

Unit 13 Assignment

Alive in Christ



Rob Newton
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Assignment Unit 13 Alive in Christ



1 Using the insights you have gained in this unit, comment on your own development in terms of being and doing:

a. as a follower of Jesus;

One aspect of following Jesus is to learn more and understand more about the will and the nature of God. The study and research can be done in private but from that knowledge there is a requirement for action and this has to be taken out into the real world. It affects every aspect of ones life and therefore cannot be kept hidden or private.

At work decisions are made not only based on personal choice but also sound theology and prayerful consideration, sometimes openly and sometimes quietly. My life is a testimony to the faith I profess and Jesus, his church and God can be seen by people in the world through me.

b. as a preacher.

Growing as someone called to speak to others about God during training should be easy to assess by coursework, service reports and comments from Christian friends and members of congregations. Though all these are viewed against another's personal experience, knowledge and expectation. The encouragement given at services and tutorials is as welcome now as it was when training began and the positive critique is still as helpful.

I look back at some early attempts at sermon writing or service construction and realise far more effort of my own and far less use of the Spirit is evident. The personal continual development for me is one of drawing closer to God, calling more on Jesus and reliance more on the power of the Spirit.

2 Identify and briefly describe a situation in the news. How might a person ‘alive in Christ’ respond to this situation:

British fail to rest at weekend



Many British people fail to relax at weekends, despite working some of the longest hours in Europe, researchers have said. According to a survey, many people are spending their weekends worrying about work or catching up on chores. Less than a quarter of people associate weekends with having fun the poll indicates.

One in seven women find the weekend is a time when depression sets in about the week ahead. More than a third of Brits (38%) are depriving themselves of their precious Sunday rest time, meaning that over 16.8 million people are effectively working a six-day week.

"This research highlights a worrying trend for weekends to be reduced to just a few carefree hours on Saturdays as Sundays herald the ominous arrival of the busy week ahead. Londoners are almost twice as likely to be thinking about work on Sundays as the rest of the country and East Midlanders are the least calm on Sundays, with 55% feeling stressed and worried rather than relaxed and happy.

a. in their being

The trends in society and life-style appear to change with every additional new piece of technology or disclosure of cultural or social research. It is often difficult to discern which leads and which is the result. For example; house moving used to be performed because the current dwelling was insufficient or inappropriate for the needs of it's occupiers, whereas there is a trend now to move house to change ones own persona, to alter the way you are by where you live and the style in which you live. This trend has been fuelled by TV programs and adverts in and for DIY stores creating a greater need. The perceived necessity to keep up in the DIY race necessitates the creation of wealth and the need for financially successful employment and all the concerns that brings including using the weekend to worry about the coming week.

A person ‘alive in Christ’ should be able to keep from societies vicious circles by the spiritual disciplines of their normal routine. Regular prayer, Bible study, worship and fellowship enable people to draw on these spiritual resources and to use God's grace to direct and prioritise.

b. in their doing

Matthew 6²⁷ Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life

Concerns over work, family, friends, personal development and even church life don't disappear and in a life where we have never had so much technological assistance we also appear to have less leisure time then ever to enjoy it.

For every situation we can use our spiritual resources rather than worrying and succumbing to the stress that can lead to. We can view the facts and then turn to the Bible, to past values, spend time in specific prayer alone or with others of faith. We can consider the wealth of other Christian literature to form a view how the situation relates to our vision of God's kingdom of justice, peace and love.

Actions will then be justified within the faith we profess and though they may differ from those of mainstream society they may be respected and acknowledged as based on Christian doctrine.

3 a. Outline two ways you could help a congregation reflect on this situation.

i small group discussion

Read from scripture appropriate verses demonstrating how Jesus teaches about resting.

e.g. *Matthew 11* ²⁸ "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls".

Mark 6 ³⁰ The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. ³¹ Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."

Having given the scriptural context pose question "what do you do at the weekend?" invite the congregation to divide into small groups and discuss their answers. The size of the small groups will depend on the overall size of the gathering and the ability of people to open up in this way. Everyone in the groups should be encouraged to participate though no one should be made to share more than they are happy with.

If it seems appropriate, a group spokesperson could feed back to the whole congregation with general points from the discussion.

This could then be followed by greater exposition of the scripture used and the implication to daily life and growth in faith.

ii prayerful meditation

Begin by reading the actual news item as if it were a live news report, respond as if in answer with a parable of Jesus demonstrating how we are expected to react to the news. e.g. *Matthew 6* ²⁵ "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷ Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life.

After allow some prayerful reflection time using quiet music and peaceful images. This would need to be long enough for everyone to take advantage of the space appreciating that some people take longer others to 'get going'. This could then be followed by a time of prayer where the congregation could respond openly.

b. What suggestions for action or practical challenges could you offer a congregation?

In being 'alive in Christ' people can be encouraged to make a greater input into the life of the church;

- to be more actively involved in the worship either by participating in a specific element or by training as a worship leader or some other role.
- to be part of the churches regular prayer meetings or groups. As well as a rota for intercessory prayer during worship there are groups which pray for our worship, our leaders, our town and many other specific areas.
- to belong to or take part in some form of regular Bible study. Much is available for individual use in daily devotional material and courses such as Disciple where study as a small group has great benefits.
- to belong to a house group or home church. These small, intimate, gatherings better enable questioning and sharing about our faith.
- to take communion regularly; the special joining in ceremony of the past, present and future, the celebration of Christ's work for us then, now and in His coming again.

In 'doing', especially as Methodists with a long tradition of social action, 'Alive in Christ' should lead to all manner of projects within the community at large. For many the words "but I don't have the time" is a much repeated phrase and for them scripture is abundant with recourses. One challenge is to 'tithing time', to actively give up some time for regular charity or volunteer work. There is always a need cause and much can be gained from giving if only for a break from the normal routine and relaxation of the mind from ones own troubles and preoccupations.

A way to encourage awareness of God in our daily lives is to keep a God diary. To list the days activities and mark against each those that involved God. As the days pass thought moves from thinking about God at the end of the day to thinking about Him throughout the day.

c. What could you expect a sermon that addresses this situation to achieve?

Basing a sermon on a real survey of people today puts in perspective the reality of 'being' and 'doing' as a Christian in today's society. People can quite easily relate to the secular world and compare where they are in relation to it. The expectation would then be for people to look at their lives both within and outside of the church and consider where they are.

It is a hope that this process would lead to growth in the relationship as individuals with God by better knowledge of God's nature and purposes.

Romans, 12 ¹*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship.* ²*Do not conform any longer 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."*

Through self examination people will grow in the knowledge of their own weaknesses and in the gifts and graces given to them.

Romans 12 ⁶*We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.*

To one another there should be growing evidence of Christ-like service, sacrifice and commitments to others.

1 Corinthians 12 ⁴*There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit.* ⁵*There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.* ⁶*There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.*

Rob Newton