

“Good News in our community, 4”

Notes for care groups to go with the talk by Stephen on Sunday 23rd January 2011

As usual, lots of questions here you could use... chose what you feel is appropriate.

You may find it useful to have flipchart paper and pens available. Let me know if you need some.

Having thought last time about what we have to offer – what resources, skills, knowledge, gifts and talents we have in our church and in the wider community - we're going to think a bit more specifically about some of the problems we come across around here. We're going to consider: What is poverty in Old Town? What does it look like? What are the symptoms and the causes of poverty in Old Town?

If people were not there on Sunday, introduce the problem tree, how it works.

Some of the core problems suggested to start people off are below. Ask the group to choose which they think is the most significant problem, or one they know most about, or come up with another one. Draw a problem tree together. Write down some of the symptoms or effects (the branches) by asking '*so what...?*' and working upwards. But prioritise your time by focusing on the roots of the problem. Keep asking '*but why...?*' as you go down.

Isolated elderly	Fear
Local businesses in trouble	Drugs
Bereavement	Ill health
Broken personal relationships	Domestic violence
Unemployment	Vandalism
Depression	Homelessness
Lack of safety	Something else...?

Read together Luke 8: 40-56

Recap some of the ways people suggested on Sunday that the woman was isolated in her own community. Are there other ways?

Who would you say are isolated or marginalised in our community? Can you give examples?

Jesus was on his way to Jairus' daughter but made space for this woman in her desperate need. In fact, while he was talking with the woman Jairus' daughter died! **Do we make space for others when preoccupied with other concerns?** Ask people to think about this question for themselves for a moment and to share their thoughts if they want to.

Jesus was surrounded by need and opportunities that day, and chose to heal this woman. **How do we prioritise the needs we see and encounter?**

Think about the problems you've identified using the problem tree. Jesus could see the woman's deepest need was peace and wholeness. **What are the deepest needs of people in our community that you have identified on the problem tree?**

Which of the roots could we address as a church and community? Think about the gifts and skills and resources we have – the loaves and fish – what could we do with God's help?

The woman in the story took the initiative in desperation and in faith, and Jesus responded. **In what ways can we help the people in our community take the initiative to change their situations?**

Jairus was an important person in his community, whereas the woman was considered unclean and was therefore isolated. As a result of this they had very different ways of approaching Jesus. Jairus was not afraid to ask, the woman was.

To really understand the deepest needs of our community we may need to dig deep. The most marginalised people will not necessarily come forward for help.

When we look at all the need around us it can be overwhelming and we could feel a sense of guilt at what we are *not* doing. Jesus healed the woman, but he didn't heal everyone. Whatever we choose to do for others is important, it is closing the gap, it is Christlike.

Do we agree that the church's mission is about bringing transformation in our community? That means spiritual change and physical and social change.

What small acts of kindness could you do more of as you go about your week?

(visiting someone lonely, befriending a vulnerable family, picking up litter, providing a lift for someone, teaching and sharing skills, cooking meals for people....). These are small things, and people will often not ask for help. But if we look out for opportunities, as we build relationships, we find that people's attitudes towards themselves change as well as their attitude to others. That slowly builds community. It addresses some of the root causes of poverty – fear, loneliness, lack of self worth...

Give people an opportunity to share stories of when someone has been kind to them and how that has affected their relationships. Or when they've done something for someone else...

Matt 5:13-16

¹³You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.

¹⁴You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

We are called to be salt and light and a city on a hill. This means we're called to live and interact in such a way as to model and radiate something good in our communities, poured out in service to others in order to affect the flavour of the world around us. Jesus calls us to reflect his light in this world – to give hope to those without hope.

Pray that this will be so.

Toolkit 0 p13 river code and mime – participation / dependence

Doing things with people, not for people. Helping them to do things themselves.

Use attitudes cartoons and role plays later in the series when talking about data collection

Toolkit 4 p24/25 Landmark images – vision, overcoming barriers

Guide p67 Tutu quote

Toolkit 0 p26-27 Exodus passages

Responses p48-49