

WALKING ALONGSIDE

ADDRESSING POVERTY IN COMMUNITY MINISTRIES

Welcome!

You are part of a special group of people who, in the next several months, will help the Center for Family and Community Ministries shape and develop a series of studies for the church focused on community ministries that address poverty. Thank you for your interest in this work, which we believe has the potential to transform both individuals in our congregations and in our communities.

The *Strengthening Congregational Community Ministries* project is funded by a grant from Christ Is Our Salvation. We are deeply indebted to Katy, Paul and Shirley Piper for their commitment to creating sustainable community ministries.

Grant Authors

Dr. Diana Garland, Dean, School of Social Work, Baylor University
Dr. Gaynor Yancey, Professor of Church and Community, Associate Dean, School of Social Work
Dr. Jon Singletary, Director of CFCM, Editor of *FCM Journal*, Assistant Professor
Vicki M. Kabat, Director, School of Social Work Marketing and Communication

Editorial Contributors

Dr. Diana Garland, Dr. Gaynor Yancey, Dr. Jon Singletary, Vicki M. Kabat
Heather Deal and Courtney Drew, MSW/MDiv students
(authors of "Understanding Poverty")

Copyright © 2008 Center for Family and Community Ministries,
School of Social Work, Baylor University





The mission of the Center for Family and Community Ministries (CFCM) is to strengthen ministries designed to serve families and communities. CFCM seeks to provide research, continuing education, and resource development to support and enhance the work of congregations and denominational agencies with families and communities. Since its founding in 1997, the CFCM has been blessed with an exceptional staff. Diana Garland, founding director, led the Center until 2005 when she appointed Dr. Jon Singletary to be director. With varied backgrounds and gifts, the diversity, energy and passion that each person brings to the Center is commonly focused on creating strong families, communities and congregations.

Center Staff:

Jon Singletary	Director
Sam Oakley	Associate Director
Angela Dennison	Associate Director, Research and Development, in collaboration with Buckner Child and Family Services Inc
Jeremy Everett	Director, Texas Hunger Initiative
Tammy Woods	Research Associate
Kimberly Schlesinger	Administrative Associate
Diana Garland	Founding Director

Contact Information:

Phone: 254.710.3854
E-mail: First name_last name@baylor.edu
Web: www.baylor.edu/cfcml

Scripture used in the Legacies of Care study is from the following translations:

New International Version (NIV)
New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)
New Century Version (NCV)
Today's New International Version (TNIV)
The Contemporary English Version (CEV)
Simulated Video (SV)
The Message



COME, WALK ALONGSIDE US ON THE JOURNEY

Dust whirled up at each step as the two men trudged heavily along the path. The sun was making its descent, and they still had a long way to go. They barely noticed. Their minds were full of what they had experienced during the last few days. Occasionally, one would say, "And could you believe what you heard this morning?" And then the other, after several more steps, "I just don't understand. What was any of this about?"

They had just lost a great friend, perhaps the greatest friend they had ever had. He had seemed so full of promise and possibility. Each had imagined himself going through the rest of his life with this man by his side. A future they thought comfortably in their possession had suddenly evaporated when their friend died. No, when he was killed. Cruelly, publicly. Treated as a joke! It was humiliating, confusing, unbelievable.

Yes, "unbelievable" was the word. Because just that morning, one of their friends who had gone to the gravesite to mourn came running back to the larger group to tell them the body was gone! No one could believe it. Others ran to see for themselves. Many others stayed behind speculating: grave robbers? a political ploy? What could any of this mean?

So distracted were they by their thoughts that it took a moment for them to notice that another person was walking alongside them on their journey. They did not recognize him or know who he was.



How often in our lives do we stumble along confused, scared, worried, unsure of anything – even our next step – never realizing that we do not walk alone. That in step with us, walking alongside, is our Saviour and our Lord. As he did on the road to Emmaus that Cleopas and his friend traveled, Jesus asks us, "Why are you so sad? What has happened?"

The real question Jesus asks us is, "Do you not know that I am here?" If we do, how then can the circumstances of life so overwhelm us? We are not alone; we never will be again.

Once we understand that Jesus is our constant companion, there awakens in us a peace and assurance we have never experienced. Cleopas and his friend say that Jesus' explanation of the scriptures "burned within their hearts," as though falling newly upon their ears and spirits. Being in the presence of Jesus, the Risen Lord, transforms us, and in our response of gratitude, we become servants willing to give ourselves away in God's service.

This is how we love one another. In gratitude to God, we long to reach out and bring another into this holy fellowship. This love is expressed in the pews of our churches, but also in the alleys behind our churches; in our fellowship halls but also in the urban soup kitchens that feed the hungry.

The one who walks beside us on this journey of life may not be one we recognize or know. He or she may be very different from us. Ragged and dirty, of a different colored skin or different culture, female or male, adult or child, physically weak, mentally unstable, scared, hurt, lost. But look into the eyes of this one in our midst. Look deeply enough, and you may see yourself. Look more deeply, and you will see Christ.

INTRODUCTION TO WALKING ALONGSIDE

"It's such a caring congregation."

"They're so ready to help one another in times of need."

"I've never felt so welcomed and cared for."

These are the comments all church leaders hope to hear from new members or visitors, and certainly this kind of care for one another is a primary component of what church means to most people.

As Christians we are familiar with the Greatest Commandment found in Matthew 22:37 to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." Too many of us spend a lifetime focusing on this commandment but forgetting that Jesus had more to say: "And the second [commandment] is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself'" (Matt. 22:39; NIV).

Often understaffed and overwhelmed by the needs of our current members, most churches do well just to make the hospital visits and the casseroles for those whom we know. Our "neighbors," though, are all around us, not just in our pews.

The Walking Alongside curriculum is designed to help you individually and as a church think about these questions:

- Who is my neighbor?
- What is my responsibility toward my neighbor?
- What is my church's responsibility?
- How have others responded and what does that teach us?
- What do scriptures tell me about my neighbor and what my response should be?
- How does that affect me? What can I do?
- What can my church do?

One thing is clear throughout these studies: Caring for community is not optional. It is part of God's plan for how we serve and provide in community, but also for how we become more Christlike. Being obedient to the second commandment helps us mature in the first. We care for others out of gratitude and love for the Creator of us all – and in so doing, we all travel a bit farther along the path toward our Lord and Savior.

Join us on the journey.



*Do all the good you can,
in all the means you can,
in all the ways you can,
in all the places you can,
at all the times you can,
to all the people you can,
as long as you ever can.*

– John Wesley



WALKING ALONGSIDE RESOURCES

No one begins a journey without packing the supplies and equipment that will be needed for the path before them. The Walking Alongside curriculum is part of a “backpack” of resources available to congregations as they seek to begin, strengthen and sustain community ministries. A list of these resources can be found at www.baylor.edu/social_work/ccm.

