

Building God's People to Reach Our Neighbours



Is our church known for its compassion and love for others who are different from us? As the body of Christ, do we love and care for others as Jesus did? Let us explore how Christ's love can be woven into the fabric of all our ministries.

By Pastor Ivan Leung

This is the third Family News issue sharing about our church theme for 2010: "Building God's People to Reach Our Neighbours". The purpose of this theme is for us to follow the footsteps of Jesus and focus on our goal in building people through caring for unbelievers, nurturing new believers, training disciples, and developing leaders. One of Jesus' key missions on earth was to establish and develop a group of disciples who were willing to wholeheartedly sacrifice themselves to follow Christ, obeying the Great Commandment and training others to become disciples.

If our goal as a church is to focus more on people-oriented ministries, then there is a need to strengthen the shepherding and pastoral care at each congregation so that ministries do not become just task-oriented. As of January 2010, each of our congregations began to implement a new initiative we've called "Age Shepherding Ministry". Its purpose is so that each age group would be able to receive appropriate care, training, and development from a new believer to a spiritual leader. By doing so, the church can continue to grow as one, according to God's plan,

and complete God's Great Commission to extend His kingdom in His glory. (For further details on the Age Shepherding Ministry, please refer to our Family News articles in September 2009 and January 2010)

When we think of Jesus' ministry on earth, He trained disciples and cared for the needs of neighbours (Matthew 9:35-36). He not only "preached the good news of the kingdom" (Luke 4:18), but also "proclaimed freedom for the prisoners", "recovery of sight for the blind", and "released the oppressed". The Bible tells us that Jesus is the Lord who extends holistic care to people. By this we mean, He cared for the emotional, social, physical, and spiritual needs of a person. He also established Himself as an example for us to love and care for our family, friends, colleagues, classmates, and neighbours. So how did Jesus care for a person?

Caring for Emotional Needs

Firstly, the Lord cares for the emotional needs of individuals (Mark 1:40-41). The passage mentions a man with leprosy that suffered physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. Because of his sickness, he lost

all dignity: he was forced to live in a secluded area without his family, and he was forbidden to enter the community.

As a result, no one was willing to help or be near this man with leprosy. He needed Jesus' help because he was facing very difficult times as those around him left and there was no one to support him. He had to deal with discrimination, loss of dignity, and emotional trauma. In Mark 1:40, this leper left his imposed isolation, went in front of Jesus, and fell to his knees begging, "If you are willing, you can make me clean."

Jesus did not shy away from this leper like the others; instead, He was "filled with compassion" (Mark 1:41). The compassion that Jesus displayed towards the leper is a great example of His love towards those that are oppressed and His sympathy towards those in difficult times. Because of His compassion and love, Jesus put His care into action by reaching out and touching the leper (Mark 1:41). This touch not only healed his leprosy, but also, more importantly, healed his emotional wounds. He was able to restore his healthy self-image, his faith in the

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Lord, and his courage to interact with others.

Although we may not be facing the same physical conditions as the man with leprosy, we all have our own emotional needs. Our emotions such as happiness, anger, pain, and joy are triggered by people and events that surround us. This could be caused by broken relationships, rejection, changes in environment, empty promises, or relational conflicts. Short-term emotional stress is normal; however, if we continually feel uneasy, troubled, depressed, anxiety, or easily angered over a long period of time, it is a sign of emotional stress which can damage our health. Brothers and sisters, when we want to care for someone, we need to follow Jesus' example of how He cared for the emotional needs of people. By understanding each person's individual needs, we can walk alongside that person and provide the appropriate care so that their emotions can rest at ease.

Caring for Physical Needs

Secondly, the Lord cares for the physical needs of people. When Jesus responded to the request from the leper, He took care of his emotional need and then healed his physical pains. In Mark 1:41-42, Jesus met both needs: “I am willing,” He said. “Be clean!” Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured.

