*wrestler*” (1 Cor. 9:25; Eph. 6:12).

1. Christian life is a _____, dealing with hardships of the faith (Cf. Phil. 1:30; Heb. 10:32–33)
2. Effort and self-control are necessary in the Christian life (1 Tim. 4:10; Heb. 12:1)
3. The Christian _____ himself (2 Tim. 4:7; Heb. 12:1);
4. The growth in the Christian's spiritual life. (Gal. 5)
5. The effort involved in _____. (Colossians 4:12)
6. The effort involved in Spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:12; 1 Thess. 2:2)
7. The effort involved in _____ - (Luke 13:24)
8. Specifically, Christian Service. (Galatians 2:2)
 - a. Paul's desire was that his ministry would accomplish its intended end, therefore, he was concerned that it was not carried out in _____. (Galatians 2:2)
 - b. Those involved in Christian ministry must exert effort and make _____ (1 Corinthians 9:24–26)
 - c. Paul's service was a labor of helping Christians to mature in Christ. He described this as striving by God's _____ (Col. 1:28–29)
 - d. Ministering the way God wants ministry conducted

may very well bring _____, which Paul describes as a conflict. (Philippians 1:29–30)

What are some aspects we can learn about service when considering the athlete?

D. The Sacrifice and Worship of Service

The fourth illustration depicts Christian service as a sacrifice. Starting with Genesis 3, and formalized in the Mosaic Covenant, sacrifice extends into the New Testament. The New Testament sacrifice developed in light of Christ's sacrifice. The altar is the heart and the believer is the sacrifice.

1. The believer is the _____ and the sacrifice (Rom. 12:1)
2. The believer serves _____. (Rom. 15:16)
3. The Christian's life is a sacrifice. (Phil. 2:17-18; 2 Tim. 4:6) Drink offering or _____. (Ex. 29:38-42; Num. 15:2-19; 28:14; Lev. 23:13; cf. Hos. 9:4; Gen. 25:14; Num. 28:7).

What are some distinct points about Christian service that come out of these illustrations?
