

Meet Needs
April 15, 2012
Allen Power

Luke 9:10-17; 37-43a

It's the age-old dilemma: Do I give to the person begging on the street?

In January 2011 Christianity Today featured an article on the question and had three Christian "thinkers" argue for "DON'T GIVE"; "GIVE"; and "GIVE FREELY." Let's see what OUR group thinks this morning. Have you come up with a METHOD or POLICY for deciding whether to GIVE or NOT GIVE to a beggar on the street? (Discussion)

LINKS: Christianity Today - Should Christians always give money to street people?

[**Gary Hoag: Give Freely**](#) - And trust God for how the money is used and to replace it in your wallet.

[**Andy Bales: Only as a Last Resort**](#) (Union Rescue Mission) - Giving cash...the least helpful and most temporary solution, and should only be a last resort...connect them with resources. [His experience w people on streets]

[**Ron Sider: Don't Give Money to Street People**](#) - Offer to buy the person a meal and then sit down and listen to the person's story. People almost always need love even more than money.

There's a story about C. S. Lewis:

One day, Lewis and a friend were walking down the road and came upon a street person who reached out to them for help. While his friend kept walking, Lewis stopped and proceeded to empty his wallet. When they resumed their journey, his friend asked, "What are you doing giving him your money like that? Don't you know he's just going to go squander all that on ale?" Lewis paused and replied, "That's all I was going to do with it."

Since most of us don't live in an urban area, we probably don't deal with the PANHANDLER DILEMMA that often. I'd venture the NEEDS we encounter more likely involve a person here at church, or a family from our kids' school. What about the SICK? Most of us are not medical professionals, but there are still NEEDS we can meet.

In today's scripture Jesus teaches us that we should NOTICE NEEDS...TAKE ACTION TO MEET NEEDS...and TRUST GOD in the process.

Luke 9:10-12

10 When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida, 11 but the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing.

12 Late in the afternoon the Twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food and lodging, because we are in a remote place here."

- Verse 10: "When the apostles returned...(and) they reported to Jesus" Returned from where? Returned from doing what?
- We need to study scripture IN CONTEXT. Let's do that. Look back at Luke 9:1-6 (Someone read this for us)

Luke 9:1-2; 6

¹ When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, ² and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. ⁶ So they set out and went from village to village, proclaiming the good news and healing people everywhere.

- The context is that Jesus had sent the APOSTLES...the TWELVE...out for the first time to do ministry ON THEIR OWN...*BUT*...IN HIS POWER.
- Question: Jesus knew His earthly life was short. What is he beginning to do with the TWELVE?
- We'll come back to these verses of CONTEXT a couple of times today.
- Back to verse 10: Question: Why do you think Jesus and the TWELVE "withdrew by themselves"?
- Verse 11: "...but the crowds learned about it and followed him." We would call that a WHAT?
- When confronted with an INTERRUPTION we can REACT or we can RESPOND
- Which did Jesus do? He RESPONDED in COMPASSION.
- In the Mark 6 version of this account: Mark 6:34 says "he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd."

Brennan Manning writes:

"We must be ready to allow ourselves to be interrupted by God... It is a strange fact that Christians and even ministers frequently consider their work so important and urgent that they will allow nothing to disturb them. They think they are doing God a service in this but actually they are disdainful of God's "crooked but straight path". It is part of the discipline of humility that we must not spare our hand where it can perform service and that we do not assume that our schedule is our own to manage, but allow it to be arranged by God."

[The Wisdom of Tenderness: What Happens When God's Fierce Mercy Transforms Our Lives](#)

Our first LESSON in MEETING NEEDS is that NEEDS usually come as an INTERRUPTION. We need to be SENSITIVE and DISCERNING enough to STOP and NOTICE the NEEDS of people.

- Look back at verse 11: BEFORE Jesus healed them, what does it say He did? "...welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God." They came because of PHYSICAL NEEDS. Jesus not only met those...first, he addressed their SPIRITUAL NEEDS.

A second LESSON from Jesus: As we NOTICE and MEET NEEDS we need to look for opportunities to be a WITNESS to their SPIRITUAL NEEDS through the Gospel of Christ.

NOT AS A PRICE OF ADMISSION..."If you let me walk you through the Roman Road you can have this food or this cash." But as a NATURAL extension of the LOVE OF JESUS.

- Verse 12: What DILEMMA do the DISCIPLES bring up to Jesus? It's late and these people need to be fed.
- It's clear that the TWELVE had mastered NOTICING A NEED. But, they struggled with MEETING IT.
- Question: When the TWELVE told Jesus "Send the crowd away" so they can find food and lodging, what OBVIOUS SOLUTION were they missing? Clues: Who are they with? (Jesus) Back in verses 1-6, what had the TWELVE been doing? Miraculous things through the power of Jesus.

Jesus didn't just NOTICE THE NEED, He TOOK ACTION!