After Jesus healed the leper, He reminded him to show himself to the priest. This is because he had to allow himself to be examined by the priest to ensure he no longer had leprosy in order to restore his status and be allowed back into the community. From Jesus' command, we can see that he cared for the emotional and physical needs of the man.

Caring for Spiritual Needs

Thirdly, the Lord cares for the spiritual needs of people (Mark 2:1-5). This passage is about Jesus in Capernaum who attracted a crowd that was so large that “there was no room left, not even outside the door” (Mark 2:2). At that time, four people carried a paralytic to Jesus in hopes of having Jesus heal him; unfortunately, there were too many people and they couldn't enter through the door. However, they didn't give up and used all their might to lift the paralytic to the roof and made a hole big enough to fit the paralytic through so that he would be right in front of Jesus. Jesus knew that these men didn't act out of blind faith, but from an understanding and belief of who Jesus truly is (Mark 2:5).

There are times when our faith may weaken when we are sick; however, it is at this time that the support and help from our friends is a great motivation to us as their faith covers our weaknesses, like the great faith

of the four men. They were unafraid of the difficulties of lowering the paralytic in front of Jesus, so when Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” Jesus knew that the paralytic's needs surpassed the man's physical disability. In Jesus' eyes, having one's sins forgiven are more important than the healing of the body. After Jesus forgave the paralytic's sins, He said, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” The man got up, took his mat, and walked out in full view of everyone in the room. Everyone praised God for what He had done because they had never seen anything like that.

Jesus reminds us to care for the spiritual needs of others. In the Old Testament, the word “shalom” can help us to further understand the meaning of spiritual health. “Shalom” has five different meanings: 1) to reconcile with the Lord; 2) to have peace of mind; 3) to have good relations; 4) to be physically healthy; and 5) to be content.

As we enter the 21st century, those in the medical profession are promoting the concept of holistic care and holistic health, encouraging people to look after themselves physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually. As a result, one can achieve a healthy balance in life. There have been numerous research articles lately that point out the key connection between spiritual and physical health. In one of the research articles, findings suggest that those who attend church on a regular basis tend to have better physical and mental health and are less likely to overdose on recreational drugs and alcohol. They also are more likely to have a higher standard of living, a stronger immune system, and a more optimistic outlook, thus increasing their life span. As a result, seeking spiritual health through consistent attendance at worship, fellowship,

and small groups, daily devotions, and prayer will allow God to enter our hearts and fill us with peace and joy. By experiencing God on a daily basis, it is a great opportunity to improve our physical and spiritual health.

Caring for the Need to Be Loved

Fourthly, the Lord cares for a person's need of being loved. In Luke 19:1-7, Zacchaeus is an excellent example. He was a tax collector that led a lonely life despite his wealth. No one wanted to interact with him, leaving him with no friends. Jesus knew the needs of Zacchaeus and, in return, Zacchaeus was hoping that Jesus would help him which was why he was willing to climb the sycamore-fig tree in public to see Jesus despite his status in Jericho.

When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." When Zacchaeus heard this, he came down at once because he could hardly believe that Jesus was willing to stay at his house. Zacchaeus was filled with joy because Jesus did not neglect or look down on him like the others, but treated him with respect and accepted him for who he is. Jesus understood what Zacchaeus' heart needed: when someone is lonely for a prolonged period of time, they are looking for someone to accept and love them and restore their low self-image and self-confidence. For Zacchaeus, the restoration of his self-confidence required friendship and love.

The greatest gift for humanity is love! A lack of friendship is what makes our world poor. Mother Teresa once said, "The feeling of loneliness and being uncared for is the world's greatest poverty." Poverty is not simply a lack in

everyday necessities, but also includes a lack in everyday affirmations. In a book titled *"Left with Nothing but Money"*, the author doesn't make satirical remarks on the wealthy nor encourages a hate for money. As we are living in this world, we need to face the realities of everyday living; however, the author points out the fact that money and the status and fame that money will bring us is not the ultimate answer to living a fulfilled life.

