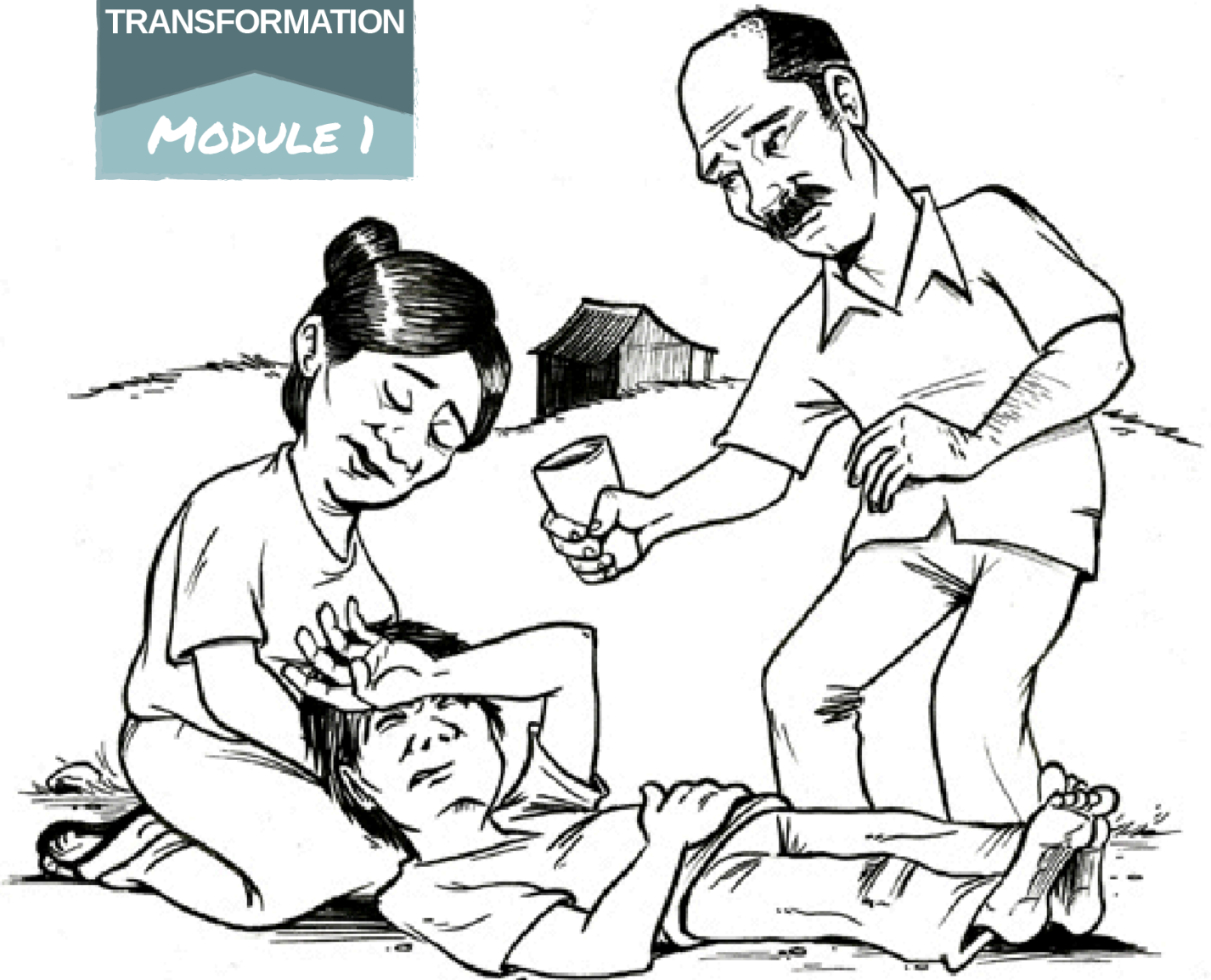


**TRUTH
CENTERED
TRANSFORMATION**

MODULE 1



INTRODUCTION TO WHOLISTIC MINISTRY SERMON MATERIALS

How To Use The Simplified Lessons To Prepare Sermons

The simplified lessons are NOT intended to just be read. In order to use them well as a sermon, you must prepare. To prepare well, we'll go through 3 steps:

1) PRAY

- Ask God to help you as you prepare this sermon. Ask Him to show you how this lesson applies to your church, and how to teach it well. Continue to pray and listen as you personalise the outline.

