

DISCOVERY AND UNDERSTANDING

Read Luke 10: v25-37

'So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him.'

Can you name three or more ways in which the Samaritan shows love to his neighbour?

Jesus chose to use a Samaritan for his story. They were foreigners who had a bad reputation with the Jewish people. Such a man was the last person Jesus's listeners would have expected to stop to assist a needy traveller. Who in our community do we view in a similar way?

What emotional, spiritual, and other barriers prevent us from loving our neighbour in a practical way as the Samaritan did?

Let's look at how the early church lived in response to Jesus' teachings.

Read Acts 4: v32-35

'There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.'

This passage tells us about how the early church looked out for those who were part of its community.

What attitude did they hold towards their possessions and wealth?

Do you think the model of sharing demonstrated by the new church in Acts is possible or favourable in today's church?

What prevents it from happening? If your church lived like the early church, would it make it easier or harder to love others not part of the church?

CASE STUDY: The Happy Church

In Ozamiz, in the Philippines, the Happy Church has a congregation of 10,000 people, the majority of which live in Ozamiz shanty town. Only 3 of their members own a car. The Happy Church wants to show love to those around them suffering from both physical and spiritual poverty. Poor themselves, they often fast in order to give up their meals for those who don't have food to eat. When the Church hold a collection for the poor you will find the basket filled with what people have to give - eggs, a chicken, a handful of rice. Though most of the congregation themselves live in poor housing, one of the ways they seek to show Gods love to others is to build a house for someone whose home is in a particularly bad state, for example leaking very badly. The church members fast for a week. They then give the money saved on food towards the building of the new house. Once the house is built the church wake the unknowing recipient by singing to them and then lead them to their new house, telling them that it is a gift of love from the church to them. They then go on to give them house warming gifts including a bucket of rice. It has become tradition to scatter coins towards the bottom of the rice so that when the rice starts to run out they can be helped in buying more.

In what ways does the Happy Church challenge you?

What might it look like for UK Churches to sacrificially love the poor here?

APPLICATION

Is there one thing that you can commit to doing over the coming week that will make a difference to your church and the local community?

Spend time praying that you, your small group and the church as a whole find new and exciting ways to assist the needy and disadvantaged in the coming weeks and months. Also take time to pray for the make lunch project that Heather Morris is launching in August.

Study provided by Signpost International Charity to assist local churches in thinking about how they can serve the poor more effectively.