

1-Jan-02

Pastor's Storybook III-10

Ministry 10

Care for the Sick, Needy and Mistreated



Deborah, Learner's neighbor, arrives at his house early in the morning to tell him, "My cousin Joseph is in jail! You helped him start a new congregation there in his town. They meet in his house. The authorities in his town are hostile against Christianity. He has nine children and they are starving."

Learner and his wife Sara take a bag of rice and other supplies to Joseph's wife Lisa.

"Joseph is in jail," Lisa tells them, "They are going to hold a trial to convict him for holding unauthorized meetings. Learner, can you go help me find a lawyer? I have no idea how to go about it. Excuse me while I prepare you some tea."



Lisa goes into the small kitchen and Sara whispers to him, "These matters are the kind of things that you said you would delegate to other workers. Most of the people in our congregation are very poor. Some are not educated. You and I alone cannot take care of all of them."

Exercise

Find now in James 5:13-17 what elders do for the sick.

Practical Work

- Make a list of the people in your congregation and community that need your help.
- Pray with your congregation about serving these needy people.
- Determine which people in your congregation meet the requirements for deacons, to serve the needy on behalf of the flock.
- Appoint deacons who follow Paul's requirements with prayer and the laying on of hands.

Learner tells Helper, "We can help people who are suffering by reminding them that Jesus also suffered. He was human just like the rest of us."

"I thought he was God."

"He is. But when He was born of the Virgin Mary he took on our human nature. He emptied Himself of His divine glory as the Son of God and became a true human, with all of our weaknesses. The only difference is that He never sinned. Philippians 2:1-11 explains this. Hebrews 2:17-18 explains that he had to be made human in order to serve as our High Priest and suffer so He could help those who also suffer."

Exercise

Find in **Acts chapter 6 & 7:54-60:**

- How did the apostles make sure that the foreign widows were not neglected?
- How did the apostles know who to appoint to serve the needy?
- What kind of person was Stephen, one of the seven chosen to serve the widows?

Learner explains to Helper, "The apostles could not abandon their responsibilities of teaching and leading the church in Jerusalem, to care for the needy. So they asked the people to choose seven men of good reputation, full of wisdom and the Holy Spirit. The apostles prayed for these men and laid hands on them. Men and women who took care of the needy in this way were called deacons. Deacons are servants to God's people. Stephen, one of the deacons, also preached to the unbelieving Jews in the power of the Holy Spirit. His face glowed and he saw Jesus seated by the Father in heaven. They stoned him to death."

Helper replies, "I remember what you taught me about Deacons. Paul told his apprentice, Timothy, that deacons must be good parents and faithful spouses. They must be mature Christians with good reputations, not ambitious for money or addicted to alcohol. Two women who served the needy were Dorcas, who sewed clothes for the poor, and Lydia, who gave Paul's missionary team a place to live."

Helper sighs in relief. "I understand now how I can continue leading my church while I still making sure that the needy people get help. I will call a meeting to appoint deacons to serve them, just as the first believers did."

A week later Helper reports to Learner, "My congregation chose Caregiver and his wife Carmen to serve as deacons. We laid hands on them and prayed that God will make them wise like Stephen was as they serve the needy."

"Yes. And please read in James to find How Elders Deal with the Sick."

Learner sighs, "You are right. We need to ask people in our congregation to take care of these things. One of the widows needs repairs on her house and this lady needs help to get a lawyer to defend Joseph."

When they return, both Helper and Mr. Foolish are waiting in Learner's house. Mr. Foolish whines, "Learner, please loan me enough money to buy a loudspeaker to announce what I am selling. It will increase my sales and I will pay you back next month."

"I have told you to stop begging for loans!"

"Your job as our pastor is to take care of the poor and needy. You neglect us!"

"I care about the needy very much," Learner replies. "But the worst thing a person can do for idle persons is to simply hand them money. I will be happy to help you find employment. Then you can help care for the needy, instead of being one of them."

Helper remarks, "I'm teaching my congregation to serve the needy. I began with the parable of The Sheep and the Goats."

Exercise

Find in **Matthew 25:31-46:**

- Whom are we also serving when we help those in need?
- What happens to non-believers after they die if they do not help those in need?

While Sara serves tea to him and Mr. Foolish in Learner's house, Helper explains, "Jesus said that the poor, the hungry, those who mourn, and innocent people who suffer receive a special blessing from God. When we serve these people, we are serving God. When we neglect these people, we are rejecting God."

How God Supplies the Needs of His People

Learner adds, "Poor people, like everyone else, should pray for their daily bread and not simply beg. But begging is more honorable than

asking for a loan when you do not intend to pay it back. That is the most deceptive form of robbery. We all must trust God to supply our needs.”

Mr. Foolish grumbles, “That is easy for you to say when you have food on your table.”

Learner says, “Let me tell you how God took care of His people, the Israelites, in the book of Exodus. They had been slaves in Egypt for many years. God sent them a prophet named Moses. Moses told the pharaoh (king) of Egypt that God wanted His people to be free. When the pharaoh refused, God sent ten terrible plagues on Egypt. Finally, God sent the angel of death to kill all the firstborn sons. Moses warned the Israelites to kill a lamb and paint its blood over their doors so that the angel would not harm them. The pharaoh's own son died. He finally let the people go. The first few chapters of Exodus relate this. Helper, can you finish the story?”

“I shall try,” Helper says. “The people walked from Egypt to the Red Sea, and stopped. They had nowhere to go. The pharaoh changed his mind and sent his army after them. God opened a dry path through the Red Sea for the Israelites, and when the Egyptian army tried to follow, the sea crashed over them. Then the Israelites spent forty years in the desert before they returned to their homeland. They found nothing to eat in the desert, and sometimes no water, but God provided everything they needed. Then God gave them The Miraculous Manna.”

Exercise

Find in Exodus 16:11-35:

- How did God feed His people?
- Did the gift of manna stop the people from complaining and disobeying God?

Helper tells another story, as they drink tea in Learner's house. “In the same way, Jesus cares for those in need. Let me tell you How Jesus Offers His Flesh to Eat.”

Exercise

Find in John chapter 6:

- In verses 2-13, what did Jesus do for the sick and the hungry?
- In verses 14-27, what two things did the people want Jesus to do?
- In verses 17-21, how did Jesus show He was King over nature?
- In verses 28-40, who is the bread from heaven and how do we receive it?
- In verses 41-69, what do we do, to find the bread that gives us life forever?

Helper continues, “Jesus healed many sick people. When His listeners had no food, He fed them. The people wanted him to become king and always give them free food. Jesus could easily have done that. He is the true King over all. He rules even nature. He calmed storms and walked on the top of the water. Jesus knew that physical food would not change their hearts. They would still be far from God. Jesus wanted them to have food that satisfies forever. This food is Jesus, himself. In John 6 He told them that they had to eat His flesh, to have eternal life. This offended many that did not want to hear spiritual truth. God wants everyone to believe in Jesus and receive eternal life from Him. When we become a part of the church, the Body of Christ, He gives us this life.”

Mr. Foolish replies, “That's a nice story but it does not add food to my family's table. Goodbye!”

Deacons Show the Love of Christ

After Mr. Foolish leaves, Helper asks Learner, “How do I take care of the needy in our congregation and the newer congregations, without neglecting my work of leading and teaching the congregation?”

“You must fan into flame your spiritual gift of teaching, without neglecting those in need. The leaders of the church in Jerusalem faced this same problem. Many widows needed care but they were busy teaching the good news of Jesus. Let me tell you about The First Deacons.