2) PERSONALISE THE OUTLINE

Main Idea: The main idea is what the lesson is all about. If there is only ONE thing people remember from your sermon, this should be it. All the other things you say should support this main idea.

- Read the main idea first to understand what the lesson is all about. You will want to remind the listeners of the main idea at the end of the sermon.
- As you personalise the outline make sure that you are strengthening the main idea, not distracting from it. While there is a lot that we could say about any topic, we want to make sure that our audience stays focused on the main idea.

Introduction: The introduction is to get people interested in the main idea; to help them want to learn about it.

- Think about how the introduction helps people to start thinking about the topic.
- Is there another story or introduction that will work better for your congregation?

Key Ideas: The key ideas are a breakdown of the main idea. They show why the main idea is true and important. The scriptures and subpoints under each key idea are to help people understand the key idea. When you are sharing stories, or reading scriptures and commenting on them, make sure that you have the key idea in mind and that what you say points back to the key idea. Make sure you understand each key idea.

- Look up the scriptures. Take time to make sure you understand them and the context as much as possible. Read the verses around each scripture, considering what the author was trying to communicate in the whole passage.
 - Why is it so important that we are teaching from the scriptures? *(It's God's word. We are teaching the word of God, not just people's ideas.)*

- Think about the sub points - Besides the sub points given, what else can you draw from those scriptures that might help the listeners understand the key idea better?
- Think back to when you learnt the lesson. Was there anything else in the lesson or that stood out to you that might be helpful to talk about? If you took notes, look back at them.
- If the stated key idea doesn't seem clear to you, feel free to rephrase it.
- Ask God to help you think of examples from your community, your own life or from your church that can help illustrate a point.

Conclusion and application: The conclusion and application section is very important as well - don't skip it!

- The conclusion helps summarise the key ideas and reminds the congregation what the main point of the sermon is.
- The application helps them put the sermon into action - decide what steps they should take to obey God. Remember the story of the man with two sons from Lesson 9 - If people do not apply what they learn, they are not really obeying God. They will not mature, and their lives will not change.
- Ask God how you should invite people to apply the sermon. Think about how people should respond. Prepare to give some examples of how individuals or the whole congregation can apply the teaching.

3) PRACTICE

- Repeat the key ideas of the sermon several times out loud, until you can remember them.
- Think about which points are so important that you will want to slow down or repeat them.
- Read through the sermon outline out loud, including anything God has prompted you to add.
- Practice giving the sermon.
 - Look up as much as possible, don't just read the page.
 - Try to only read from the outline when you are reading a story or Bible verses.
 - Use the outline for memory cues.
- You may want to practise a few times.

Before you preach, pray again that God will give you the words He wants you to say, and that people's hearts will be ready to receive whatever God has for them.

Lesson 1: The Whole Story

Main Idea: God's plan is not just to see souls saved but also to see the restoration of the three relationships that were broken in the fall—our relationships with God, with each other, and with the rest of creation.

Introduction

We usually say that Jesus came to save us from our sins. This is true, but He came to do so much more than that. His death on the cross is only one part of the whole story. To understand the whole message of the Bible, we need to understand the different stages of the biblical story from beginning to end: Creation, The Fall, The Mission, The Cross, and The Return of Jesus Christ.

The Whole Story - Key Ideas

Creation

- Genesis 1:31 - *'God saw all that He had made, and it was very good'*.
- Three relationships that were perfect.
 - People (Adam) and God – Adam is 'very good'
 - People with each other (Adam and Eve) – no arguing, no shame
 - People (Adam) and creation – no lack of food

The Fall

- Genesis 3 - the Fall
- Three relationships broken by sin, resulting in both moral and physical evil.
 - People and God – fear and hiding from God
 - People with each other – arguing and accusing
 - People and creation – Genesis 3:17 - God tells Adam, *'Cursed is the ground because of you'*. (famine, floods, earthquake, and drought)

The Mission

- The rest of the Old Testament - God seeks His people, desiring to restore relationships.
- ABRAHAM - God blesses Abraham and promises to bless all the nations through Abraham's family.
- MOSES - book of Exodus. Through him, God gave the Law
 - Law gives God's intentions for every area of life.
 - Laws talk about all three relationships (even specific laws about personal health and healing creation).

