

# Jesus with the Poor

## Day 1: Jesus' "First Impression"

Why do people say that 1st impressions are important?

### **Read Luke 4:14-29**

This was very early in Jesus' ministry. Usually, 1st impressions are very significant. Jesus began his public ministry with a quote from Isaiah. It reads like a personal MISSION STATEMENT.

- Why do you think that Jesus chose this scripture to announce his ministry?
  
- What does the ministry of Jesus have to do with helping the poor?
  
- Think of the ways that Jesus fulfilled these areas during his ministry. Was he successful in doing what he set out to do?

Write down three examples that you can remember where Jesus helped the poor.

The gospels of Jesus depict him repeatedly reaching out to those at the bottom of the socio-economic pyramid of his time -- the poor, women, Samaritans, lepers, children, prostitutes and tax collectors. Society looked down on these people and Jesus would find a way to lift them up, defend them, and give them back their dignity. The poor needed a defender then and it is the same today.

### **Read Psalm 72:12-13**

**Challenge:** Choose a scripture that you think is a good "mission statement"

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## Day 2: Honoring the Poor

### Read Mark 12:38-44

Here, Jesus challenges the wealth of the religious by honoring and defending the sacrifice of a poor widow.

- ❑ If you were a religious leader how would you feel about what Jesus said in vs. 38-40?
- ❑ What are some examples of religious greed that we need to watch out for in our lives?
- ❑ Why do you think Jesus contrasts the rich religious to the poor widow?
- ❑ What impressed Jesus about her giving?
- ❑ What is the lesson for you?

There is a gold mine of spiritual applications that we can take from this scripture. It is especially worth noting what Jesus highlights the poor widow before everyone. In fact, for all time! Not only was she poor, she was a widowed women, and one who could have easily fallen through the cracks of society, yet who was there to recognize her? Jesus. The religious were more focused on getting ahead and advancing in their social ranks. We can also get caught up in this type of worldliness in our own lives and lose perspective on the poor of this world.

- ❑ Why do we need to guard our attitudes toward the poor?
- ❑ Jesus took time to recognize, honor and serve the poor, yet he was extremely busy in trying to save the world and train his disciples. What does this say about our challenges and our busy lives?
- ❑ Why is it easy to leave the poor off our priority list?

"He raises the **poor** from the dust, He lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with nobles, and inherit a seat of honor; For the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, And He set the world on them."

- 1 Samuel 2: 8

**CHALLENGE:** Write a personal MISSION STATEMENT. Jesus took the poor and put them right in the middle of everything he was doing. Challenge yourself to look at your life and recommit to serving the poor.

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## Day 3: A Strong Voice, A Humble Heart

What are the best seats that you could have? Would you like to go to the Super Bowl? A rock concert front row? A royal wedding? What would be the best seats for you? Jesus goes to a pharisees house and in the midst of their politics of “best seat”, teaches them a very powerful lesson about the heart of God and how our hearts need to be with the poor.

### **Read Luke 14:1-14 - A Strong Voice**

- ❑ How often are the Pharisees silent when it comes to serving or helping others?
- ❑ What does their silence mean?

When it comes to the poor we can never have too many voices.

### **Read Ps. 82:3 & Pr. 31:9**

The poor need to have someone speak on their behalf. Jesus was that for many of the people in scripture and is a great example of how we can be that same voice for the poor today. There is much that can be done in regards to helping the poor in our own community. We have to make sure that we are not silent just as the Pharisees were.

Being good is commendable, but only when it is combined with doing good is it useful.  
~Author Unknown

### **Read Luke 14:7-11- A Humble Heart**

Jesus speaks about humility in vs. 7-11 and the importance of humbling one's self. Truth be told some of the most humbling situations can be found while serving the poor. There is a great connection to serving with the poor and humility.

- ❑ Why do you think humility plays such a huge role in our ability to serve and become great champions for the poor?
- ❑ Think of a time when you were able to experience helping someone much less fortunate than you. Why do you think moments like that help us to be more grateful?
- ❑ What is Jesus trying to teach us about Kingdom values vs. worldly values when it comes to honor and exaltation?

