



CPC First Fridays: *Christian Spirituality*

Lesson Two:
Loving Our Neighbor
Holistically

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Loving Our Neighbor Holistically

- The Apologetic Of Love
- The Case For Holistic Love
- The Recipients of Holistic Love
- The Priority Of Holistic Love
- The Strategy for Holistic Love
- Table Discussions
- Summary Conclusion



The Apologetic of Love

"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:34-35

The church is to be a loving church in a dying culture. How, then, is the dying culture going to consider us? Jesus says, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." In the midst of the world, in the midst of our present culture, Jesus is giving a right to the world. Upon His authority He gives the world the right to judge whether you and I are born-again Christians on the basis of our observable love toward all Christians

(Francis A. Schaeffer, The Mark of The Christian)



The Apologetic Of Love *Illustrated*

*Awe came upon everyone... All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together with one accord in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. **And day by day the Lord added to them those who were being saved.***

Acts 2:43-47



The Case For Holistic Love

The Example of Christ

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 proclaim good news to the poor.*

*He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”*

And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

Luke 4:17-2



The Case For Holistic Love *Illustrated*

*Awe came upon everyone... All who believed were together and **had all things in common**; they would sell **their possessions and goods** and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together with one accord in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And day by day the Lord added to them those who were being saved.*

Acts 2:43-47



The Recipients of Holistic Love?

(Corbett and Fikkert, When Helping Hurts)

Who are the poor?

How we define poverty will determine how we seek to help poverty. For instance:

- **A lack of knowledge – Educate the Poor**
- **Oppression by Powerful People – Work for Social Justice**
- **The Personal Sins of the Poor – Evangelize and Disciple the Poor**
- **A lack of Material Resources – Give Material Resources to the Poor**



The Recipients of Holistic Love?

(Corbett and Fikkert, When Helping Hurts)

Who are the poor?

The Triune God is inherently a relational being, existing as three-in-one from eternity. Being made in God's image, human beings are inherently relational as well. (c.f. Bryant Myers)

- **Relationship with God** – This is our primary relationship, the other three relationships flowing out of this one. The Westminster Shorter Catechism teaches that human beings' primary purpose is 'to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.' This is our calling, the ultimate reason for which we were created.
- **Relationship with Self** – People are uniquely created in the image of God and thus have inherent worth and dignity.
- **Relationship with Others** – God created us to live in loving relationship with one another. We are not islands!
- **Relationship with the Rest of Creation** – The 'cultural mandate' of Genesis 1:28-30 teaches that God created us to be stewards, people who understand, subdue, and manage the world that God has created in order to produce bounty.



The Recipients of Holistic Love?

(Corbett and Fikkert, When Helping Hurts)

Who are the poor?

Because the four relationships are the building blocks for all human activity, the effects of the fall are manifested in the economic, social, religious, and political systems that humans have created throughout history.

- **Poverty of Spiritual Intimacy** – denying God’s existence and authority; materialism; worshipping false gods and spirits
- **Poverty of Being** – god complexes; low self-esteem
- **Poverty of Community** – self centeredness; exploitation and abuse of others
- **Poverty of Stewardship** – loss of sense of purpose; laziness/workaholics; materialism; ground is cursed



The Recipients of Holistic Love?

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Who are the poor?

Relationships are the building blocks for all human activity, the effects of the fall are manifested in the economic, social, religious, and political systems that humans have created throughout history.

until we embrace our mutual brokenness, our work with low-income people is likely to do far more harm than good.



The Priority For Holistic Love

For thus said the LORD of hosts... regarding the nations that plundered you: Truly, one who touches you touches the apple of my eye.

Zech. 2:8

As Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her... nourishes and tenderly cares for her...

Eph. 5:25ff

So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Gal. 6:10



The Priority For Holistically Love

WCF 26.1 “Of the Communion of Saints”

All saints, that are united to Jesus Christ their Head, by His Spirit, and by faith, have fellowship with Him in His grace, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory: and, being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other's gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man.



The Priority For Holistic Love

WCF 26.2 “Of the Communion of Saints”

Saints by profession are bound to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification; as also in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities. Which communion, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended unto all those who, in every place, call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.