This study guide provides the following materials for Sunday School classes, small groups, church staff development, youth retreats, or individual instruction:

- “Legacies of Care” – a six-part study of systems of care in ancient and contemporary history and how these practices influence our choices today.
- Leader’s instructions (this page)
- Reproducible Teaching Leaflets

Other study series in the Walking Alongside curriculum include:

- Biblical Foundations for Caring
- Understanding Poverty

Plus SUSTAIN!, a separate unit to help congregations assess, design, implement and evaluate community ministries.

LEADER’S INSTRUCTIONS

The lessons are self-explanatory – easy to use for the beginner or long-time teacher. Several reproducible Teaching Leaflets are included and are referenced in the studies. These provide additional history and context for teacher preparation, class distribution or individual study.

A variety of Bible translations are cited to offer additional depth to the study. Prayers are provided, but we encourage leaders to let the Spirit guide them in these prayer times.

» In each lesson, you will find arrows to guide you to specific opportunities to reflect individually or engage as a group on materials presented. These include weekly “challenges” for participants that include options to appeal to different learning styles.



Footprints will highlight quotations from ancient and contemporary theologians to remind us that others have taken this journey and offer us much wisdom.

Lessons include a “Context for today,” which we believe will help individuals engage personally as they “walk a mile in the shoes of another.”

To further inform your study and to build upon it, additional resources, links to existing community ministry projects, other teaching materials, congregational and community assessment tools, and much more is available at the Walking Alongside Web site at www.baylor.edu/social_work/ccm.



FOUNDATIONS FOR HOLISTIC MINISTRY

LESSON ONE - INTRODUCTION

Welcome to “Foundations for Holistic Ministry,” a six-week study that we hope will provide a holistic- biblical, theological, spiritual, and physical- foundation for your ministry. This study examines Biblical passages and theological principles and their applications to our lives today. These passages provide us with a more integrated, holistic approach to living out the Christian faith.

Many Christians often feel as if we are caught in a chasm between the Evangelical denominations and congregations that have de-emphasized the scripture passages and the theological perspectives that call for social action/ministry and the many traditionally progressive/mainline denomination and congregations that have de-emphasized the need for individual transformation. Neither approach is holistic. Joe Phelps, pastor of Highland Baptist Church in Louisville, KY in a weekly newsletter to the church states:

Traditional and progressive are not teams for competition. They are faith partners in the journey- like a left and right foot- taking turns, keeping balance, complimenting each other. One partner without the other gets quickly stuck; moving in a vicious circle or is seriously impeded in its journey. Churches today suffer from this imbalance. What’s most missing is the “progressive” voice to our faith- the part that speaks of a big God, a big Bible, a love-laced Jesus-mission, an evangelism beyond religious catch-phrases that sound orthodox, but mean almost nothing to the speaker or to the hearer.

A helpful place to start in adjusting this imbalance is to know from where you are beginning, to know what ideas have influenced you over your lifetime and how these ideas shape your faith today. A useful tool for this assessment is the Theological Foundations Survey. This survey assesses your Biblical and theological understandings of people, sin, salvation, the Christian life, the Church, and society and social change. This assessment provides a starting point for our study over the next few weeks.

(Take the Theological Foundations Survey. Discuss with your class mates.)

It is hoped that this series of studies in Biblical passages, theological principles, and their application to our lives today may provide us with a more integrated, holistic approach to living out the Christian faith. Perhaps we can find a way to not have such strong distinctions between left and right, traditional and progressive.

One needs only to look to Jesus the “author and finisher of our faith,” (Hebrews 12:2) to see the model of how to fully integrate what has traditionally been defined as evangelism and ministry that meets the needs of the whole person. After all, Jesus preached and he healed. As Christians, literally followers of Christ, we look to Jesus’ life and ministry as our model for our own lives and ministry. Jesus really begins and defines his public ministry and his role as God’s messenger with his statements in the synagogue in his hometown of Nazareth. These are recorded in Luke 4:16-19: When

he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Jesus was reading from the writings of the prophet Isaiah and thus put his ministry squarely in the line of prophetic visions of redemption found in what we know as the Old Testament. In Matthew 5:17, Jesus said that he had not come to do away with the law but to fulfill it. We will look at the Old Testament Scriptures and images of God that show the necessity of caring for the total welfare of the whole person. We'll also explore some of the encounters in the gospels where Jesus really illustrates these ideas and serves as our model. Throughout the studies we'll also consider contemporary practices that correspond to these ideas. Throughout the studies there will also be many times for you to stop and respond to some reflection questions designed to elicit group discussions. These are perhaps some difficult topics to wrestle with, so feel free to discuss these scripture passages and theological ideals with each other. Finally, we'll look at the accounts of the early Christian church and the ramifications of all lessons for our churches and our lives as individual Christians today.

This series consists of five additional lessons, titled:

- "Creation: Who are we?"
- "Moses/Exodus: What are we to do? "
- "Covenant Law: How are we to live?"
- "Prophets: How are we to worship?"
- "The Early Church: How do we respond?"

As you participate in this study, our prayer is that you'll be open to considering and reconsidering the assumptions that have shaped your foundations for ministry. May God be with us all as we build our foundations for holistic ministry.

Prayer

God may we see in your Oneness our need for unity,
God may we see in your Threeness our need for community
God may we see in your creativity our need for diversity,
God may we see in you our need to love each other
Amen

- Christine Sine, Mustard Seed Associates (<http://godspace.wordpress.com>)



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Where do you experience these theological tensions within your own belief system?

How is your experience of Christian living influenced by traditions you have been taught or passages of scripture that have been emphasized in your prior experience?



Teaching Leaflet

FOUNDATIONS FOR HOLISTIC MINISTRY

LESSON ONE: INTRODUCTION

Use Theological Foundations Survey

Where do you experience these theological tensions within your own belief system? How is your experience of Christian living influenced by traditions you have been taught or passages of scripture that have been emphasized in your prior experience?

Take some time with the following survey to think about the theological foundations you bring as you think about these issues. Think about what ideas you have grown up with as you take this survey. How do they influence your beliefs today?

(Have participants take Theological Foundations Survey. Give time for discussion.)

Discussion questions:

- ☐ Did you find it hard to choose one idea or did it seem pretty simple? Was that true for each set of questions?
- ☐ Was one set easier to answer than another set?
- ☐ Where do most of your answers lie, on the left side of the page or the right? Or did you find yourself circling a lot of 3s in the middle?

The statements on either side of the survey have validity and can be supported by various passages of scripture and Christian traditions, and to be true to the whole of scripture, we should have balance in our views on these theological foundations. For most of us, however, we have probably been more influenced by the theological ideas on the left side of the page if we were to be totally honest.

Whether your answers fall completely to one side or to the other, or even more in the middle, this study will help you to explore Bible passages and how they relate to how we care for people in need.

Theological Foundations Survey

The purpose of the survey is to explore the beliefs of this study group related to holistic ministries.

Directions: For each set of statements listed below, please circle the number you think best describes your beliefs. “1” means you would agree most with the statement on the left, “5” means you would agree most with the statement on the right, “3” means you would agree equally with both. If you disagree with both statements, put an “X” over the number next to the statements.