- 2 Chronicles 7:14 - *'If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land'.* ('My people' now means Christians)

The Cross

- John 3:16 - *'For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life'.*
 - Contrasts with other religions, where people have to sacrifice to please the gods.
- Colossians 1:20 - *God's full plan was 'through Jesus, to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross'.*
 - Jesus died to forgive sins so that *all three relationships* can begin healing.
- Matthew 28:18-20 - Jesus gave His church the job to *'make disciples of all nations'*, working to restore the three relationships.

The Return

- Revelation 21:1-7 - Someday, Jesus will come back and completely renew everything, all of heaven and all of earth. *'There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away'.* All three relationships will be healed forever.

Conclusion and Application

- This is the whole wonderful story: God created a perfect world. Sin entered that world and broke our relationships with God, each other, and creation. God gave the law so we would understand how to restore the relationships, but people do not obey the law. God loves us so much that He sent His Son to restore the three relationships that were broken by sin in the fall. And one day Jesus will come again and make all things new.
- God loves you. You may have a relationship with Him and good relationships with each other and with creation.
- Jesus died on the cross to restore all three relationships, not just our relationship with Him. If you are a Christian, think about these three relationships and see if there is something you can do to improve any of them. Ask the Lord to help you do it.
- If not yet a child of God, you can give your life to Jesus today, and your life will never be the same. Jesus loves you!

Lesson 2: Humans Are Important to God

Main Idea: All people are made in the image of God and are valuable to Him. We need to treat every person, even those who are commonly mistreated, as God’s precious creation.

Review of Lesson 1

- The whole story of the Bible: Creation, The Fall, God’s Mission, The Cross, and Return of King Jesus.
- God’s plan is not just to see lives saved but also to see the restoration of relationships that were broken in the fall—our relationships with God, each other, and creation.

Introduction

In one of the countries where TCT is being done, there were several prostitutes living near a number of the churches taking the course. The prostitutes were girls who were living on the street because they got pregnant before they were married, and so their families chased them away from home. Some people in the churches suggested that they could invite the prostitutes to live in their church buildings and teach them to sew. Other people had concerns. Should the churches choose to help people like prostitutes, drunkards, or gang leaders? Let’s look at what the Bible says.

Key Ideas

Each person is carefully created in their mother’s womb by God.

Psalm 139:13-16

*For You created my inmost being;
You knit me together in my mother’s womb.
I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Your works are wonderful, I know that full well.
My frame was not hidden from You
when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in Your book
before one of them came to be.*

- God knits every child individually in the womb and therefore every human being is God’s creation, valuable to Him.
- God designed us. We are carefully made, and He has a plan for our lives. We did not just happen by chance, but God made each person.

All humans are important and valuable because we are all created in the image of God.

Genesis 1:26-27

God said, 'Let Us make mankind in Our image, in Our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground'. So God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them.

- God created human beings different from the rest of creation. Humans are created in God's image and likeness. God provided for them and gave them the job of ruling over the earth.
- What does it mean to be made in the image of God? It means humans have many characteristics like God's. We understand things like love, faithfulness, and justice. Animals can't understand these things; only people can.

God loves all people so much that He sent His Son to die for us.

John 3:16

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

- God showed how much He loves humans by sending His Son to die for us, even though we were still sinners at that time.
- If God loves each person that much, we must honour and value every human also.

Story Illustration: The Early Church

Christians in the early Church knew that people are important. Jesus' sacrifice proved that every person—whether sick or healthy, male or female, poor or wealthy—is valuable to God. This understanding of God's great love for all people led the early church to act differently than other people. At that time, if a baby was born with deformities, or if it was a girl, it was often left out on the street to die. The Christians would rescue these babies from the streets and raise them as if they were their own.

The early church also believed that since Jesus demonstrated His love by sacrificing His life on the cross, it was their duty to sacrificially serve others as well. During that time an epidemic broke out that was very contagious. Because the Romans feared getting the illness they left people to die as soon as they saw a person had the disease. The Christians, however, were different. They went to those who were sick and nursed them, even people who were not Christians. They believed in sacrificial service and mercy. Many Christians did die, but as others witnessed their love, many more people gave their lives to Christ. The church grew rapidly.

Conclusion and Application

- Did the churches reach out to prostitutes? Yes.

- God thinks every person is very important. He made humans in His own image. He creates each person and values them so much that He sent Jesus to die for them.
- You are valuable to God. Every person in your community is valuable to God. We need to treat everyone, even those who are commonly mistreated, as if they are God's precious creation.
- Take time to think about some people who are often neglected in our community. What can we do to treat them more like God's precious creation?
 - (For the pastor) Here are some ideas of how churches can do this:
 - Provide clothes to the elderly.
 - Teach widows how to plant vegetables around their homes in tins.
 - Have special seats in church for people with disabilities.