The Priority For Love *Illustrated*

*Awe came upon everyone... **All who believed were together** and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together with one accord in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And day by day the Lord added to them those who were being saved.*

Acts 2:43-47



Priority For Holistic Love *Clarified*

Heb. 13:1-2 *Let mutual love continue... 16 Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.*

- *Grk. “Philadelphia/os”*– “In the NT the terms have acquired highly specialized meanings which restrict the range of reference to fellow believers.” (Louw & Nida Lexicon)- Rom12:10, 1 Th 4:9, 1 P 1:7,

The various social relations envisioned:

- **Christian Strangers:** vs. 2 Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.
- **Oppressed/Persecuted :** vs. 3 Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured.



The Priority For Holistic *Witness* *and Evangelism*

- **Christ's Example:** Luke 4:17ff and John 20:21
“As the Father Has Sent Me, So I send you”
- **Second great command** (Mt 15:35ff Lev 19:18) and the question of “Neighbor”
- **The Story of the Good Samaritan**(Luke 10:25ff)
 - Jesus inserts the “Jew” as the needy- which invokes a counter intuitive reply– as to commend a “un-believer” as example to Jews
 - *Take home?*

And Jesus said to him, “You go, and do likewise.”



The Priority For Holistic Love: The Church Acting Jointly and Severally

The Church Acting Jointly: *The Case Of The Widow*

1 Tim 5:3ff (esp. 5, 10)

e.g. a Christian who is in so many words a member in good standing of the church.

The Church Acting Severally: *The Resident Alien*

1 Peter 2:11-12 (c.f. Jeremiah 29:7)



The Recipients of Holistic Love

Notes:

- **Vs. 3: "honor"** -financial overtones in the NT (1Cor.6:20, 7:23, 1Tim.5:17)
There was evidently even a "list" of those who were the rightful recipients (vs. 9) such as to reflect an organized ministry of mercy in the early church.
- **Vs. 3: "really widows"**-Paul is distinguishing "real" widows from "false" widows. Whoever is a "real" widow is then recognized as a proper recipient of the church's assistance (vs. 16)
E.g. must interpret this passage in view of ancient family-system economics, one could therefore treat "widow" as "destitute" (*The real widow, left alone*) as then qualified in the following ways:



The Recipients For Holistic Love

- A destitute person :
 - Beyond the age or ability to support oneself through work (vs. 9)
 - Without family resources (vs. 11-16) And by inference given the present wage-labor, vs. family-labor system of economics, someone who lacks sufficient financial support through their work related wages..
 - Willingness to offer themselves in whatever capacity they can in the service of God, including service within the church and\ without (vs. 10).
 - Throughout this passage, it is clear that the mercy fund of the church ought not to enable *idleness* (vs. 13)



The Strategy For Holistic Love

One of the biggest problems in many poverty-alleviation efforts is that their design and implementation exacerbates the poverty of being of the economically poor – their feelings of inferiority and shame. The way that we act toward the economically poor often communicates –albeit unintentionally – that we are superior and they are inferior. In the process we hurt the poor and ourselves. And here is the clincher: this dynamic is likely to be particularly strong when ever middle-to-upper-class, North American Christians try to help the poor, given these Christians’ tendency toward a Western, materialistic perspective of the nature of poverty.



The Strategy for Holistic Love

Christian's should be committed to empowerment focused versus enablement-focused ministry. We believe that at the heart of all true poverty (emotional, relational, temporal and spiritual) is an ethic of hopelessness. Poverty is not merely the lack of outward or inward resources (though it includes this), poverty is the lack of options which renders one HOPELESS and POWERLESS and in need of a hope informed ethic of life!

The target of empowerment-based ministry is described in terms of helping people out of their sense of "shame, inferiority, powerlessness, humiliation, fear, hopelessness, depression, social isolation, and voicelessness. (And it can be noted that these are words of "poverty" that know no socio-economic boundaries, even if they are expressed in different ways, albeit temporal, psychological, social and/or spiritual).