Some of these may seem like extremes, but if you lean to one or the other most of the time, go with that idea.

If you agree most with this statement,
circle 1 or 2

If you agree equally with both,
circle 3

If you agree most with this statement,
circle 4 or 5

A. People, Sin, Salvation

1	People are foremost individual beings.	1	2	3	4	5	People are a balance of personal and communal beings.
2	People have a strong body/soul separation.	1	2	3	4	5	People are integrated beings with more wholeness within than separation.
3	Sin is personal, associated with an individual's thoughts, choices and actions.	1	2	3	4	5	Sin is systemic, associated with social, economic and political structures.
4	God's plan of deliverance is for souls saved by faith, who will ultimately be resurrected.	1	2	3	4	5	God's plan of deliverance is for all of creation, which will ultimately be renewed.
5	Conversion is a one-time event.	1	2	3	4	5	Conversion is a gradual, long-term process.
6	The gospel means the good news that Christ offers individuals forgiveness of sins and eternal life.	1	2	3	4	5	The gospel means the good news that God is bringing about greater peace, justice and wholeness in society.
7	The way to share God's love with people is by telling them about Jesus.	1	2	3	4	5	The way to share God's love with people is by demonstrating it with caring actions.

B. The Christian Life

1	The message of faith is one of challenge to complacent Christians.	1	2	3	4	5	The message of faith is one of comfort for struggling Christians.
2	Christian living means having a moral lifestyle.	1	2	3	4	5	Christian living means having a lifestyle of compassion and justice.
3	Christian faith focuses on growing in one's personal relationship to God.	1	2	3	4	5	Christian faith focuses on promoting wholeness and peace in the world
4	Outreach ministry is the responsibility of specially gifted individuals.	1	2	3	4	5	Outreach ministry is the responsibility of every Christian.
5	Outreach ministry should focus on people's spiritual needs — the quality of their relationship with God.	1	2	3	4	5	Outreach ministry should focus on people's social and emotional needs — the quality of their health, finances, family life, etc.

6	The only objects of evangelism are individual persons.	1	2	3	4	5	The only objects of evangelism are social structures.
7	The Bible is the source of theological truth.	1	2	3	4	5	The Bible, tradition, reason, human experience can be sources of theological truth

C. The Church

1	The focus of God's transforming work is the church.	1	2	3	4	5	The focus of God's transforming work is the world outside the church.
2	The church should focus on preparing people for eternal life after death.	1	2	3	4	5	The church should focus on helping people here and now.
3	The task of the church is to work to change the lives of individuals.	1	2	3	4	5	The task of the church is to work to change society.
4	Government is solely responsible for meeting the needs of the poor.	1	2	3	4	5	The church is responsible for meeting the needs of the poor.
5	The church awaits Christ's return to restore of the world, as human efforts cannot be expected to bring about social change.	1	2	3	4	5	The church is the agent of God's work of restoration in the world, responsible for bringing about social change.

B. Society and Social Change

1	Change in a person's circumstances comes when they change spiritually.	1	2	3	4	5	Change in a person's circumstances comes when they get the social aid they need.
2	Poverty is largely due to a person's foolish choices or immoral lifestyle, such as laziness or drugs.	1	2	3	4	5	Poverty is largely due to social, economic, and political factors, such as racism, shortage of affordable housing, and a lack of good jobs.
3	Christians have the most impact on society through their personal influence, by being good citizens and neighbors.	1	2	3	4	5	Christians have the most impact on society through their collective influence, by organized advocacy or action groups.
4	Change in a community comes as individuals and families are transformed.	1	2	3	4	5	Change in a community comes as social structures, laws, local economy and culture are transformed.
5	Christians should look for wisdom about how to help persons and communities from the Bible and Christian teachings.	1	2	3	4	5	Christians should look for wisdom about how to help persons and communities from any useful sources, including secular ones.

Adapted from: Heidi Unruh and Phil Olson, *Becoming a Church That Makes a Difference: Ventures in Holistic Ministry* (Word and Deed Network, 2006), esa-online.org. Used by permission.



FOUNDATIONS FOR HOLISTIC MINISTRY

LESSON TWO - "CREATION: WHO ARE WE?"

Introduction to the Lesson

This lesson will explore what it means to be human. What sets humans apart from the rest of God's creation? This lesson will also look at what it means to define humanity holistically. It explores the question of why we tend to separate ourselves into the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. After today's lesson you will be able to discuss what it means to view humanity holistically, the uniqueness of humanity, and begin a discussion of how to minister holistically.

Key scripture: Genesis 1:1-28; Genesis 2:7; Genesis 2:18-22; John 9

Key points:

- o God created humanity in a way that sets us apart from the rest of creation
- o Human beings were holistic from the beginning
- o Humanity was created to be in relationship with God and others

Lesson

How do we determine what it really means to be human? Does psychology hold the answers? What about sociology or anthropology? Each of these disciplines gives us insight into humanity but, as Christians, we also turn to scripture to learn what it means to be truly human. Our exploration of humanity will begin at the beginning: Genesis 1 and 2. These scriptural accounts are not meant to be historical fact or scientific theory. They are theological reflections on the creation of the world.

The Physical World

In Genesis 1 (vv.1-28), we find God speaking the physical world into being: water, sky, earth, plants, and animals. The key point to notice in this creation story is that God spoke this creation into being. After the material world was created, God then reflected on God's work and deemed it good.

Humanity

In Genesis 2:7, we find God creating humanity in God's image. God creates humanity in a way that is very different from the way God created the physical world.

Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

In Genesis 1, God created by speaking the physical world into existence. However, in Genesis 2 we find God creating humanity through a very different means: breath. The term breath in Hebrew can also be translated Spirit. God does not merely speak humanity into existence, but actually forms the human and breathes life into his nostrils. God, with great intentionality, acts. God breathes God's spirit into humanity in a way that separates us from animals and God's other creation, which God speaks into existence.

Humanity's unique role

God's unique role for humanity also sets us apart from the rest of creation. God gave humanity a role in God's creation. We are the caretakers of God's world. According to Psalm 8:3-9, God placed humanity slightly lower than God's self in the created world.

Relationship

Another way in which humanity is unique among God's creation is that God determined humans had the need for relationship (Genesis 2:18-22). God in God's self is a relational being. God exists as the Trinity- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God created humanity in God's image, therefore God created humanity as relational beings as God is relational. Humanity was created first to relate to God and secondly to relate to one another.

Holistic

If we look at people in this way, with a need for relationship with God and with others, this is part of what it means to look at a person holistically. Another key point to note is that this holistic view of humanity came before the fall of humanity. What makes us whole—a physical/material body, a spirit that relates to God, the need to live in relationship to each other—came before the fall.

The dualistic view of human beings as having separate parts, a physical body and a soul (or spiritual part), was not part of the Hebraic, Old Testament world-view. This belief that the body and soul are two separate parts of the person is a Hellenistic idea that played no part in the creation narratives. In the Hebraic mindset, there is only a whole person made alive by the breath of God.

