

## 14. IS CHARCOAL MORE USEFUL THAN YOU ?

Since you want to make your life useful, take a lesson from a humble piece of charcoal. Charcoal is a black amorphous form of carbon, made by heating wood or other organic matter, in the absence of air. It is useful as a fuel.

We see charcoal cooking 'fuul masri' in narrow necked pots along many of our streets. If you are hungry, take your container, and for a small charge you can enjoy a good meal.

The charcoal gives itself away in serving others. Imagine at one time you were a fine tree, growing in the countryside. You lived in one place, getting bigger and stronger. You drew nutrients from the ground to feed yourself. You had some limited use, giving shade to people who sought it, and providing nest sites for landing birds.

But suppose the woodcutter came one day and told you of a much greater need. The weather was cold and people needed to be warm. They were hungry and the beans needed to be cooked. Many flies and mosquitoes would be driven away if incense was burned. Would you pay the price of being really useful?

Cut down, split apart, choked in an airless fire, broken into small pieces and sold off in small amounts to a variety of people. Taken throughout the city to many areas you've never been before. Set into braziers, ovens and barbeque fires. Being really useful to a lot of people. Helping to feed some, keeping others warm, and protecting more from insect borne disease.

It costs to be of maximum use to God. Remember the words of Jesus: "Anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me, cannot be my disciple". Fiery trials refine Christian faith. They prove the genuine Jesus Christ to others. His love is seen as we lay down our own lives for the benefit of those around us.