

## Week 8 – Discovering Commitment

### Choosing a way of life

You could study Christian theology for years, and be a world expert on the Bible, and visit every church in Europe, and read 1000 encyclopaedias on the subject – and still not be a Christian.

Learning about the Christian faith, and thinking about it, is important. But what we know and think is much less important than who we are, and how we live. The Christian faith isn't a set of abstract ideas – it's a way of life.

### Life as a Christian

Being a Christian means that we

- believe in God and his amazing love for us
- put our faith in Jesus Christ as our Saviour
- ask God's forgiveness
- trust ourselves completely to God
- let the Holy Spirit fill our life
- seek to serve God in everything we do.

So being a Christian doesn't mean having airy-fairy, "spiritual" feelings. It's not about feelings at all. Christianity is practical, and down to earth.

It's about letting God take control. Putting God at the centre, instead of ourselves. And then letting him guide all our thoughts and actions.

For example, how do we use our time, our money, our skills? Do we spend time with the people we like most, or the people who need us most? Do we have the world's priorities, or God's priorities?

In all the situations they face, Christians are ready to ask themselves – *"What would Jesus do?"*

### Making a Commitment

Being a Christian is like being on a journey. As we travel through life, we keep on growing and developing as people. Our faith keeps on growing and developing too.

At some point on this journey, we will be ready to make a more serious commitment to Jesus – to declare our faith openly and publicly, and to enter fully into the joys and the responsibilities of following Jesus and belonging to his Church.

In the Church of England we use the historic ceremonies of Baptism and Confirmation for making this commitment.

## **Baptism**

Since the very beginning, the Bible tells us that people were baptised when they became Christians. The water of baptism symbolises our old life dying, and a new life beginning with Jesus. Those being baptised promise to reject evil, to ask forgiveness for their sins, and to follow Jesus faithfully for the rest of their lives. The whole church then welcomes them into the church family.

## **Confirmation**

If babies and young children are baptised, parents and godparents make the promises for them. When they are older, they can re-affirm these promises for themselves in a service of Confirmation. People who were not baptised as children can be baptised shortly before, or at the same time as, they are confirmed.

In the Confirmation service, the Bishop asks the candidates the same questions that were asked at their baptism. Their answers confirm that they have chosen the Christian way of life for themselves.

Then the Bishop lays his hands on them, and prays that God will confirm them (make them 'firmer' or 'stronger') in the Christian faith –  
"Confirm, O Lord, your servant with your Holy Spirit. Amen."

There are many examples in the New Testament of Jesus and the disciples laying hands on people, to pray for them, to bless them, to heal them, to commission them for a task, and to let them receive the Holy Spirit. These are all part of what happens during Confirmation.

## **The help that God gives to us**

We are never alone as we continue on our Christian journey. We travel with friends, with Christians the world over. And God is with us, helping us every step of the way.

***The Spirit*** God is with us the whole time, in all our experiences, good and bad. We can't handle everything on our own. We need to trust God, and he will see us through.

***Prayer*** Praying regularly, every day, is the greatest help of all. We can talk to God about anything and everything, and he will set us on the right road. Simply being with God, during a time of quiet prayer, gives us peace, confidence, and strength.

***The Bible*** Reading the Bible helps us see the world through God's eyes. Whatever situation we may be in, we can turn to the Bible and find reassurance, encouragement, guidance, and inspiration.

***Other Christians*** It's very valuable to spend time with other Christians. It's almost impossible to really live as a Christian all by yourself. We are there to support one another – that's how God's love works.

***The Church*** This is where we come together – to worship God, to strengthen our faith and understanding, to care for each other, and to join in God's work in the world. The Church is every Christian's natural home.