Much of what we assume in Western society comes not from the Biblical and theological interpretation of the Bible but from this Greek philosophy. In this philosophy the body is evil and the soul is good. This Hellenistic philosophy can be seen in Paul's letters to the early Christians. However, one must keep in mind that Paul is trying to communicate the Gospel to a Hellenistic culture. He is communicating the Gospel to them in their own language.

When we look at the work of Jesus, however, we see that he holds to the Hebraic view of the person. This can be seen in John 9, where Jesus heals a blind man. This healing using the dust of the earth is reminiscent of the way in which humanity was created. After Jesus places the mud upon the blind man, Jesus sends him to wash in the Temple pool. He was deeply connected to both the man's physical and spiritual wellbeing. This is typical of Jesus' healing ministry. In a synthesis of the four gospels, Jesus performs acts of healing over twenty times. Many of the accounts of his healing include both physical and spiritual aspects. Jesus practiced holistic ministry.

Class Discussion

- o How do we describe ourselves as humans? Discuss this with the group at your table.
- o If God created humanity as holistic beings from the beginning, why is it that we tend to emphasize/deemphasize certain aspects of our common humanity?
- o In what ways does your church work to minister to whole people? Are there any programs/activities that seem lopsided?

Individual Reflection

What does it mean to you that humanity, that you, were created in a special and distinct way from the rest of creation? Was this idea something new to you? Will it change, in any way, the way you view people?

Benediction

Folliott S. Pierpoint, a hymn writer in the 19th century, penned the words to this familiar hymn on a beautiful spring day when he became overwhelmed with the goodness of God's beautiful creation, the senses to appreciate it, and the special gifts of God to us through human relationships. Let the words of "For the Beauty of the Earth" serve as a prayer of gratitude for our wholeness today:

For the beauty of the earth,
For the glory of the skies;
For the love which from our birth,
Over and around us lies;
Lord of all, to Thee we raise
This, our hymn of grateful praise.

For the wonder of each hour,
Of the day and of the night;
Hill and vale and tree and flow'r,
Sun and moon, and stars of light;
Lord of all, to Thee we raise
This, our hymn of grateful praise.

For the joy of ear and eye,
For the heart and mind's delight;
For the mystic harmony,
Linking sense to sound and sight;
Lord of all, to Thee we raise
This, our hymn of grateful praise.

For the joy of human love,
Brother, sister, parent, child;
Friends on Earth and friends above,
For all gentle thoughts and mild;
Lord of all, to Thee we raise
This, our hymn of grateful praise.



Call To Be Attentive

As you go about your daily life this week, pay attention to the ways in which you minister. Spend time reflecting or journaling your interactions with people this week. Are you seeing people differently? Has what you learned from this lesson transformed the ways that you view people? If so, how? Will you consider sharing these stories at your next meeting?



FOUNDATIONS FOR HOLISTIC MINISTRY

LESSON THREE - "MOSES/EXODUS: WHAT ARE WE TO DO?"

Introduction to the Lesson -Human's as agents of God's work

This lesson explores how God relates to God's people. God uses humanity in God's creation and action within the world. In this lesson we will examine the nature of God toward suffering and oppressed people, and we will also look at Moses' role as a human agent and of God's intervention in the exodus deliverance of the suffering Hebrews. and as Finally, we'll see how Moses became the vehicle through whom God gave God's Covenant Law by which the people learn how to live with each other.

Key scripture: Exodus 2:23-25; Exodus 3: 7-10; Exodus 4:1-13; John 1:14; Philippians 2:5-8

Key points:

- o God hears the cries of the oppressed and takes notice of them
- o God is intimately involved in our suffering
- o God chooses a human to be an agent of God's active liberation
- o God is sensitive to the fears and shortcomings of God's agents and offers companionship and support to leaders.

Lesson

Moses

The central event of the Old Testament is the Exodus story. From this event emerges the identification of the nation of Israel and accounts of her successes and failings in living as God intends. Also from this event we see how God chooses to relate to God's people.

Exodus 2:23-25 reveals the nature of God: God hears the cries of the oppressed and takes notice of them. This loving nature of God is further revealed in his calling of Moses in Exodus 3:7-10. From this passage we can see that God is sensitive to the conditions of God's people through the words "observed," "heard," "know," and "come down to deliver." God is intimately involved with the suffering Hebrews. God is moved by their physical, social, economic, and political plight and is attentive to their need for deliverance. How does God choose to intervene and deliver the Hebrews from their suffering? God chooses a human to be an agent of God's active liberation.

God, in all God's wisdom and power could have intervened. Instead, God chose to work through a flawed and fearful human being: Moses. In Exodus 4:1-13, we find a leader, chosen by God, who seems a lot like us—scared, awestruck, and reluctant. Overcome with the magnitude of this task and fear of Pharaoh, Moses begged God to send someone else. Despite this reluctance God chose to send Moses, however, God was not unmoved by Moses' fear and trepidation. God sent Aaron to be Moses' partner. God gave Moses a companion and helper.

As we have seen, God could have intervened with God's own power, however, God chose to intervene through human action. Perhaps we could consider this to be the

normative way God chooses to intervene: To use God's highest creation, humanity, with all our flaws and weaknesses, with all our fears and excuses, and with all of our calling and empowerment from God to accomplish the difficult task of being God's agents in responding to the suffering that is still found in the world.

Jesus

The core event of the New Testament, the incarnation of Christ, leads us to continue to think about this idea of humans as agents of God's work in the world. God's most elaborate response to the needs of humankind for liberation was sending Jesus into the chaotic human existence.

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14).

Paul writes of Christ's mission being God taking on human form in Philippians 2:5-8. While this dual nature of Jesus, who refers to himself both as Son of God and Son of Man, is a mysterious and deep topic debated and studied intensely throughout Christian tradition, it is foundational to think of God's ultimate intervention in human history being the incarnation, the human agency of Christ.

Like Moses, Jesus too sought out companionship along his journey. Jesus knew his ministry could not be done alone and that he would need help and support along the way. Therefore, he called the twelve named disciples and many others to be his co-laborers. Today, as disciples of Christ, we too co-labor with Christ in this calling.

While Jesus brought an immediate healing to those who needed liberation from their ailments, we, today, as his human agents can bring liberation to oppressed people through offering all persons access medicine, clean water, economic development. Couple this with teaching the Gospel as we live out our lives in Christ's service and we have holistic ministry.

Humans as agents today

God did not stop choosing human beings as agents of God's work at the end of the Biblical age. Today, God still calls people to be agents of deliverance throughout the world. The most famous American example is Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who stated in his final speech (reminiscent of Moses), "I just want to do God's will. And he's allowed me to go to the mountain. And I've looked over, and I've seen the Promised Land! I may not get there with you, but I want you to know tonight that we as people will get to the promised land." There are many people throughout the world that God calls as agents of God's work. Contemporary examples are people like Jim Wallace (founder of Sojourners), David Beckman (president of Bread for the World), Bono (lead singer of U2 and Christian activist), Shane Claiborne (founder of the Simple Way), and Tony Campolo (Christian writer), and Marian Wright Edelman (Children's Defense Fund).

