



Practical Christian Living

Helping those in Poverty

Icebreaker: *How big of a problem is poverty in our community?*

See page 3 for an illustration on how the world at large lives.

What are some excuses people have used to not help the poor?

- Their fault
- Jesus said you will always have the poor with you (Mtt 26:11) —why help them?
- Someone else will do it/that is what the government and taxes are for

Treating People with Love and Dignity

As we studied last week, God made all people with value. Because we are all made in God's image we have to treat each other with love and dignity.

How does the world try to remove the dignity of the poor?

What are some ways we could give dignity to the poor rather than taking it away from them?

Christ-like Compassion

When Jesus ministered on the earth he really looked out for the underdog and the downtrodden.

Luke 4:18-21

What four groups does Jesus say he came to minister to in this passage?

- Poor, imprisoned, the blind, and the oppressed

Each of these are groups that are at the mercy of society. Jesus didn't come to dine with the rulers and leaders of the earth. He went into the homes of the tax collectors and sinners. He had compassion on the poor. His message of the kingdom was a message that all of mankind was now on equal footing with God.

How can we show compassion on the poor like Jesus would?

- Meet their needs, pray for them, treating the impoverished like real people because that is who they are.

Identifying & Meeting Real Needs

One of the hardest things to do in addressing the homeless and those who are severely impoverished is to really know what their real needs are and how those needs are best met.

What are some concrete needs for someone who is homeless?

- Shelter, food, clothing, the basics of hygiene, and even real human interaction instead of being treated like less important or less than human.

Many Americans tend to throw money at problems. When we do that it keeps us from being really connected with the people who are actually in need. We can write a check to the Red Cross, Disaster Relief, or a missionary and feel like we have done our part. Giving is important but there are times we can actively take part in making a difference too.

When you connect with the poor or homeless on a personal level you will begin to know what their real core needs are.

Money can be a big asset in helping some people. It is able to alleviate many burdens and we should be willing to give to others in their time of need. We see that is one of the biggest characteristics of the early church.

Acts 2:42-45 & Acts 4:32-37

How did the early church address poverty in their midst?

- They sacrificed for each other and were willing to give.
- They knew people were more important than money or possessions.

Which are we often more invested in, money or other people?

Offering People More than Money

Acts 3:1-8

What did the lame man think he really needed?

- Money

What gift was he given instead? Was it a better gift or a worse gift than what he expected?

- He was given healing but more than that he was restored to society.

While we will not be able to miraculously heal the sick, the greatest gift we can give to the homeless and those in extreme poverty is a renewal of their personhood that comes through restoring their dignity. To do that we have to treat them as equals, as people, as who God intended them to be.

What makes that a difficult thing to do?

How happy was this man in Acts when he received the gift of wholeness?

Christians are not called to be passive observers in the world. We are called to be difference makers. Our goal is to start making a difference in the world one person at a time.

If the world was a village of 100 people*

If we could reduce the world's population to a village of precisely 100 people, with all existing human ratios remaining the same, the demographics would look something like this:

The village would have 60 Asians, 14 Africans, 12 Europeans, 8 Latin Americans, 5 from the USA and Canada, and 1 from the South Pacific

50 would be male, 50 would be female

73 would be non-white; 27 white

67 would be non-Christian; 33 would be Christian

33 would live in substandard housing

20 would be unable to read

33 would be malnourished and 1 dying of starvation

33 would be without access to a safe water supply

39 would lack access to improved sanitation

24 would not have any electricity (And of the 76 that do have electricity, most would only use it for light at night.)

7 people would have access to the Internet

10 would have a college education

1 would have HIV

2 would be near birth; 1 near death

5 would control 32% of the entire world's wealth

33 would be receiving --and attempting to live on-- only 3% of the income of "the village"

* From the Family Care Foundation with corrections from snopes.com