

Loving People Who Make Me Feel Uncomfortable

Class Objectives

- **Loving others the way Jesus did may involve our responding to others who have a stigma, go against social protocols, or are undesirable in some way. Regardless, we must serve their needs.**

Jesus rose above all the ways that his society would have used as reasons *not to help* a person in a desperate situation. The person who exhibits the love of Christ will look for *every reason* to help someone when presented with the opportunity.

- **When people get themselves caught in sin, some uncomfortable situations may arise. Human nature says avoid the matter; don't get involved. Love says, come along side to restore.**

Paul said to *carry one another's burdens*. This involves our personal humility and is part of the load we have been called to carry. We must never tire of doing good.

Think About It

1. Describe an experience you have had where you have had to help someone who had a stigma attached to them.
2. How did you feel as you served their need? How did others regard you while you served their need?
3. How did that person respond to your care and concern?
4. What are some things we can do to more effectively serve those who may make us feel uncomfortable?

What the Savior Said

Mark 1:38–45 (CSB)

³⁸And he said to them, “Let’s go on to the neighboring villages so that I may preach there too. This is why I have come.”

A MAN CLEANSED

³⁹He went into all of Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons. ⁴⁰Then a man with leprosy came to him and, on his knees, begged him, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.”

⁴¹Moved with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched him. “I am willing,” he told him. “Be made clean.” ⁴²Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. ⁴³Then he sternly warned him and sent him away at once, ⁴⁴telling him, “See that you say nothing to anyone; but go and show yourself to the priest, and offer what Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.” ⁴⁵Yet he went out and began to proclaim it widely and to spread the news, with the result that Jesus could no longer enter a town openly. But he was out in deserted places, and they came to him from everywhere.

During the time of Jesus, it was widespread in Palestine. The disease was met with superstition and fear. It led a person to the deepest physical, emotional, and mental anguish. Physically, leprosy took away a person’s occupation, normal daily life, as well as one’s physical and spiritual family. Lepers were completely banished from society and treated “as if they were in effect dead persons.”⁷ The Jewish rabbis of Jesus’ day added to the burden. If a leper stuck his head inside someone’s house, the entire house became unclean.⁸ It was illegal to even greet a leper. If they were upwind of a person, they had to remain 100 cubits (around 150 feet) away from anyone else. If they were downwind, they could not be within 4 cubits (about six feet) of another person. This is the ultimate in social distancing!

The man in Mark 1 is mentioned as having “leprosy all over him,” Luke 5.12, and would have been mutilated from head to toe, rotten, stinking, and repulsive.⁹

During Jesus’ time, those in the ancient near east saw leprosy as a sign that someone had been “touched” by a demon. While the Old Testament never describes leprosy as the work of demons, Scripture does show leprosy as a punishment for sin.¹⁰

⁷ Josephus, Flavius, and William Whiston. *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987, Antiquities 3.264.

⁸ Neusner, Jacob. *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988, Neg. 13.7-9.

⁹ Hughes, R. Kent. *Mark: Jesus, Servant and Savior*. Preaching the Word. Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989, p. 54.

¹⁰ Uzziah, king of Judah, 2 Kings 15; 2 Chronicles 26; Miriam, sister of Moses, Numbers 12. God threatened Israel with leprosy if they disobeyed Him. He would smite them with boils, scabs, and itches, Deuteronomy 28.27; Leviticus 26.21. He also threatened to damage their houses with leprosy, Leviticus 14.34. Job’s friends assumed God had smitten Job with leprosy because of the boils on his skin, Job 11.6, 22.5.

9. What is the significance of Jesus' touching the man?

10. Why do you think this story has been included in the gospels?

A Passage to Explore

Galatians 6:1–3 (CSB)

CARRY ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS

6 Brothers and sisters, if someone is overtaken in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual, restore such a person with a gentle spirit, watching out for yourselves so that you also won't be tempted. ² Carry one another's burdens; in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. ³ For if anyone considers himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

Galatians 6:9–10 (CSB)

⁹ Let us not get tired of doing good, for we will reap at the proper time if we don't give up. ¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the household of faith.

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11. Sinful choices can lead a person into some uncomfortable situations. Despite this, what is Paul's admonition in Galatians 6.1?

 12. How does a gentle spirit help make an uncomfortable situation more comfortable?

 13. There may be times where loving someone may involve a long process of help and recovering. How does the admonition in 6.9-10 apply?

Life Application

This week, make some time each day to spend a few moments alone with God. Every day we will consider how we can demonstrate our love by coming along side those who might make us feel uncomfortable. Take your time with each passage(s) so you can concentrate on what is being said. Use the questions as a springboard for your positive thoughts throughout your day.

Monday

14. Read Luke 15.11-24. What are some *uncomfortable* things the prodigal son would have gotten himself into because of his sin?

15. How does the Father's reaction to his son's return teach us how to respond in uncomfortable situations?

16. What are some things that challenge you about the story of the prodigal son? How can this be applied to the way we love others?

Tuesday

17. Read Mark 2.13-17. Describe the stigma tax collectors and sinners bore during the days of Christ.

18. What can we learn from the way Jesus seemed to be at ease with the ones society rejected?

Wednesday

19. Read Luke 13.10-17. In this text, Jesus heals a woman who had been a disabling physical abnormality. Sometimes the physical problems others bear may make us uncomfortable. What are some things that stand out to you in the way Jesus helped her that day?

20. What do we learn from the reaction of the ruler of the synagogue?

21. What can we learn from this story on how we need to see other people, especially people who are dealing with great physical problems?

Thursday

22. Read Mark 5.1-20. What are some things that would make you uncomfortable about the man Jesus and the disciples encountered?

23. What happened to the man after Jesus cast the demons out of the man?

24. What can we learn from this story as far as the transforming power of Christ? Is this transforming power still available today? Explain.

Friday

25. Read Mark 5.25-34, especially 5.25-26. How does Mark describe the woman's dire circumstances?

26. Now read 5.29. What powerful imagery is connected to the word *affliction*? How would her condition have created an uncomfortable situation for Christ?

27. What is so special about the way Jesus addresses her in 5.34? What is meant by the term *daughter*?