Lesson 3: Love God & Love Our Neighbour

Main Idea: God has called us to love our neighbour as a way to show our love to Him. We can show love to our neighbours by meeting their needs.

Review of Lessons 1 and 2

- Jesus Christ died on the cross not only to save our lives but also to restore our three broken relationships: with God, with each other, and with creation.
- All people are created in the image of God and are valuable in the sight of God. We need to treat each human being with respect, knowing that they are precious in the sight of God.

Introduction

Imagine that you have been lying in bed for days with a fever. You feel terrible. You are thirsty, sweaty, shivering, and weak. Suddenly, someone comes in your door and says, 'God has a wonderful plan for your life! Read this tract, say the sinner's prayer, and your soul will be saved, and all your problems will be gone'. Then, the person walks out your door. How do you feel? (pause) Confused? Angry? Of course! This person doesn't seem to care about you, how you feel, and what you need. Now I have another question for you. Do you think Jesus would ever have done that?

Of course not! In the Bible, we see over and over again that Jesus showed concern for people's physical needs as well as their spiritual needs. He fed people. He healed people. He hugged children. Let's think about this.

Key Ideas

The Great Commandment

- Jesus was asked which is the greatest commandment. His answer? (Matthew 22:37-40).
'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind'. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself'. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.
- Paul wrote in Galatians 5:14
*The entire law is fulfilled in keeping this **one** command: 'Love your neighbour as yourself'.*
- Why this single command? Loving God IS the greatest commandment, but the way we show that we love God is through loving our neighbours.

Loving means action

- To love means action, not just in words or feelings. To love means to serve, to seek to meet needs. It's easy to say we love God but not show any concern about our neighbours' needs.
- 1 John 3:17
If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?
- James 1:27
Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.
- If we have material possessions but we do not pay attention to the needy people around us, there is no love of God in us. According to James, a pure religion is taking care of the orphans and widows. It is not possible to show God's love without helping people with their needs.

Our neighbour is anyone in need, even our enemy

- Let's review. The whole law is summed up in one command: to love our neighbours as much as we love ourselves. This shows that we love God. Loving our neighbours means wanting what's good for them and helping them with their needs. Who is it that we are supposed to help?

Luke 10:25-37

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher', he asked, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' 'What is written in the Law?' Jesus replied. 'How do you read it?' The man answered, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself'. 'You have answered correctly', Jesus replied. 'Do this and you will live'. But the man wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?'

In reply Jesus said: 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two [coins] and gave them to the innkeeper. "Look after him," he said, "and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have." Which of these

three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?’ The expert in the law replied, ‘The one who had mercy on him’. Jesus told him, ‘Go and do likewise’.

- This is amazing because Samaritans and Jews are enemies. The priest and the Levite are also Jews, but did not offer any help. The person who offered practical help was the hurt man’s enemy. He saved this wounded person's life.
- Our neighbour is anyone who is in need, even our enemy.

Conclusion and Application

- God calls us to love our neighbours as a way to show our love to Him. Let's look for practical ways to meet our neighbours’ needs.
- One Christian brother helped his neighbour by bringing him to the hospital. Another person supported education materials for three children whose parents do daily labour but did not have any income due to lockdown.
- Let’s ask God to show us who our neighbour is and what needs they have. Let’s pray right now.

Lesson 4: Growing in All Areas

Main Idea: Jesus grew in four areas—mental, physical, spiritual, and social. We also need to grow in these four areas and we can help our community, church, and family to also grow in the same ways.

Review of Lesson 3

- The great command, according to the verses in the previous lesson, is to love God and love your neighbour. The law and prophets are summarised by only one command, which is to love your neighbour. God calls us to love our neighbour as a way to show our love for Him. We can do this by meeting the needs of our neighbours and helping them become the people God wants them to be.

Introduction

What do children need in order to grow? A child needs good food and clean water. He or she needs a clean environment, good body care, and a loving family living in harmony. It is difficult for a child to grow up healthy if they have an unbalanced diet or an unstable family.