The Strategy For Holistic Love

In General

A Christian spirituality of holistic Love value empowerment-based helping vs. enablement based helping:

- Listen closely to those you seek to help from their perspective and biblically discern what is their outward and inward needs
- Never do for the needy what they can do for themselves
- Limit one-way giving to emergencies and quickly as possible transitioned into chronic focused empowerment;
- Involve the local community of the recipient, starting with the inner (most local) members along a concentric circle of localness (family, church, neighborhoods cities, state, etc
- Empower the poor through employment, lending, and investing, using grants sparingly to reinforce achievements;
- Subordinate self-interest to the needs of those being served;



The Strategy For Holistic Love

Three Steps In Helping

(Corbett and Fikkert, When Helping Hurts)

Not all Poverty is created equal. A helpful first step in thinking about working with the poor is any context whether the situation calls for relief, rehabilitation, or development. In fact, the failure to distinguish among these situations is one of the most common reasons that poverty-alleviation efforts often do harm.

Relief– The urgent and temporary provision of emergency aid to reduce immediate suffering from a natural or man-made crisis ('stop the bleeding,'). A provider-receiver dynamic in which the provider gives assistance to the receiver, who is largely incapable of helping himself at that time.



The Strategy For Holistic Love

Three Steps In Helping *Cont.*

Rehabilitation-- begins as soon as the bleeding stops; it seeks to restore people and their communities to the positive elements of their pre-crisis conditions. The key feature of rehabilitation is a dynamic of working with the tsunami victims as they participate in their own recovery, moving from point 2 to point 3.

Development--is a process of ongoing change that moves all the people involved – both the ‘helper’ and the ‘helped’ – closer to being in right relationship with God, self, others, and the rest of creation. In particular, as the materially poor develop, they are better able to fulfill their calling of glorifying God by working and supporting themselves and their purpose in life.



For Table Discussions:

- 1. What do you think are the major challenges to holistic love in/with/through the church?**
- 2. Why do you think it is important to biblically define and discern our own poverty before seeking to address the poverty that is in others?**
- 3. After reading the story about the witch doctor in Uganda, how would you answer Fikkert's question: "What did I do wrong?"**



For Table Discussions: # 3 Answered

The Poison of Paternalism:

(Corbett and Fikkert, When Helping Hurts)

One of the biggest mistakes that North American churches make – by far- is in applying relief in situations in which rehabilitation or development is the appropriate intervention.

Do not do things for people that they can do for themselves. Memorize this, recite it under your breath all day long, and wear it like a garland around your neck. Every time you are engaged in poverty-alleviation ministry, keep this at the forefront of your mind, for it can keep you from doing all sorts of harm.



For Table Discussions: # 3 Answered

The Poison of Paternalism Cont:

Paternalism comes in a variety of forms:

- Resource Paternalism
- Spiritual Paternalism
- Knowledge Paternalism
- Labor Paternalism
- Managerial Paternalism



For Table Discussions: # 3 Answered

The “ABCD’s” of Asset Based Community Development

- Identify and mobilize the capabilities, skills, and resources of the individual or community. See poor people and communities as full of possibilities, given to them by God.
- As much as possible, look for resources and solutions to come from within the individual or community, not from the outside.
- Seek to build and rebuild the relationships among local individuals, associations, churches, businesses, schools, government, etc. God intended for the various individuals and institutions in communities to be interconnected and complementary.
- Only bring in outside resources when local resources are insufficient to solve pressing needs. Be careful about bringing in resources that are too much or too early. Do this in a manner that does not undermine local capacity or initiative.



Summary Conclusion:

Paul nowhere sets forth a systematic presentation of "Christian ethics." Instead, he responds ad hoc to the contingent pastoral problems that arise in his churches... he is seeking to shape the life of a particular community in accordance with his vision; his exhortations are aimed at defining and maintaining a corporate identity for his young churches, which are emphatically countercultural communities.

Indeed, the focus on community is a part of the gospel itself. How so? If we ask, "What is God doing in the world in the interval between resurrection and *parousia*?" The answer must be given, for Paul, primarily in ecclesial terms: God is at work through the Spirit to create communities that prefigure and embody the reconciliation and healing of the world.



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