

## Chapter 4: **Community**

### **Explain how you understand “the mind of Christ”.**

When I think about “the mind of Christ”, I think about the Trinity; God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. I am also reminded of the scripture in the Book of Romans 12:2 which says, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is his good, pleasing and perfect will”.

I understand “the mind of Christ” to be a process of constant communion with God, being one with God in mind, body, and soul which helps us to relate to others in a Christ-like manner with true compassion and love. For example, through the leading of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was able to perform and say the things of God as a result of his communal relationship with God the Father. I believe this communal relationship with God can be experienced by Christians, particularly when we are transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit through accepting Jesus as our Lord and Savior, and as we experience transformation through the renewing of our minds. Having gone through this transformation, we as Christians can adopt to the mind of Christ, and begin to see the world through the lens and mind of Christ as we extend compassion, humility and a servanthood.

In Chapter 4, on pages 48, and 49, it is evident that for Christians to live with compassion and be in community with others, we must be in fellowship with Christ, so that the mind of Christ can draw us into the community. This is emphasized on page 49 of chapter 4, where the authors made it clear that “our community life is the manifestation of the mind of Christ”

(McNeill et al., 2005). Therefore, having the mind of Christ means to remain in constant communion with God through prayer, worship, and relationship.

### **How does the mind of Christ gather us together in the community?**

In the Book of Acts chapter 4, I've always admired the unity, community, and oneness in the hearts of the believers. This was seen where the believers claimed none of their possessions as their own, but instead share everything they own. They were on one accord, sharing the same goal, and had one powerful thing in common, a relationship with God. As I reflect on how the mind of Christ gathers us together in community, a key verse in Acts chapter 4, specifically verse 31, comes to mind. Acts 4:31 states that "after they had prayed, their meeting place was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly". This scripture translates to me that; the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the believers allowed them to experience the mind of Christ supernaturally, and through this encounter, they became one with God and with each other through the Holy Spirit. This correlates with chapter 4 of the text (pg. 49) where the author talks about walking on the same path with other believers and how when the presence of Jesus Christ manifests itself to us in the Christian community, it is easy for us to relate to each other with the mind of Christ causing us to become open and receptive to the suffering of the world and offer a compassionate response as a community (McNeill et al., 2005, pg.49-50).

### Chapter 5: *Displacement*

**Jesus voluntarily displaces himself (Phil: 2:6-7). He gave up the heavenly place and took a humble place. Discuss the ways Jesus voluntarily displaced himself. Where have you voluntarily displaced yourself in following Christ?**

Jesus displaces himself by giving up his 'ordinary and proper place' in heaven to be voluntarily displaced here on earth in a condition of suffering. The author highlighted various instances where Jesus displaced himself which can be seen in the instances whereby, Jesus as a child was taken to Egypt to be protected against the threat of King Herod (McNeill et al., 2005). Or, as an adult, Jesus went into the desert for forty days to fast only to be tempted by the devil, and lastly, during his years of earthly ministry, we saw where he was displaced in different places to evade unbelievers and the Pharisees who wanted to persecute him, which in the end ultimately led to his final displacement on the cross (McNeill et al., 2005, pg.63). With all of this in mind, the author concludes Jesus' displacement as the "Lord in whom God's compassion become flesh" (McNeill et al., 2005, pg.63).

Reflecting on my life, I have yet physically voluntarily displaced myself for Christ, however, I have voluntarily displaced my desire and plans for the will of God. An example of this is, my decision to attend college. I did not want to go back to school. I want to find a job, begin working, start my family, and live a normal, 'ordinary, proper life'. However, God placed me in a state of displacement, whereby my desires are no longer at the forefront, and instead His perfect will is at work. This I believe is as uncomfortable as being displaced geographically.

### **What do we discover in voluntary displacement? Why is displacement so important?**

I believe what we discover in displacement is God, compassionate living, community, and the ability to "see with others what we could not see before, feel with others what we could not feel before, and hear with others what we could not hear before" (McNeill et al., 2005, pg.65). This is why displacement is important, we get to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, with the mind of Christ humble among mortal men and women while sharing in joys and sorrows of others as Christ did.

Chapter 6: *Togetherness*

**Discuss the authors' statement "This new, non-competitive togetherness opens our eyes to each other. Here we touch the beauty of the Christian community."**

I believe this statement is saying that when we as Christians give up our desire to be outstanding, different, and better than others, we are able to view one another as equals, and see others through the lens of sameness, which in turn allow us see other people's unique, hidden talents and gifts. This in an essence, helps us to see the true beauty of the Christian community. This statement reminds me of the scripture in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 that tells us that "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ". Simply put, the body of Christ is made up of many members working together to fulfill the same purpose. Therefore, there should be no competition, for the body of Christ to work in perfect harmony.

**How might we "empty" ourselves for another?**

On page 79 of chapter 6, the authors outline what it means to "empty" ourselves for another. This is outlined as the process whereby we pay attention to others with the desire to make them the center, without shifting the attention from them to ourselves. Simply put, we should make their interest our own (McNeill et al., 2005, pg.79). "Emptying" ourselves also require us to be empty, to receive others in our intimate inner space, as we listen with real concentration that brings forth healing, and call forth the hidden gifts in the person.