The book emphasizes two paths to choose in life. One is a "path of living" that completes the tasks associated with the different stages in life. The other is a "path of life" that seeks eternity. The former chases after success, fame, status, and all the rewards of this world. The latter seeks peace, joy, warmth, grace, and spiritual strength. Both paths can be equally important; however, we often focus on the former and neglect the latter. As a result, we forgo the more important relationships and feelings that cannot be seen and forget the hidden value of life such as morals, relationships, health, family, and friendships. By the time we realize

that those things have left us, we are "left with nothing but money"!

Although Zacchaeus was a tax collector, he was not left with nothing but money because Jesus cared for him, loved him, and accepted him by interacting with him. Brothers and sisters, if you have friends, you are a wealthy person because this is a blessing that God has bestowed upon you. The relationships that we have with others and the love that spawns from these relationships are very important and precious!

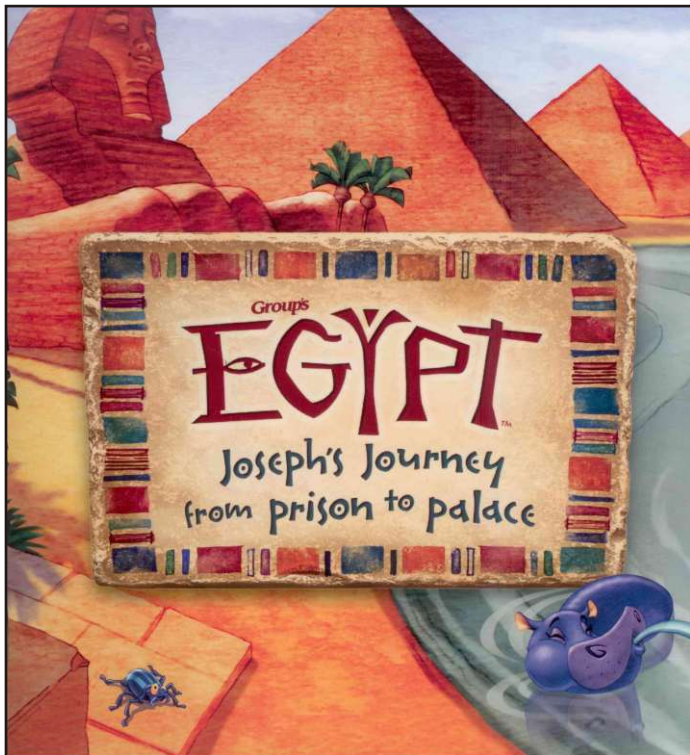
Following Jesus' Example

Jesus is a Lord that tends to every need of a person. He also preached a holistic gospel. Let our attitude be the same as that of Christ Jesus, set Him as the example for Godly living, and follow through with holistic care of our neighbours. May Christ's love fill us and mold our lives so that we may be filled with the same love. May this love encourage us to live for Christ and share His love with those around us so that the message of peace can be brought to everyone during this time of turbulence. ■

Prayer of Saint Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace;
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.
O divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood, as to understand;
to be loved, as to love;
for it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.
Amen.

Upcoming Events



Vacation Bible School

August 16 - 20 at Fraser Lands

9:30 am - 12 noon

Cost: \$10/child

For ages preschool to Grade 6
(turns 4 years old by December)

Join us in ancient Egypt! You'll explore Pharaoh's palace, experience thrilling "real-life" dramas, play high-energy games, sample tasty snacks, and hear unforgettable music. Plus, you'll meet lots of new friends!

Come and discover more about how God was with Joseph in good times and bad, God's Word will come alive with new meaning for all who participate.

Registration begins Sunday July 11 after Sunday services.

Fraser Lands Community Day

Saturday July 24, 2010

3330 S.E. Marine Dr.

12 noon - 4 pm



Invite your family, friends & neighbours and join the fun this July!!

Join us for a BBQ lunch, car wash, carnival games, live entertainment and music, prize draws, community service/info booths, balloon animals, face painting, reptile petting area, video games, and meet others in the community.