

# STEPPING UP AND STEPPING OUT



## LEARNING A NEW MINDSET ON BENEVOLENCE

### SESSION 7:

## Meeting Needs without Needing Meetings

Personal Notes

**Intro: How are we supposed to ... ? Feeding 5000**

**Matthew 14:13-21, Mark 6:30-44, Luke 9:10-17, John 1:14**

This must be an important story because it is in all four of the Gospels.

Doing ministry draws needy people (spiritual and material)

How are you going to handle them?

- ⇒ Send them away
- ⇒ Make a budget?
- ⇒ You do it
- ⇒ Leave it to a kid to not understand church process and procedures
- ⇒ Pray
- ⇒ Feed them all plus

### **Questions:**

**Do we ever send people away so we don't have to deal with them?**

**Are budgets an asset or a problem? How about committees?**

**Does this story matter today?**

### **Point One: Do it yourself (Mark 2:1-12)**

- ⇒ Friends in need
- ⇒ Be radical (took off a roof!)
- ⇒ Get them to Jesus– their ultimate need
- ⇒ Forgiveness- fundamental message (God forgives us in Jesus!)
- ⇒ Healing and praise- we need more praise!

***What obstacles do we encounter when helping the poor?***

# STEPPING UP AND STEPPING OUT



## LEARNING A NEW MINDSET ON BENEVOLENCE

### SESSION 7:

## Meeting Needs without Needing Meetings

*Where was the benevolence committee?*

*What does going thru the roof look like today?*

### Point Two: Sometimes it is too much. (Acts 6:1-7)

- ⇒ Spiritual and faith community issues: this was a physical and spiritual need – but it was upsetting the church community
- ⇒ Really big problems- sometimes people's needs are more than one of us can handle
- ⇒ Spiritual and wise people- some benevolent issues take discernment
- ⇒ Special servants and wise people (deacons?)
- ⇒ Do you ever need to hand off to the elders? Deacons?

### Point Three: What You Do about the Poor is a Reflection of your Heart (I John 3:16-18)

*16 By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. 17 But if anyone has the worlds goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does Gods love abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.*

- ⇒ What does it mean to lay down your life for your Christian brothers and sisters?
- ⇒ Need vs. want
- ⇒ Love in action, words
- ⇒ **Is this verse for the church, or for you?**

# STEPPING UP AND STEPPING OUT



## LEARNING A NEW MINDSET ON BENEVOLENCE

### SESSION 7:

## Meeting Needs without Needing Meetings

Personal Notes

### Conclusion: James 1:27

*27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.*

Widows and orphans are poor and needy

Helping them is pure religion

- ⇒ **What is the difference between providing financial resources and visiting?**
- ⇒ **What if our church takes care of widows and orphans? Does that count?**

### Practical Considerations

- ⇒ Give out Blessing bags (hygiene items, water, etc)
- ⇒ Personal benevolence budget– set your own amount
- ⇒ Daily limits on giving- cap what you give each day
- ⇒ Boundaries– work in pairs, cant do everything
- ⇒ Refer high need request
- ⇒ Coordinate giving when possible- with Community team
- ⇒ Communicate- let office staff know what is being done
- ⇒ People need you more than your money- build a relationship

### VIDEO:

# STEPPING UP AND STEPPING OUT



## LEARNING A NEW MINDSET ON BENEVOLENCE

SESSION 7:

## LIFE GROUPS

Share this article in your group by either reading it out loud or sending it out ahead. After sharing, discuss the questions listed at the end.

I've done a lot of thinking about the poor lately, wondering what, if anything, I should be doing that I'm not already doing. I've read Shane Claiborne's *The Irresistible Revolution* and Jen Hatmaker's books *Seven* and *Interrupted*. *When Helping Hurts* is sitting on my bedside table, ready to be read next.

Of course, my husband and I give generously to organizations we trust to care for the less fortunate. But, I had never actively been involved with the poor. All that changed about a year ago when God asked me to give up my paid job and volunteer with vulnerable populations.

This past year, I've learned a lot, thought a lot, and been unbelievably grateful to return each day to my safe, warm, middle-class home. I've also felt guilty that I even have the option of returning to my safe, warm, middle-class home. I've had many unanswered questions about my involvement and responsibilities. Clearly, I need to work through the issues and prayerfully, with Scripture as my guide, work out my response to the poor.

The Bible has a lot to say about the poor, and as much as I would like to keep my head in the sand some days about the injustices in our world, I don't think it's a viable option. I have very few answers and no blanket solutions, but I don't think God is finished with me in this area, so I'm pretty sure I have lots more to learn.