Key Ideas

Jesus' growth

Luke 2:52

And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

- Our Lord grew in four areas.
 - wisdom (mentally)
 - stature (physically)
 - in favour with God (spiritually)
 - in favour with man (socially)

Our growth

- Jesus is our model in everything. His growth helps us think about the way people need to develop.
- You don't have to be rich or have a privileged life to grow in these four areas and be used by God.
 - Jesus came from a poor family. When Jesus was born, His parents brought to God the offering of poor people (Luke 2:22-24, Leviticus 12:8).
 - Being poor did not prevent Jesus from growing in all areas. He had enough food to eat; His father had a job as a carpenter; He learned to read and write; Jesus had a loving family. Even though He was poor, Jesus finished all the work that God gave Him (John 17:4).

- How can we grow like Jesus did?
 - Mentally: Keep learning about different things, as we are doing right now by learning about God's will in all areas of our lives.
 - Physically: Keep ourselves fit (exercise, eat healthy food, take care of our body, and keep our environment clean).
 - Spiritually: Keep a good relationship with God our Father, regularly spending time in prayer and being obedient to His word. Memorise scripture.
 - Socially: Spend time with family, friends, and neighbours to help relationships stay strong.
- All areas are important to God. Just like a table is stable when its four legs are strong and even, a Christian's life must be balanced in these four areas.

Helping our neighbours grow

- Not only do we need to grow in these four areas ourselves, we need to help others to grow as well. Growth is gradual. It takes time. In order to help our neighbours to grow like Jesus grew, we have to be willing to invest many hours over many years.
- Here are examples of things you could do. This doesn't need to be overwhelming; let's start small. Choose ONE idea you aren't already doing and that you can start doing this week. Some ideas overlap areas, and that is OK. Everything we do is important to God, and He wants us to grow in all areas.
 - Ways to help your family to grow in these four areas: Support your children in their schooling. Wash dishes after a family meal. Lead your family in a daily devotion and memorise scripture together. Go for a walk with your spouse without the children around.
 - Ways to help your church. Lead a Monday discussion on applying Sunday's sermon. Repair the church roof or clean the toilet. Pray each day for the pastor and elders of the church. Invite different church members to your home for coffee.
 - Ways to help your community grow. Discuss how to solve community problems with a community leader. Walk around the neighbourhood and pick up trash. Invite neighbours to a Christmas celebration at your home. Play soccer with neighbourhood kids.

Conclusion and Application

- Let's take a minute of silence to ask God which one of these things we could do this week. (Pause for a minute.)
- Turn to the person next to you and share with each other what the Lord is putting on your heart, and then pray together. Ask the Holy Spirit to help your prayer partner do this one thing this week. Next week you can think of something else to try.

Lesson 5A: God Wants the Church to Help

Main Idea: The church is called to love their community through actions, especially by addressing the needs of the vulnerable.

Review of Lessons 1 through 4

- God cares about all areas of life.
- Jesus died on the cross to reconcile all things to Himself. This includes our relationships with Him, with each other, and with all of creation.
- We show that we love God by loving our neighbour, and love means action, not just words or feelings.
- We need to grow in all areas of life like Jesus did and help others to do the same.

Introduction

What is the main job of the church? Many people may think that the job of the church is to hold worship services and to encourage its members to pray and evangelise. Should the church focus only on spiritual matters? Today we are going to read two passages of scripture that talk about what God expects from His people.

Key Ideas

True Fasting (Isaiah 58:1-7)

- Isaiah was a prophet in Israel. God sent Isaiah to proclaim His message to the people of Israel, His chosen people. Let's hear what he said.
*(vs. 1-3a) Shout it aloud, do not hold back. Raise your voice like a trumpet. Declare to My people their rebellion and to the descendants of Jacob their sins. For day after day they seek Me out; they seem eager to know My ways, as if they were a nation that does what is right and has not forsaken the commands of its God.
They ask Me for just decisions and seem eager for God to come near them. 'Why have we fasted', they say, 'and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?'*
- They were offering sacrifices. They were fasting and praying. But God didn't pay attention to their actions. He rejected their offerings. Why?
*(vs. 3b-5) Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers.
Your fasting ends in quarrelling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists.
You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high. Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for people to humble themselves?*

Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed and for lying in sackcloth and ashes?

Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord?

- God tells Isaiah that His people are rebellious and sinful, because even though they were doing some things that made them seem spiritual, they didn't live in the ways God wanted. They oppressed their workers. They ignored the poor. They fought with each other. This is the reason why God rejected them. What DID God want His people to do?

(vs. 6-7) Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:

*to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke,
to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?*

*Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer
with shelter—*

*when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own
flesh and blood?*

- Today, the church is also God's chosen people, just like Israel was. This is what God wants from His church: not shows of spirituality, but giving help to those who are in trouble. This is true worship.