Chapter 7: *Patience*

**Share insights on discipline and speak about why discipline and discipleship cannot be separated.**

According to the authors, discipline is the “human effort to unveil what has been covered, to bring to the foreground what remained hidden, and to put on the lampstand what has been kept in a basket” (McNeill et al., 2005, pg.88). This analogy presents discipline as a form of revelatory attribute that can only be enabled by God’s divine Spirit in us. The author also states that discipline in the Christian life requires effort that reveals rather than conquers (McNeill et al., 2005, pg.79). Discipline in a nutshell, is the effort to avoid deafness and become sensitive to the voice of God who invites us into a new life in discipleship (McNeill et al., 2005, pg.89). When it comes to discipline and discipleship, the authors outline that discipline and discipleship belong together, which means that they strengthen and deepen each other (McNeill et al., 2005, pg.87). Without discipline, discipleship is short-lived, and without discipleship, discipline can easily become a form of self-assertion (McNeill et al., 2005, pg.87).

**Can one be truly compassionate without being patient? Why or why not?**

“The compassionate way is the patient way”, and “patience is the discipline of compassion” (McNeill et al., 2005, pg.89). In the same way that discipline and discipleship cannot be separated, I believe that patience and compassion are the same way, as the authors informed us, the word compassion could be read as com-patience (McNeill et al., 2005, pg.89). Additionally, passion and patience are both derived from the Latin word *pati*, which means “suffering”. With that being said, a compassionate life is a life patiently lived with others in suffering. The authors postulates that, “if we cannot be patient, we cannot be com-patient”, therefore, patience is the hard but fruitful discipline of the disciple of the compassionate God (McNeill et al., 2005, pg.91).

Chapter 8: *Prayer*

### **How do the authors define what prayer is and what it is not?**

In this chapter, the authors define prayer as a discipline, and in many ways the criterion of the Christian life. The author also describes prayer as standing in God's presence with open hands, naked and vulnerable, proclaiming to ourselves and others that without God we can do nothing (McNeill et al., 2005, pg.102). Additionally, the authors highlight that the discipline of prayer is the discipline by which we liberate the Spirit of God from entanglement in our impatient impulses (McNeill et al., 2005, pg.102). On the contrary, the authors made it very clear that prayer is not an effort to make contact with God to bring God to our side (McNeill et al., 2005, pg.102).

### **Why is it impossible to speak about prayer without speaking about the Holy Spirit?**

The Holy Spirit is sent by God to draw us into deep intimacy with Him. Prayer without the leading of the Holy Spirit are just merely words coming from the flesh with no fullness of agape love, truth, and divine instruction from our Father in heaven. Therefore, it is impossible to speak about prayer without speaking about the Holy Spirit, as it is the Holy Spirit who prays through us. "No one can say Jesus is Lord, except the Holy Spirit (McNeill et al., 2005, pg.104)."

### Chapter 9: *Action*

### **Discuss the statement "In prayer, we meet Christ, and in Him all human suffering. In service, we meet people, and in them the suffering Christ."**

The statement in "prayer we meet Christ, and in Him all human suffering. In service we meet people, and in them, the suffering Christ", means that it is only through prayer that we can truly move into deeper unity with God who is compassionate, all-knowing and filled with revelation. It is through this deep unity that we get to experience Christ the slain Lamb who suffer and bared

the cross for man-kind's sin, which then give rise to the "concrete acts of service that draw us in deeper solidarity with the marginalized, the sick, oppressed and hungry, who in an essence, metaphorically represents the suffering Christ (McNeill et al., 2005, pg.114).

**What, do the authors say, is the best criterion for determining whether our confrontation is compassionate and righteous, rather than offensive and unrighteous?**

According to the authors, the best criterion for determining whether our confrontation is compassionate and righteous, rather than offensive and unrighteous is to ask ourselves if we can be so confronted, and can we learn from indignation directed at us (McNeill et al., 2005, pg.123).

### **Conclusion**

As I conclude this compassionate reflection exercise, I want to add that my understanding of compassion now and how it is changing my sense of what it means to be a social worker is that I now understand that compassion is multifaceted and requires understanding the mind of Christ, being present and available for others in times of uncomfortable displacement. Compassion is gathering together as a community while pooling together individuals' unique gifts and talents to impact others positively. Being compassionate is remaining patient in suffering and allowing the power of the Holy Spirit to birth a community who will rise up in solidarity to stand with those who are greatly in need. Having gained a deeper understanding of compassion, I believe that as a social worker, I will be more empathetic, and more willing to extend compassionate action, as I show up in areas where no one is willing to go.

References: **McNeill, D. P., Morrison, D. A., M., N. H. J., & Filártiga Joel. (2005).**

***Compassion: A reflection on the Christian life.* Image Books/Doubleday.**