

HEART
2011.04.17

Check in – What’s 1 thing you’re thankful for?

Agenda for Today:

1. Update on Support Letters – all letters sent, questions, new thoughts, ideas for improvement
 - a. Medical Insurance
 - b. Release
2. Child Sponsorship Program – Karen to provide overview
3. How Do We Have Jesus Heart – see questions and Case Study
4. Prayer – break into groups of 3 – share your greatest fear or need you have about the trip; pray for each other to have Jesus heart; pray for growth in your area of poverty

Today we’re going to teach each other.

Go around the circle again and ask, **“when you hear the word poverty, what one word do you think of?”**

Questions:

Why did Jesus come to Earth? Luke 4:17-21

¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

¹⁸ “The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,

¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”^[a]

²⁰ Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. ²¹ He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

How does this passage describe what Jesus came to do?

Was he really going to prisons and letting people out?

What is the year of the Lords favor?

Other thoughts/passages:

-He came to preach the good news about kingdom of God: Lk 4:43

-He prayed for the kingdom to come: Matt 6:10

-What is the kingdom like: mustard seed (gradual); perfect place/perfect communion with God (Genesis1-3 prefall); it’s in each of us Lk 17:20

Jesus reports back to John the Baptist that he was actually doing what he came to do. Luke 7:18-22

¹⁸ John's disciples told him about all these things. Calling two of them, ¹⁹ he sent them to the Lord to ask, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?"

²⁰ When the men came to Jesus, they said, "John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?'"

²¹ At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. ²² So he replied to the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy^[a] are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor.

What do you think it would have looked like if Jesus just came to care for spiritual needs? Or if he just came to care for physical needs?

What's the church and what are we supposed to be about?

Acts 4:34 – There should be no one in need among us

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. ³³ With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all ³⁴ that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales ³⁵ and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

This is a picture of the early church at work. What characteristics describe what they were about: Unity, sharing, proclaiming, extreme generosity.

1 John 3:16-18 – We should show Love with action

¹⁶ This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. ¹⁷ If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? ¹⁸ Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

What does the love of Christ compel us to do? Lay down our lives for each other; share what we have; don't just say you love, act on that love.

John 20:21

"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

What does this mean for us?

Other thoughts/passages: Many of the OT laws that God gave the Nation of Israel were meant foreshadow the coming of Christ and that God would set everything right: Passover

Many of the laws about debt, tithing, gleaning all were established to make sure the poor were cared for. In Isaiah 58:1-3; 5-10 God actually get's angry with the Nation for not caring for the poor.

Have you ever thought of yourself as poor or impoverished?

Sit with this question as we read this Case Study and we'll come back to it.

Case Study (adapted from When Helping Hurts)

Mountain Top Church is a predominantly Caucasian church made up of young professionals. Being in the Christmas spirit, Mountain Top Church decided to reach out to the minority residents in a housing project on the East side of town. People living there have high rates of unemployment, domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse and teenage pregnancy. A number of the Mountain Toppers were fearful of entering inside the project, but the Pastor insisted that Jesus cared for the residents and the Christmas was the perfect time to show His compassion.

But what could Mountain Top do? Since most of these people lacked material resources, the church decided to buy Christmas presents for the children in the project. Mountain Toppers went door-to-door singing Christmas carols and delivering presents to the children in each apartment. Although it was awkward at first, the Mountain Toppers were moved by the smiles of the children and appreciation of the mothers. In fact the church was so moved by the joy they experienced that they decided to deliver candy baskets at Easter and turkeys at Thanksgiving.

However after several years of doing this, the pastor was struggling to find enough volunteers to deliver the gifts.

What seems good or right about this?

What seems not so good about this approach?

Why do you think the pastor began struggling to find volunteers?

The rest of the story...

The pastor called a meeting to ask why their enthusiasm was waning. Someone finally shared, "Pastor, we are tired of trying to help these people out. We have been bringing them things for several years but their situation never improves. They just sit there in the same situation year after year. Have you ever noticed there are no men in the apartments when we deliver the toys? The residents are all unwed mothers who just keep having babies in order to collect bigger and bigger welfare checks. They don't deserve our help!"

When digging deeper, the reality was when the fathers of the children in the projects heard the Christmas carols outside their front doors and saw the presents for their kids through the peepholes, they were embarrassed and ran out the backdoors of their apartments. For a host of reasons, these dads struggled to find and keep jobs. This contributed to a deep sense of shame and inadequacy, which made it even more difficult to apply for jobs. The last thing these fathers needed was a group of middle to upper class Christians providing Christmas gifts for their children that they couldn't afford to purchase themselves.

While trying to alleviate the material poverty by giving presents, Mountain Top increased these fathers' poverty of 'being.' This made the fathers even less willing to apply for jobs, thus exacerbating the material poverty that Mountain Top was trying to solve.

In addition, to hurting the residents in the housing project, the members of Mountain Top Church hurt themselves. At first they developed a subtle sense of pride that they were helping. Later when they observed the residents failure to improve their situation, their disdain for them increased and they developed "compassion fatigue." They became even less willing to help the low-income residents.

What do we learn from this?

- Poverty for everyone increased. The gulf between the church and the housing project actually increased as a result of this experience.
- we think we are doing good, but may be doing harm
- ask how we can help before we assume what's needed. Maybe they needed job training, not Christmas gifts
- economic superiority does not equal spiritual superiority
- we need to repent from a superiority or God complex – in what way's?
- we need to rely on God's sovereignty in providing for us – give us our daily bread
- we're not better than anyone else – we're all broken
- remember Job? God let Satan take away all material possessions to prove that righteousness was not dependant on what we have

How might the Mountain Toppers been 'poor' or impoverished?

Reality is that we are all poor, broken or impoverished in some way. Some people financially, some emotionally, relationally.

So back to our question, Have you ever considered yourself poor or impoverished?

Where are you poor?

We all have Mutual Brokenness.

So in reality we aren't better than the people we are going to serve. Until we understand out mutual brokenness, going to serve materially poor people might do more harm then good.

How would we apply this to what we do this week?

How will this help us as we serve together in Haiti?

Prayer – break into groups of 3 – share your greatest fear or need you have about the trip; pray for each other to have Jesus heart; pray for growth in your area of poverty