Sheep and Goats (Matthew 25:31-46)

- Sheep and goats are both similar animals, but a shepherd can easily tell them apart. Just like this, Jesus can tell people apart. He knows which people belong to Him.

(vs.31-40) When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on His right and the goats on His left.

Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited Me in, I needed clothes and you clothed Me, I was sick and you looked after Me, I was in prison and you came to visit Me'.

Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You something to drink? When did we see You a stranger and invite You in, or needing clothes and clothe You? When did we see You sick or in prison and go to visit You?'

The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of Mine, you did for Me'.

- The sheep (the righteous people) do physical things—provide food, drink, clothes, shelter; visit the sick and prisoners. The sheep's actions are almost identical to the

things that God called His people to do in Isaiah 58:1-7. What God requires of His people in the Old Testament is the same in the New Testament. But what about the goats?

(vs.41-46) Then He will say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave Me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite Me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe Me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after Me'.

They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help You?'

He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for Me'.

Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.

- The difference between sheep and goats is that sheep help and goats don't. Jesus says that He will send the 'goats' away into darkness, because they did none of the things that the sheep did. They do not belong to Him.
- God wants His people—the Israelites then and His church now—to reflect His character, to love their community through actions, especially by addressing the needs of vulnerable people. If we don't, we are like the goats, we do not truly belong to Him.
- Our physical actions have a physical AND a spiritual impact. They are a reflection of what is in our hearts.

Conclusion and Application

- God wants the church to help. The church is called to love their community through actions, especially by addressing the needs of vulnerable people. We cannot leave this responsibility to the government or another organisation. Jesus is the shepherd, but are we truly His sheep, or are we goats?
- Lead the church in a prayer of repentance (based on Psalm 51). Church members can repeat each phrase after the leader, or pray silently in their hearts.

Have mercy on us, O God, according to Your unfailing love.

We have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight;
We have sinned in what we have done, and in what we have left undone.

Cleanse us from our sin.
You do not delight in sacrifice, or we would bring it.
Our sacrifice, O God, are broken spirits;
You will not turn away repentant hearts.

Create in us pure hearts, O God, and renew steadfast spirits within us.
Let us not turn away from the needs of our neighbours.
Restore to us the joy of Your salvation and grant us willing spirits to sustain us.

Lesson 5B: God Wants the Church to Help

Main Idea: The church is called to be salt and light in the world. One way to do that is to love our neighbours by helping them with their needs.

Review of Lesson 5A

- The church is called by God to love their community through actions, especially by addressing the needs of the vulnerable.
- Will we be sheep, those who obey the command to love our neighbours, or goats, those who don't?

Introduction

Today I want to start by asking you some questions. What do you think people in our community think about our church? Are they afraid we are going to try to convert them or their family members? How do you think people would feel if our church stopped meeting? Would they be sad, or happy? Would they even notice? Today we are going to look at the Bible to see how God wants His church to be known in the world.

Key Ideas

Jesus compares Christians to salt and light

Matthew 5:13-16

You 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 underfoot. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither 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. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

- Would we miss salt and light if they were taken away? YES! Salt and light make our lives better!

We are called to be salt

- The most important thing about salt is its saltiness. That is what makes it valuable. Because of its saltiness, it is used to clean wounds, keep things from rotting or decaying, and add flavour to food. Salt also makes us thirsty for good water. Similarly, the most important thing about a Christian is that they are holy; they are like Christ. To say 'Christians are salt' means we are to have a good influence on the areas where we live, to see our communities become more like God intends, and to make them thirsty for the Living Water—God Himself. If we are not salty, we are useless for His kingdom.

We are called to shine our light

- In John 8:12, Jesus said, *'I am the light of the world'*.
- In the passage we just read, He also says that we are the light of the world. How are these both true? He has shone His light into our lives, and we reflect His light to the world, just like a mirror reflects light.
- He also points out that a lamp is meant to shine, and in verse 16, He says:
In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.
- Our physical good works reflect God's goodness to the world. When people see how good He is and how He changes people's lives, this brings glory to Him!

Result of true worship

- In Isaiah 58 (we read last week) God told His people that true fasting and worship is to help people in trouble. Let us read verses 8-10 to see what the result will be if we obey God in this way.
Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and He will say: Here am I. If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.
- What a promise we have! Our God is powerful and merciful! God says He will save us, heal us, and protect us if we obey Him and reflect His character by taking care of people's needs.