**Challenge:** Phil. 2:7 speaks of how Jesus humbled himself and took the very nature of a servant. Think of ways that you can humble yourself and serve this week just like Jesus.

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## Day 4: Pure Religion

### **Read Luke 14:12-14 - Generosity**

Jesus calls us to serve those who cannot repay us back, knowing that we will reap treasures in heaven and be rewarded at the resurrection. Many times we want to give knowing that we will get something out of it.

- ❑ If you threw a party for those described by Jesus who would you invite?
- ❑ How would you go about having a party for them?

With a voice, humility and generosity there is no telling the ways that God will be able to move through the world using us as his agents of change. Strive today to grow in these virtues

### **Read James 1:26-27**

- ❑ Why is giving to widows and orphans considered “pure religion”?
- ❑ How can you practice “pure religion”?

**CHALLENGE:** Find some way to serve those who will never be able to repay you. Ask God to reveal to you the special way that you can make a difference in somebody's life without expecting anything in return. Do not wait even for a “thank you”.

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## Day 5: Becoming Poor

### **Read 2 Cor. 8:9**

- What does it mean by he became “poor”?

### **Read Luke 18:18-25**

- What did the rich young man really want?
- Why did Jesus ask him to sell everything and give it to the poor?
- What wrong was there in him having so much?
- Why is it so hard for the Rich to enter the Kingdom of God?
- Are you rich? (By a global standard) If so, Jesus says that it will be hard for you to enter the Kingdom of God. How can you make sure that you enter?

### **Read Luke 18:26-29**

- Some felt like it was impossible to be saved under that criteria, do you?
- How does God make it possible for us who are rich to be saved?
- Peter said “We have left everything.” What kind of things need to be left behind?
- Is there anything you need to leave behind?

### **Read Proverbs 19:17**

- What does God’s reward for you look like?

**Challenge:** Give up something this week for the poor. Use the money or time that would be spent on this to help the poor in some way.

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## Day 6: When He Returns...

**Read Mt. 25:31-46**

- ❑ What is meant by “when the son of man comes”?
- ❑ Who are the sheep and who are the goats?
- ❑ So then what is the Topic of this paragraph?
- ❑ When did they see Jesus hungry, naked or thirsty?
- ❑ Does Jesus take it personal?
- ❑ Does this mean that all those who do not help the poor are going to hell?

Sometimes Jesus said things that are not what is necessary for salvation but rather what identifies the saved. In other words this is not part of a check list of things “to do” in order to be saved, but it is something that the saved definitely do. It’s important to recognize that even people who are lost sometimes do good things to help the poor. To our shame sometimes they even do more! Helping the poor is a part of many religions. Muslims believe it to be one of the five pillars of faith. Buddhist believe compassion to be a central tenant of the Buddha. But God has taught and Jesus has demonstrated that helping the poor is something that is a hallmark of his people, the saved. Actually they usually do it better than anyone because of the Love, faith and unity in their efforts. Most of all it is great because they do it in the name of God.

**Challenge:** Go do something for the poor today and do not tell anyone. Remember that it is Christ you are serving.

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## Day 7: Christ in the Early Church

The book of Acts gives us an amazing snapshot of the early church under the Apostles leadership as they strove to imitate Christ

### **Read Acts 4:32-35**

- ❑ What stands out about the early church?
- ❑ What is the difference between their faith and love and ours?
- ❑ What needs or needy persons exist in your small group? your sector or region?
- ❑ What needs to change in order for us to have the same conviction and practice in our ministry?
- ❑ What changes do you need to make in order to be part of the solution?

### **Read 1 John 3:17-18**

**Challenge:** Host a Christian Swap Meet with your small group or ministry.

### **What's a Christian Swap Meet?**

*A "swap meet" is where people bring their extra items that are in good shape and sell them to other people in their community- like a flea market or garage sale. A "Christian swap meet" is where disciples bring their extra stuff that others may need and give it to each other for free. This can be especially helpful with children's clothes, sports equipment, small appliances, furniture, etc. and can be very beneficial to single moms, young couples just starting and families with many children.*