

Being family in Christ's Church

Week 6: Pastoral Care

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing and sharing together.

We hear so many 'bad news' stories in the news but what 'good news' stories have you heard or seen this week that has encouraged you?

And why were you encouraged?

WORSHIP

Read Psalm 121

Take a few moments of silence to pick out verses that you have been drawn to. The leader can then encourage people to read their verse as an act of worship and perhaps elaborate on why they were drawn to this verse.

Alternatively (or in addition) sing a praise hymn/song.

WORD

1. Reflecting back on Psalm 121, in what ways does God use people / us to help other people in need?
2. What does the term 'pastoral care' conjure up in our minds? What does it mean?

Read Romans 12: 9 - 21

3. How does this short passage summarise what 'pastoral care' is without actually using those two words?
4. What does the phrase 'to love our neighbour as ourselves' mean?

A story of 'pastoral care' in practice was told by Jesus when an expert of the law was seeking to confirm he followed the law, only to have demonstrated to him that there are no limits to the love that God intends for us to show to our neighbours.



5. Read Luke 10: 25 – 37
6. How was the man going to Jericho viewed by the robbers?
7. What may have caused the priest and the Levite to walk by on the other side of the other road, rather than stop and help the injured man?

If we picture the scene, an obvious question anyone may ask is 'what am I letting myself in for if I stop and help him? He was naked, injured, likely no wallet and no identification. Who is this man? Or what if it had been a naked and injured woman?

8. Why did the Samaritan stop?
9. Imagine you were 'a fly on the wall' following the Samaritan, describe everything you saw the Samaritan do for the man
10. What do you notice about his attitude to taking responsibility?
11. What can we learn about financially 'giving' to the needs of others from this passage?

The Samaritan did not let 'what if...' thoughts prevent him from caring. He bandaged the man's wounds and put the man – probably still naked – on to his donkey. Then he cared for him at the Inn. If he had had plans for the day, he clearly changed them and stayed with the man overnight to look after him. Then he paid the Inn keeper and committed to returning and paying whatever the Inn keeper was out-of-pocket for.

12. What can we learn from Luke's story about what 'pastoral care' is in practice?
13. What stops us from replicating the behaviour of the Samaritan in today's world?
14. In what ways can we put the principles of the story told in Luke's gospel into practice?

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Paul talks about the importance of being faithful in prayer. We can pray for people in a number of ways

14. What opportunities are there at church to pray with other people?
15. In what ways do we feel hindered from praying with others, for others?
16. What would you say the relative importance of each of the following is when it comes to 'pastoral care': 1) Prayer 2) Listening 3) Doing
17. In what ways can we put the principles of Romans 12; 9 – 21

Our ability to love our neighbour is dependent on our reliance on the Lord himself. Without His Holy Spirit in our lives, we will struggle to love others as God intends. But how much do we rely on God himself to love us? Do we realise our 'worth' in his eyes?

To finish you may want to read Psalm 23 and allow the group to highlight whether a particular verse 'stood out' and if so, why.

SUMMARY

We may not have naked and beaten up men and women in our streets. But there are people who are living in poverty in Alsager. or who are addicted to drugs, with no hope. Prayer is a good start but how could we practically respond?

If we go to London or any of the larger cities, we will see beggars, some of whom sleep in cardboard tents under brick arches and are wearing the same clothes as they were 3 months ago. Prayer is a good start but how could we practically respond?

There will also be people who come to the church who are in need, who need a friend, who need a listening ear, who need to know someone cares. Prayer is a good start but how could we practically respond?

WHAT NEXT?

Take some time (either in silence or with some appropriate music playing) to allow people to prayerfully reflect on Romans 12: 9 – 21

Encourage each member to think of just one or two ways they can realistically and practically commit to taking a risk to support 'their neighbour' (using Jesus' broad definition of 'neighbour')

If your group would like to be accountable to each other, you could share and pray for each other (honouring confidentiality). But don't forget to encourage one another either with what you have stepped out in faith to try and do. Encouragement builds confidence; confidence builds greater faith.

Pray for other needs as necessary including follow-up from previous weeks.

You could consider meeting for lunch or evening meal at one of your houses and invite spouses along. The catering burden can be shared by 'bringing and sharing'.