Luke 9:13-17

13 He replied, "You give them something to eat."

They answered, "We have only five loaves of bread and two fish—unless we go and buy food for all this crowd." 14 (About five thousand men were there.) [Probably 20,000 counting women and children]

But he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each." 15 The disciples did so, and everybody sat down. 16 Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to set before the people. 17 They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

- Other than the resurrection, this is the only miracle that appears in ALL FOUR GOSPELS. Why do you think so?
- Question: Why would Jesus challenge the TWELVE, "YOU give them something to eat?" (See 9:1)
- Question: What were the TWELVE focused on? The problem and not Jesus' power.

The Life Application Study Bible reminds us:

"Do you think God would ask you to do something that YOU AND HE together couldn't handle? Don't let your lack of resources blind you to seeing God's power."

- Question: Jesus was God in the form of man. He could have given them a feast of any kind of food. Why do YOU think he chose to MULTIPLY the bread and fish they had?
- Question: What do we mean if/when we use the expression - "Well, that was a 'loaves and fishes' situation!" As the old song says: "Little Is Much When God Is In It."
- Verse 17 - It's obvious why Jesus had the disciples pick up the twelve basketful of LEFT OVERS --- Why? Didn't want to waste food. Question: Why do you think there were LEFTOVERS to begin with?
- Question: Who were the leftovers for? Clue: How many baskets were there? What TRUTH does that teach us?

John Piper writes:

"The leftovers were for the servers. In fact the first time there were twelve servers and twelve basketfuls left over What didn't they understand? That Jesus would take care of them. You can't outgive Jesus. When you spend your life for others, your needs will be met."

As we reflect on this account of feeding the 5,000...Warren Wiersbe sums up this text:
"After Jesus returned to heaven, the disciples must often have been encouraged by remembering this miracle. It teaches us to have compassion, to look on problems as opportunities for God to work, and to give Him all that we have and trust Him to meet the needs. --- If we do all we can, He will step in and do the rest.

Not only are we to NOTICE NEEDS and TAKE ACTION to meet them, we need to TRUST GOD in the process.

Luke 9:37-43

37 The next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him. 38 A man in the crowd called out, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. 39 A spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams; it throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him. 40 I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they could not."

41 "O unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you and put up with you? Bring your son here."

42 Even while the boy was coming, the demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the evil[a] spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father. 43 And they were all amazed at the greatness of God.

- Verse 40: The man says "I begged your disciples to drive (the demonic spirit) out, but they could not."
- Question: Why would we think the disciples COULD have driven it out? (See 9:1-2)
- They had done it before, but for some reason they could NOT this time.
- Look at verse 41: Are you surprised by Jesus' reaction? Why do you think he reacted this way?
- They had successfully HEALED and CAST OUT DEMONS before...now they've "lost their touch".
- Question: WHAT do you think they were MISSING?

Matthew 17:19-20

19 Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, "Why couldn't we drive it out?"

20 He replied, "Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

Mark 9:28-29

28 After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" 29 He replied, "This kind can come out only by prayer.[Some manuscripts prayer and fasting]

- This was EMBARRASSING for the disciples. But, there was a REASON for it. And a lesson for us.

Ray Pritchard writes:

Why did they fail so miserably when Jesus healed the boy instantly? The question answers itself. Their failure was absolutely necessary so that they might learn to depend on Jesus completely. Our Lord intended this embarrassing lesson as a warning against taking spiritual warfare lightly. We must learn to depend on Christ completely and then hold nothing back if we would see "this kind" cast out. Great victories for Christ will not be won by halfhearted effort.

- Question: It's clear the disciples didn't have ENOUGH FAITH. How do you and I need to TRUST GOD when it comes to MEETING THE NEEDS of the poor and the sick?
 - Trust Him for POWER and TRUST HIS WILL...not ours.
 - Trust Him when we are tempted to QUESTION MOTIVES or MANIPULATE
 - Trust Him for our OWN NEEDS to be met if we meet the needs of OTHERS

Tim Keller said:

In Deuteronomy 15, God says that if you care for the poor, he will provide for you. God knows that the reason people aren't generous is that they are afraid. They say, "I need a lot of savings." But God is saying, "That's distrust. You're looking to money to give you a feeling of confidence that I should be giving you."

- This was a case of both PHYSICAL SUFFERING and DEMON POSSESSION.
- We don't have the miraculous healing power of Jesus. However, there are many ways we can minister to someone who is SUFFERING PHYSICALLY. I've seen this class MODEL THAT!

In Matthew 25:35-40, Jesus said:

35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

37 ... 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

40 ...'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

So, What's The Takeaway?

- Has this lesson caused you to take a second look at how to help the POOR and SICK?
- Will we LOOK for ways to reach out to those who are sick?
- The question is WILL WE NOTICE and WILL WE HELP?
- How will you and I be MORE SENSITIVE to needs and TRUST GOD to guide us?
- Good questions to PONDER this week. Better to ANSWER with ACTION!