God also calls each of us as God's agents in the world today. We don't have to be big name rock stars, writers, or famous Christian activists to be used by God. When God chose Moses he was a former slave now an ordinary shepherd. All he did was respond to the call of God. God provided the way for him to deliver the Hebrews. That is all God asks of us. To simply respond and follow the way provided.

Class Discussion

- o Have you ever been fearful or reluctant to respond to God's call to action in your own life? Think about the excuses you may have offered. How did God help you to overcome those?
- o Have you felt supported in your living out of God's call in your life? Who have been some of the companions and co-workers in the work of God in your life? Who has been like Aaron to you?
- o Who are the oppressed, captive people of today? To whom is God attuned in our own time as God

was attuned to the cries of the people of Israel?

o We often hear it said that as the Church, the body of Christ, we are to be “incarnational,” to act as Jesus did in the world. How do we do that?

Individual Reflection

God has not stopped using people for God’s work in the world today and God uses “ordinary” people for that work. Take time to reflect on ways in which you can be a human agent of God’s deliverance in the world today?

Benediction

God, it takes courage to be the creatures
You made us to be.

Year after year we add to our experiences of the World,
Pushing against our limits
To find out what will budge and what will not.

We find that we can make certain things happen,
And we can prevent other things from happening.
We can make friends, and we can make enemies.
We can say “yes,” and we can say “no.”...

God, we are tentative before you,
Confused in the clutter of our abandoned dreams
and tattered faith,
worn out by our efforts to improve the world,
cramped by responsibilities,
and lost in an ocean of time.

In our brokenness we turn to You.
Resurrect the shattered pieces
Into a stronger whole.
Take the fragments of our faith, and in your mercy, Lord,
Redeem them and make us whole.

(from Prayers & Litanies for the Christian Seasons by Sharlande Sledge, p. 47)



Call To Be Attentive

Pay attention to the way God uses you this week, even in the small, everyday-ness of life. Begin a list of ways that you feel God has used you this week. Keep this list ongoing throughout this series.





FOUNDATIONS FOR HOLISTIC MINISTRY

LESSON FOUR - "COVENANT LAW: HOW ARE WE TO LIVE?"

Introduction to the Lesson

After the Exodus the next major encounter between God and the Israelites was the handing down of the Covenant Law- the Ten Commandments being the most known part of this law, but not all of it. As a result of God's intervention through Moses in their desperation, the people are in a covenant relationship with God. Out of this relationship the people agree to live as the people of God and the Covenant law is delivered by God to Moses to show them how to do just that. This lesson will present the Covenant law, examine the instructions God provides in the law, and its provisions for social justice.

Key scripture: Leviticus 19:9-10, 25:8-55; Exodus 22:25-27; Deuteronomy 15:1-2, 7-11, 12, 15

Key points:

- o God directs God's people to carry out God's concern for the poor, needy, and enslaved
- o God is a God of social justice
- o God expects of God's people to act in a manner towards all human beings in accordance with God's nature

Lesson

Covenant law

There are four main aspects of the Covenant Law that are important for holistic ministry.

- 1) The Law presupposed a relationship between God and the people. Their motive for accepting and keeping the law was gratitude for their deliverance; for what God had already done.
- 2) The law became the human side of the equation between God and Israelites. It is how they were to demonstrate their faithfulness to God.
- 3) "The Law was intended to apply the relationship with God to every aspect of human life." Because of the instruction received, there was no longer separation between religious practice and everyday life. We might say there is no longer a separation between the sacred and the secular. This is where we will focus in this lesson.)
- 4) The Law continued to give guidance as to the character and nature of God. Because "God is concerned with human content and character, humans must be concerned." (Kysar., p15-16).

Examining the law

When we examine the Covenant law laid out in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy we find that God provides instructions for how the Israelites care for those in need. God tells the people to give special attention to the most vulnerable persons in that day: widows, orphans and strangers. As you read these scriptures together, you'll find they are so rich with God's expectations.

Let's look at some specifics of God's concern for the welfare of the oppressed as expressed in the Law. God told the people to be concerned about the poor and hungry and to be generous with food. Let's look at a passage from **Leviticus 19:9-10**.

As the farmers and vineyard keepers tended to their crops, some of the harvest was to be intentionally let for people in need to come and harvest to meet their needs. It is a picture of sharing out of one's abundance. It becomes the responsibility of those with much to change the circumstances of those with too little.

Reflection questions: How often do we hear and say just the opposite in our own time; that it is the responsibility of the poor to improve their own conditions? Is there a "middle ground" where it is the responsibility of those with more to offer a way for those with less to do better? How might the principles of "gleaning" be lived out in our modern world?

Most of us do not raise crops or tend vineyards anymore. One example to be considered as an answer could be the program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture commonly known as "Food Stamps." Another is food rescue programs and food banks found around our country.

Now let's look at some passages that have to do with money. Read Exodus 22:25-27

This passage deals with the exchange of credit and puts limits on what a lender can demand of a borrower even to the point of charging interest. That is not to be done. It also indicates that God is concerned that the basic needs for shelter from the cold not be denied to even the most destitute. God does not want someone to go without the basic necessities while they are trying to repay their loans. Read Deuteronomy 15:7-11.

We see God here in the Covenant demanding that God's people be champions of the poor, hungry and indebted. God is also concerned with the manner in which needy people are to be extended credit. No one is to give begrudgingly, but willingly lend enough to meet the person's need. One is not to be "tight-fisted."

Reflection Questions: Have there been times where you have been "tight-fisted?" How do modern day manifestations of credit enslave vulnerable people? Do you know much about "pay day" lenders and the unfair, exorbitant interest charged?

Notice in verse 9 of the passage above that something different happens for debtors in the seventh year. God also sets forth in the Covenant Law provisions for social justice. God initiates the practice of Sabbatical and Jubilee years. Read Exodus 15:1-2. Every seventh year (Sabbatical), all debts are remitted. It provides the means for debts to be forgiven and for those in debt to be given a "clean slate." This is a redistribution of wealth.

Walter Brueggemann writes of this economic dimension of the communal law:

"This command, likely the quintessence of neighborliness, seeks to prevent the emergence of a permanent underclass by providing that regularly and frequently, the poor will have their debts canceled and be equipped for reentry into the economy in a viable way." (200, p. 81).

This practice set Israel apart as a "peculiar community in the world."

In that day, many poor persons had no recourse to support themselves or to pay debts than to sell

themselves and their families into slavery. In verse 12, God demands that even slaves within the

community are also to be set free in the seventh year. God gives reason for this magnanimous gesture with, “Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you; for this reason I lay this command on you today,” Deuteronomy 15:15, NRSV. Because of God’s liberation, God’s people are in turn to be liberators.