Story Illustrations: Being Light

Here are two stories of churches being salt and light.

- In one area, the Hindu majority people were suspicious of the Christians and looked down on them. Because of this, the church was fearful of engaging outside the Christian community. After learning that they should demonstrate Christ's love to the entire community, the women of the church began to investigate community needs.

At the next week's service, the women reported they had found 12 Hindu women who each had only one sari (dress). The pastor asked if there were women in the congregation who had three saris and who would be willing to donate one to those Hindu women. Enough women volunteered to meet this need. The following week, the women of the church visited the homes of the women who had only one sari, and they offered a second sari. The Hindu women were so impressed with this gesture that they invited the Christian women to pray for them. Some of the

pregnant Hindu women also asked the Christian women to pray for their unborn children.

- In one area the people faced a huge water shortage. After learning about God's desire for the church to reach out to their community, the church leaders decided to explore what they could do as a church to meet the need for water. They found a place to rent equipment that could be used to help dig wells by hand. They rented a small steel cylinder and winch. They moved it to their community and began to dig for water at the back of the church property. When water was struck at 45 feet, everyone celebrated enthusiastically.

Non-church members thought that church members would keep the water for themselves. But instead, the church invited the community to share in God's blessings of their successful well. Soon, representatives from nearby parts of the rural community began to ask church leaders if they would help dig wells near them. The church responded positively. In little more than a year, 15 wells were dug by hand—one was more than 80 feet deep!

The people were so impressed by the way the church showed God's love that when the church invited the community to come to hear the message of the Gospel, the building was filled with people who were curious to know more about this God who had provided water.

- Both of these churches are poor, yet they used what they had to bless people in need. God used their small gifts to make a big impact.

Conclusion and Application

- God calls us Christians to be light to our communities, to do good work to glorify Him among the unbelieving world.
- How do people in the community see our church? Imagine if all the members of our church did things like in these stories. People would be glad to have our church in their community, and they would be more open to learning about God. We would truly be a light in the darkness.
- In a few weeks, our church is going to plan an Act of Love that we can do for our community. Right now, let us gather in three different groups—youth, men, and women—to pray. (Split up, then give directions as follows, giving a couple of minutes after each direction for prayer.)
 - Let us thank and worship our God who cares about every part of our lives, and the lives of those in our community.

- Let us ask God how our church can be a light to our community by helping people in our community, especially those who are hungry, thirsty, sick, imprisoned, or who lack clothes or shelter.
- Let us spend time listening to God silently.
- After a while, get back together and ask the group to share anything they have heard.

Lesson 6: Needs We Can Help With

Main Idea: God wants us to address all types of problems in our community. He has good intentions for our community.

Review of Lessons 1-5

- Jesus died on the cross to restore the three relationships: with God, with each other, and with creation.
- God created each individual in His image, so we need to treat everyone with the same respect, especially those who are not treated equally in society.
- God's love should be reflected in our actions.
- We need to grow in all areas of life (mental, physical, spiritual, and social) as Jesus grew.
- The Church is called to show love to our community by addressing the needs of vulnerable people in all four areas of life.

Introduction

Today, I'm going to read a story to you.

Pastor Wong's Vision

Once, a pastor named Wong moved into a very poor area of a large city. One morning, as he was reading from Isaiah chapter 58 and crying over the pain in his community, there was a quiet knock at the door. When Wong opened the door, it was Jesus. 'Wong, show me why you are crying', He said.

They went for a walk, and Wong told Jesus the stories of the houses they passed. In one lived a woman who prostituted herself to feed her children. In the next shack was a man who beat his wife and kids every time he got drunk—which was often. There was the home of the community president, who took money on the promise of getting electricity for the community—but then gambled it away. They passed an open place in the middle of the community, filled with garbage and scurrying rats. 'See that house?' asked Wong, pointing to a shack. 'A woman and four kids live there. The roof leaks. They have very little to eat or wear, and they're almost always sick'. By this time they were at the edge of a hill. Wong pointed, 'Down there is where the women and children walk to get water. There isn't any water here'.

Then, Wong heard Jesus crying! Jesus reached out and put His arm around Wong, and said, 'Wong, I want to show you what my intentions are for your community'. Jesus began to speak, and Wong could see the things that Jesus described taking place! Jesus talked about the people in Wong's church saving a little rice in a can each day. At the end of the week, they brought the full can of rice to the church to share with community people. They did the same with soap. The church ladies 'adopted' widows, helping them wash, cook, and care for their children.