My quiet time recently included Psalm 72. Verses 12-14 jumped out at me:

*He will rescue the poor when they cry to him;  
he will help the oppressed, who have no one to defend them.  
He feels pity for the weak and the needy,  
and he will rescue them.  
He will redeem them from oppression and violence,  
for their lives are precious to him.*

One of the things that struck me most in those verses was the last line and the reminder that **the lives of the poor are precious to God**. If I am seeking to become more and more like Jesus, then I'm pretty certain **the lives of the poor should also be precious to me**. Are they? Do I believe that the life of a recovering addict living on social assistance has the same value as an ethical business person helping to build the economy? What about a loving, Christian mother versus a prostitute whose children are in foster care? I know what our culture would say, and I know what Jesus would say. Do my life choices reflect what I know to be true? Do I truly believe all lives are precious?

I've also thought a lot about the ways I offer help, and whether they're actually helpful. Does the assistance I offer preserve the dignity of the recipient? Is what I offer useful, or is it just a way for me to feel good about myself? Our commu-

# STEPPING UP AND STEPPING OUT



## LEARNING A NEW MINDSET ON BENEVOLENCE

SESSION 7:

# LIFE GROUPS

nity has a number of places to drop off lightly used household goods and clothing for redistribution to the poor, or for sale at a discount store. I've heard many conversations centered around a good spring clean-out and the opportunity to be generous to those less fortunate.

Generous? I think giving what I no longer need to those who can use it makes sense in a Reduce-Reuse-Recycle sort of way, but giving away what I don't want does not constitute generosity. **Generosity involves giving what I could still use, and perhaps even want, to somebody who needs it.** Also, if what I'm giving away is no longer good enough for me to use, why is it good enough for somebody else? If it's not worn out but I'm simply tired of it, is purchasing something new a good use of my resources? I've been thinking a lot about owning less and using it up, instead of giving away because I'm planning to buy more.

**Another thing on my mind is the use of time.** Time in North America is even more valuable than money. Do I want to throw money at a problem and let others do the actual work, or if appropriate, am I willing to spend time with someone? Poverty is a complex problem, and rarely do the poor just need money. Often, they need a friend, a counselor, a mentor, an education, a good laugh—the same things you and I need. For the poor, finding resources is much more difficult than it is for you and me. Am I willing to put in the time, or would I rather write a check? These are hard questions, and the answers are easy to see in theory, but much more difficult to live out in practice.

I recently attended a "Poverty Revolution Boot Camp" and was telling somebody I know a little about it. She said to me, "Do you know some people choose poverty?" I must have looked dumbfounded because without waiting for my reply she said, "Yes. It's true. I saw a documentary about people who live under a bridge in Winnipeg. When they were asked to go to a shelter they refused, saying they had chosen this lifestyle. They said, 'We choose to live this way.'" I replied that although that might be true, most people do not want to live in poverty and desperately want out of their current circumstances. **"Well, some people choose it. That's all I know. For some, it's a choice."**

This lady loves Jesus, reads her Bible daily, prays fervently, and is a very compassionate, thoughtful, caring woman. Yet she has chosen, as many of us do, to cling to the notion that people have chosen their lot in life, and that there's very little we can do about it. I would guess she has no idea what to do, feels badly, and as a means of living with her conscience chooses to believe the poor have chosen to live the way they do. She is not alone. But, God is clear about what He desires from his people in regard to the poor.

Hear these words, from Isaiah 58: 6-7:

*This is the kind of fasting I want:  
Free those who are wrongly imprisoned;  
lighten the burden of those who work for you.  
Let the oppressed go free,  
and remove the chains that bind people.  
Share your food with the hungry,  
and give shelter to the homeless.  
Give clothes to those who need them,*

# STEPPING UP AND STEPPING OUT



## LEARNING A NEW MINDSET ON BENEVOLENCE

SESSION 7:

## LIFE GROUPS

*and do not hide from relatives who need your help.*

**Clearly, I cannot ignore my responsibility to the poor.** As a Christ-follower, I must heed the words from Matthews 25 to care for “the least of these.” I don’t know exactly what that means and how it looks, but with Jesus, I’ll work at figuring it out. I’ve struggled through some of the above-noted questions, but I haven’t fully worked through all of them. And perhaps, as time goes on and I learn more, I will struggle through them all over again.

**I don’t think caring for the poor, whatever that looks like in my life, is going to be easy.** However, I trust if I’m doing what Jesus has asked me to do, it will be good. I also know that if all of us were doing our small bit, we could go a long way to solving a big problem. Jesus told us we’d always have the poor with us, and while I believe there will always be some with more and some with less, knowing there will always be poor people doesn’t absolve me of my responsibility to do what Jesus asks. So, what is my responsibility to the poor? I’m not entirely certain, but I’m working on it.

—  
Karen Vine is a regular contributor to Soul Care Collective.

<https://seedbed.com/what-is-my-responsibility-to-the-poor/>

### Discussion:

- ⇒ *What are your first thoughts as you hear this article?*
- ⇒ *What does it mean to be “actively involved with the poor” in your opinion?*
- ⇒ *Have you felt the guilt of not being in poverty? Why?*
- ⇒ *If the lives of the poor are “precious to God” (Psalm 72), why are they not precious to us? Do our lives show this?*
- ⇒ *What are some ways we can meet people’s needs without having to need a meeting?*