Returning people to a state of freedom, allowed them to once again have full participation in the community and be restored in wholeness. One scholar says, “Participation has multiple dimensions...including physical life itself, political protection, and decision making, social interchange and standing, economic production, education, culture, and religion,” (Mott, p. 25). Until slaves were freed, they did not have this full participation in community. The Sabbath year restored it to them once again. Slaves were made whole participants in community life.

Reflection Question: Are there people today that have no recourse but to sell themselves into slavery? Who are these in our world today? Are they able to fully participate in society?

The practice of Jubilee was established every fifty years. In Leviticus 25:8-55, the observance of Jubilee is set forth. There are several provisions: real estate is returned to its original owner or their family (Lev. 25:10, 13); the land is to remain fallow for one year (Lev. 25:11-12); sale and redemption of land is required (Lev 25:14-17, 23-28); slaves are freed (Lev 25: 39-43, 47-55). Jubilee is again a radical redistribution of wealth and an acknowledgement that really all land and possessions, and most importantly people belong to God.

This idea may be very hard for us as products of Western civilization to wrap our 21st century minds around, yet these demands are found within scripture. How might we practice Jubilee today? One idea is the Jubilee 2000 campaign.

Reflection Question: Are there ways for you to extend the principles of Sabbath and Jubilee toward persons in need?



Call To Be Attentive

Spend time this week reading through materials from the Center for Responsible Lending, Jubilee 2000 and other social justice organizations you may know about. Research ways you might become involved in their work. Spend time over the next few weeks looking for ways you can become involved in justice issues in your community. Read through the newspaper, go online, or spend time with community members to determine the justice issues for your local community.

Benediction

O God, the Father of us all, we praise you for having bound humanity in a great unity of life so that each must lean on the strength of all, and depend for his comfort and safety on the help and labor of his brothers and sister.

We invoke your blessing on all the men and women who have toiled to build and warm our homes, to fashion our clothing, and to wrest from sea and land the food that nourishes us and our children.

We pray you that they may have health and joy, and hope and love, even as we desire for our loved ones.

Grant us wisdom to deal justly with every man and woman whom we face in the business of life.

May we not unknowingly inflict suffering through selfish indifference or the willful ignorance of a callous heart...

May the time come when we need wear and use nothing that is wet in your sight with human tears, or cheapened by wearing down the lives of the weak.

Speak to our souls and bid us strive for the coming of your Kingdom of justice when your merciful and saving will shall be done on earth.

Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918),
American Baptist Minister and exponent of the Social Gospel
Quoted in Davies, pp.121-122

Sources

Davies, Horton. The Communion of the Saints: Prayers of the Famous. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.

Brueggemann, Walter. Texts That Linger, Words That Explode: Listening To Prophetic Voices. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000.

Hoppe, Leslie J. There Shall Be No Poor Among You: Poverty in the Bible. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2004.

Kysar, Robert. Called To Care: Biblical Images For Social Ministry. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991.

Mott, Stephen C. Biblical Ethics and Social Change. Oxford University Press, 1982.



4



Teaching Leaflet

FOUNDATIONS FOR HOLISTIC MINISTRY COVENANT LAW: HOW ARE WE TO LIVE

Gleaning - Leviticus 19:9-10

Modern-Day Examples of Gleaning

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

One example of modern-day gleaning is a program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture called SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), formerly known as Food Stamps. The first idea for the Food Stamp program has been credited to various people, most notably Secretary of Agriculture Henry Wallace and the program's first administrator Milo Perkins. Perkins said, "We got a picture of a gorge, with farm surpluses on one cliff and under-nourished city folks with outstretched hands on the other. We set out to find a practical way to build a bridge across that chasm." SNAP today is still administered by the Department of Agriculture and is intended to provide not only food to persons in poverty, but to provide market support to strengthen farming. It is a win/win in that surplus production can be utilized for the greater good.

Food Banks and Food Rescue Programs

Another example of modern-day gleaning is food banks and food rescue programs. One of the best-known food bank networks is Feeding America (formerly America's Second Harvest), which supplies more than two billion pounds of food and grocery products annually. Through Feeding America, surplus foods are donated, and then moved and stored until it can be delivered to agencies that ultimately feed hungry persons in need throughout the country. This tremendous amount of surplus food comes from various sources: 486 million pounds from national product donors, 494 million pounds from U.S. government programs; 843 million pounds from local product donors, and 198 million pounds from purchase.

Every day, one quarter of the food produced in restaurants, businesses and our own homes is left to go to waste. Food rescue is the practice rescuing unused portions of nutritious food from restaurants and other food service sites before they are tossed out. The food including meat, produce, dairy, bakery and shelf-stable items are collected from groceries, retailers, and other donors. Many food rescue programs take these unused portions of food and make nutritious meals for community agencies to serve to their participants. Examples of food rescue programs include DC Central Kitchen (www.dccentralkitchen.org), and The Campus Kitchen at Baylor University (www.campuskitchens.org).

Credit Practices

Responsible Lending

The Center for Responsible Lending (www.responsiblelending.org) is a nonprofit and nonpartisan research and policy organization. CRL works to protect homeownership and family finances by working to eliminate abusive financial practices. Included in the many issues the CRL works to end are predatory lending and payday loans. According the CRL, "every year, payday lenders strip \$4.2 billion in excessive fees from Americans who think they're getting a two-week loan and end up trapped in

debt...across the nation payday borrowers are paying more in interest, at annual rates of 400 percent, than the amount of the loan they originally borrowed. Despite attempts to reform payday lending, now an industry exceeding \$28 billion a year, lenders still collect 90 percent of their revenue from borrowers who cannot pay off their loans when due, rather than from one-time users dealing with short-term financial emergencies.”

Jubilee in Today's World

One organization working to bring Jubilee to the world today is the Jubilee USA Network. Jubilee USA is an alliance made up of over 80 religious denominations, faith communities, and social action groups working for the cancellation of debilitating debts to fight poverty and injustice in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. According to Jubilee USA:

In the Jubilee Year as quoted in Leviticus, those enslaved because of debts are freed, lands lost because of debt are returned, and community torn by inequality is restored. Today international debt has become a new form of slavery. Debt slavery means poor people working harder and harder in a vain effort to keep up with the interest payments on debts owed to rich countries including the US and international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The Jubilee USA Network brings together people to turn this reality around by active solidarity with partners worldwide, targeted and timely advocacy strategies and educational outreach.

Jubilee USA is a part of a worldwide movement of concerned people and groups seeking to cancel the debts of the poorest countries by the new millennium. In order to repay foreign debts, many poor countries are being forced to divert scarce government resources away from health care, education, and other vital services. The result has been to deny many children the chance to go to school, women access to prenatal care, HIV-infected persons access to counseling and treatment, and small farmers access to credit and technical assistance.

African countries now spend twice as much on average repaying foreign debt as on providing health care. The United Nations Development Program in 1997 stated, “Relieved of their annual debt repayments, the severely indebted countries could use the funds for investments that in Africa alone would save the lives of about 21 million children by 2000 and provide 90 million girls and women with access to basic education.” Most poor countries have tried very hard to repay these debts. In 1996, nations in sub-Saharan Africa paid \$14.5 billion on their foreign debt. But in 1995, they could only pay 57% of payments due. The reality is that the debt cannot and will not be repaid, and it is senseless for creditors to pretend otherwise. Countries cannot develop healthy economies when millions of their people are being denied basic health care and education and earn wages so low they can barely survive. A bold step to cancel poor countries’ debt is the most practical way to restart their economies, protect the global environment, and reduce poverty.

Sources:

Kysar, Robert. *Called To Care: Biblical Images For Social Ministry*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991.
www.feedingamerica.org
www.dccentralkitchen.org/program
www.responsiblelending.org
www.jubileeusa.org



FOUNDATIONS FOR HOLISTIC MINISTRY

LESSON FIVE - "PROPHETS: HOW ARE WE TO WORSHIP?"

Introduction to the Lesson

In the last lesson we learned of some of the high demands for social justice and generosity demanded in the Covenant law. We know that the Israelites did not always live up to these high ideals and God would once again use human agents to intervene and bring God's messages to the people. We call these agents prophets. In this study, we will look at some of the prophets who proclaimed God's justice in their own day and how their words relate to holistic ministry today.

Key Scripture: Amos 5:21-22, 24; Micah 6:6-8; Isaiah 58, 42:5-9; (Luke 4:18-19)

Key points:

- o Justice is the righteousness God requires
- o Personal piety cannot be separated from acts of justice

Lesson

Justice and Righteousness

The concepts of justice and righteousness were key concepts in the Old Testament, prophetic literature. The prophets brought messages of God's expectation of justice and righteousness to the Israelites. The two Hebrew words used in the Old Testament, *mishpat* (justice) and *sedeqa* (righteousness), are consistently found together in scripture, approximately 30 times, and are a constant theme of the prophets. These terms are used relationally within the Old Testament, used to interpret the Covenant between God and the Israelites. They are words used to define how the Israelites maintain their relationship with God and with their neighbors.

Righteousness gives light as to how one is to live out God's justice. Righteousness is living in right relationship with God. The way to live in right relationship with God is to seek justice for God's people. In our Western culture we tend to equate justice with impartiality, "justice is blind." However, this is not the way God views justice. Throughout scripture God consistently places God's focus and attention on the suffering, poor, and marginalized. To live in right relationship with God, to live righteously, is to consistently place our focus and attention on the suffering, poor, and marginalized as well.

The Prophets

Almost all of the prophets discuss aspects of social justice within their writings, however we will focus on three prophets that are key to our topic today. These three are Amos, Micah, and Isaiah. Each has very important messages that apply to us today.

Amos

Perhaps the most familiar prophetic passage speaking of justice and righteousness comes from the prophet Amos:

But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream (5:24).

In Amos' day, the wealthy few were greedily trying to get richer and completely ignoring the desperation of the poor. A common practice was to cheat through crooked scales, thereby robbing from farm workers their rightfully earned wages and food. This is eerily reminiscent of the economic conditions of today. Today some farm workers are not paid agreed upon wages at the end of a work day by dishonest landowners. Workers in third world factories producing cheap garments for first world consumers do not receive fair compensation for their piece work. Much of the economic crisis we are in today is due to a wealthy few trying to get richer. In Amos' day, as well as ours, the thought was that what happens in the marketplace does not affect what we do in religious devotion. In other words, business is business and religion is religion.

The Israelites learned, however, that the sacred and the secular cannot be separated. Amos 5:21-22 issues harsh words from God to the Israelites regarding their religious practices. Religious piety means nothing if the people are, in everyday business and commerce, engaged in unfair practices and oppression of the poor. This type of lifestyle, the separation of the sacred and secular is not what God requires. God does not view the way we treat people in everyday life separate from the way we worship God. What then does God require of us? The answer is given in our next prophet: Micah.

Micah

The scathing words of Amos leave us asking, "What does God require of us to live a righteous life?" Micah answers this question in 6:6-8. There are only three acts God requires of us to live a righteous life: doing justice, loving in kindness, and walking humbly with God (v. 8). These are the acts of worship God accepts. If we are not doing these then we are not living righteously. For many of us it is easy to do the last two because they are a normal part of our Western Christian education. We are taught that being a Christian means loving people, "seeing the Jesus in everyone," and practicing personal piety—reading our Bibles daily, attending church, and spending time in private prayer. However, according to Micah, personal piety also includes seeking justice. This cannot be separated from our worship of God.

Isaiah

Finally, Isaiah also speaks of justice as an act of worship. If it is not rituals of worship that are the most important to God, how are we to put our faith into practice? Isaiah 58:6-12 offers some insight. The fast, or act of worship, that God requires is that we "loose the bonds of injustice" and "let the oppressed go free" (v.6). It is to "share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house, when you see the naked, to cover them" (v. 7). Isaiah says that if you do this then, "your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday" (v. 10).

The acts God requires of us are not only reading our Bible, praying, attending worship every week, and doing evangelism. While all these actions are good, we are also to be helping people who are homeless on our streets, people who are fighting against the tidal wave of poverty and losing, and those who are enslaved by their debts, and changing the systems that contribute to homelessness, poverty, and oppression.

As we learned in our first lesson, as Jesus began his ministry on earth he turned to the prophet Isaiah to explain his purpose. Jesus turned to Isaiah 42:5-9. Jesus was declaring this new day, building upon the covenant God had established with God's people as he began his earthly ministry (Luke 4:18-19). With Isaiah's teachings, we see an inclusiveness and forward look to a fuller revelation of God's work in the world through the promised Messiah that will encompass all the people of the world. In this passage we see a summation of what we have learned about the God of Creation and the God of the Covenant, who favors the oppressed and expects us to deal with them in justice and righteousness.

Reflection Questions

- o We no longer come to worship with burnt offerings or containers of oil, but do we sometimes offer



lesser sacrifices to God in our own day? What are they?

- o What are ways we can do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God today?

- o What are ways in our everyday business or consumer lives do we participate in oppression and unfair practices?

Individual Reflection

Reread Isaiah 42:5-9 and 58. What actions in these passages offer you practical application for your life today? In what ways can you bring together personal piety and justice in your life?

Benediction

Micah 6:6-8:

With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God?

Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
with calves a year old?

Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,
with ten thousand rivers of oil?

Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you?

To act justly

and to love mercy

and to walk humbly with your God.



Call To Be Attentive

For one week keep a journal of the time spent in traditional acts of religious piety (Bible reading, church meetings, prayer, etc) and time spent on justice activities. Is this list balanced? Should it be balanced? What are ways you can work to make this list more balanced?.

Sources

Brueggemann, Walter. Texts That Linger, Words That Explode: Listening To Prophetic Voices. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000

Cook, Joan E. Hear, O heavens and Listen, O Earth: An Introduction to the Prophets. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006.

Foster, Ruth Ann. "Dangerous Waters of Justice and Righteousness." *Christian Ethics Today* 5 ser. 5. 024 (1999): 1-8. 7 Aug. 2007 <<http://www.chrstianethicstoday.com/issue/024/Dangereous>>.

McKenna, Megan. Prophets: Words of Fire. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001.

Mills, Watson E., ed. *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible.* Macon: Mercer University press, 1990.

"Mishpat." *Anchor Bible Dictionary.* Ed. David Noel Freedman. Vol. 3. New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992.

"Tsedequah." *Anchor Bible Dictionary.* Ed. David Noel Freedman. Vol. 5. New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992.

"Hesed." *Anchor Bible Dictionary.* Ed. David Noel Freedman. Vol. 4. New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992.



Call To Be Attentive

For one week keep a journal of the time spent in traditional acts of religious piety (Bible reading, church meetings, prayer, etc) and time spent on justice activities. Is this list balanced? Should it be balanced? What are ways you can work to make this list more balanced?.



FOUNDATIONS FOR HOLISTIC MINISTRY

LESSON SIX - "THE EARLY CHURCH: HOW DO WE RESPOND?"

Introduction to the Lesson -

In the last lesson we ended with Jesus quoting Isaiah 42:5-9 while declaring a new day and grounding his ministry in justice. Isaiah gives some hopeful words as he looks forward to the coming of a greater fulfillment of God's revelation for all people. We have focused on the particular Covenant relationship God had with the people of Israel. With Isaiah's teachings, we see an inclusivity and forward look to a fuller revelation of God's work in the world through the promised Messiah that will encompass all people of the world. In the passage we see somewhat of a summation of what we have learned about the God of Creation, who gave special attention and purpose to humankind in the created order, and the God of the Covenant, who favors the oppressed and expects us to deal with them in justice and righteousness, and now to the the promised One to be a light for all nations. Let's look at Isaiah 42:5-9.

We see from Jesus' demonstrations of mercy, healing, and teaching how it is that we, his followers, are to respond to our world with hope. This lesson will examine the greatest commandment, how the early church lived out this commandment, and how we, today, can live out this commandment.

Key Scripture: Matthew 22:34-40; Acts 2:44-47

Key points:

- o **Jesus made it clear what he expects of his followers: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind and love your neighbor as yourself.**
- o **The early Church lived as an alternative community to their larger society**
- o **Early believers did not separate their individual conversion to faith in Jesus Christ from the way they responded to their world**

Lesson

In Matthew 22:34-40 Jesus unites all the ideas we have explored throughout this series. Over and over, Jesus made it clear what he expects out of us. After Jesus' resurrection and ascension, we know that the disciples and apostles began to teach all that they had learned about how to live out this greatest commandment. Followers of Christ gathered together in groups of believers. The group grew larger because of how these believers related to one another and to others in the community.

The book of Acts documents this early Church history. Acts 2: 44-47 outlines how the early church lived as an alternative community. The early church knew it was called to be an alternative community, much like the "peculiar community" the nation of Israel was called to be. Much like Jesus had pulled together outcasts from his society: tax collectors, women, sinners, the poor; the early church represents an alternative community to the social ideal of its day. About this community, one Biblical scholar writes:

Most important about Luke's [the author of Acts] picture of the earliest church is his insistence that it was a community in which physical need was cared for... That Luke understood this communal life to be an effective witness to the society in which the

church lived is suggested by the way he speaks of the conversions to faith aroused by the life of the community. The alternative community formed by Christian believers attracted others and pulled them away from the societal values with which they lived.¹

Early believers did not separate their individual conversion to faith in Jesus Christ from the way they responded to their world. Faith in Christ changed everything, even social order. This can be most profoundly seen in Paul's writing to the Galatian believers with, "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus, (Gal.3:28). This was a radical world view.; completely counter-cultural in the day of the early Church and counter-cultural for us today..

Reflection questions:

o What social categorizations separate us today?

o Does the church work to overcome this or does the church perpetuate these separations?

In many ways, churches today reflect more of the surrounding cultural views of our society, especially in terms of wealth and social status, rather than embracing this notion of being a radically different, alternative community. In this environment, it becomes tempting for churches to exist for their own self-perpetuation rather than as a community of joyful believers fully committed to demonstrating the whole Gospel for the world.

When churches draw this narrow focus, evangelism becomes narrow too. Evangelism is relegated only to the personal and private, and never to the social and structural. Reading the book of Acts clearly shows us that the early believers didn't see it that way. They lived in a way that was alternative and contradictory to their culture: living in community, holding all things in common, and selling their possessions to help those less fortunate.

Reflection Questions

o Does the church today serve as an alternative community or do we embrace much of what society values today? Are churches keepers of the status quo?

These notions about the nature and function of the Church bring us full circle back to where we began with an exploration of evangelism vs. social involvement. Let's take a moment to take the **Theological Foundations Survey** again. Compare your before and after surveys to determine if the explorations of these Scripture passages and contemporary issues has changed your scores this time. Discuss this with your group or the people at your table.

Were your answers different this time? To truly practice holistic ministry, we do need to acknowledge and deal with the "lopsidedness" with which many of us have approached our understanding of how to live as Christians. We need to wrestle with our theological and scriptural biases and learn to be balanced in our approach. We need both the traditional and progressive expression of our faith to be balance. Scholars have said that evangelism and social ministry are "two sides of the same coin" or "two wings of the same bird."² Rather than separating the imperatives of the Christian faith as it is to be lived out into categories of the spiritual in evangelism and the physical, emotional, and communal in social action, we must learn to embody a more holistic approach to the sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Benediction

“The work of Jesus was not a new set of ideals or principles for reforming or even revolutionizing society, but the establishment of a new community, a people that embodied forgiveness, sharing and self-sacrificing love in its rituals and discipline. In that sense, the visible church is not to be the bearer of Christ’s message, but to be the message.”- Stanley Hauerwas



Call To Be Attentive

Spend time this week comparing your two Theological Foundations Surveys. Note what has changed and what has stayed the same. Reflect on what has changed, why you think it has changed and what this means for your ministry in the future. Also note what has stayed the same, why, and what this

Sources

¹Kysar, Robert. Called To Care: Biblical Images For Social Ministry. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991.

²Miles, Delos. Evangelism and Social Involvement. Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1986.

Sider, Ronald J. Good News and Good Works: A theology for the Whole Gospel. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999.



WALKING ALONGSIDE

FOUNDATIONS FOR HOLISTIC MINISTRY

PARTICIPANT EVALUATION



Help us improve the “Foundations for Holistic Ministry” study.

_____ I was able to relate and engage with the information, even though much of it was new to me.

_____ There was too much/too little information.

_____ The lessons were easy for the class leader to present. If not, what would improve them? _____

_____ I wish there had been more time for: _____

_____ I wish we had spent less time on: _____

_____ I visited the Walking Alongside Web site to get more information.

_____ The study challenged me in unexpected ways? If so, how?



_____ The study disappointed me, because _____

Other comments: _____

Please return to: Jon Singletary
Center for Family and Community Ministries
Baylor School of Social Work
PO Box 97120
Waco, TX 76798-7120