Jesus talked about employment, water, sanitation, housing, and transformed lives. Wong could see that the people had work. Not high-paying jobs, but jobs that gave dignity and met basic necessities. The woman who had been selling her body now supported her kids with a respectable job. The drunkard was a loving husband and father. The president was really helping the community. The shacks were changed into simple, safe, clean houses. Women and children were getting clean water from standpipes. There were public latrines. The garbage heap was gone, replaced by little trees and children kicking a ball and laughing.

Then Jesus said, 'Wong, look at the church!' Wong looked. It was full of people praising God for His goodness! Jesus explained, 'Wong, this vision is my intention for your community. I want you to share this vision and begin to lead the people toward it'.

Wong protested that his church was too poor. 'Wong', asked Jesus quietly, 'Who led the children of Israel across the Red Sea? All things have been given to me. You must be obedient to what I have asked you to do. Share what you have, even though it is little. Proclaim my good intentions for your people—both spiritually and physically. And I will heal your land!' Then, Jesus disappeared. Wong wondered, 'Did I have a dream? Or a vision?' He didn't know, but Wong did know that he had a new understanding of God's concern for the poor...and a fresh vision of how he was to lead his people to exhibit God's love in his community.

Key Ideas

God has good intentions for our communities

Jeremiah 29:11

'For I know the plans I have for you', declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future'.

- Pastor Wong's community was dealing with prostitution, drunkenness, abuse, corruption, and severe poverty. People lacked clean water, food, and lived in an unhealthy environment. But this is NOT what God wanted for that community.
- God has good intentions for our communities.

Our church's responsibility is to proclaim God's good intentions by addressing the needs of our community.

2 Chronicles 7:14

If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

- We can see changes as we start to live in obedience to God. Our responsibility as a church is to proclaim God's good intentions for the community by addressing the needs we see.
- When we follow His ways, God will heal our land.

We need to open our eyes to see the many resources God has given us.

- In Pastor Wong’s community, transformation began with the local church mobilising their resources. God wants our church to use what we have to serve our community, no matter how poor we are. We are not lacking in resources to help someone who is in need. We just need to see those resources. Let me show you what I mean.
- Imagine that there is a family in our community. The parents are Jose and Maria. Jose and Maria’s house burnt down; absolutely nothing is left. Jose is a farmer. He has already finished planting his small field, but there are still another three months until he will harvest. He spent all the money he had on seed for his field, and all he owned was burnt in the fire.
- This family has many needs. What resources do we have to help them?
 - People: People could comfort the family, or clean up the spot where the house was burnt.
 - Space: We could find a place for them to stay for a while, sharing a house.
 - Materials: Maybe someone has a spare pot or pan, an extra blanket or some clothing.
 - Skills: We have people who know how to build houses or prepare food.
 - Time: We can prepare meals for volunteers who could help rebuild a house.
- How much we have is not a problem for God. We are just to obey Him and try to address any needs with what we have. He will use our offering to show people His good intention for our community.

Conclusion and Application

- God has good intentions for our communities. Our church's responsibility is to proclaim God's good intentions by addressing the needs of the community. We need to open our eyes to see the many resources God has given us.
- After the service today, let's walk around our community and observe the needs we can see. As we walk, let's ask God what His good intention is for each situation, and what resources God has given us to address these problems. What people, materials, time, funds, or spaces do we have? In the coming weeks, we will discuss what we saw, and select three problems to address immediately.
- (Prayer) Father, please bring transformation in our community as we live in obedience to You! Amen! Let us go out to see how we can love and serve our community.

Lesson 7: Kingdom Maths

Main Idea: Even the poorest are able to give. As they do, they will see God multiply their efforts in remarkable ways.

Review of Lesson 6

- God has good intentions for our community.
- Our church's responsibility is to proclaim God's good intentions by addressing the needs of our community.
- God has given us so much; we need to open our eyes to see those resources. Money is not the only resource people need. Perhaps we don't have money, but we have a garden or chickens. We have skills and knowledge. We have time and relationships and strong arms. Whatever we have is a gift from God to be used for His glory.

Introduction

Many people use their poverty as an excuse not to give to others. They say, 'I am too poor, I have nothing to give', or 'My gift is too small, it doesn't make any difference'. As a result, they miss out on God's blessings and on the opportunity to glorify God. They may be poor, but they are forgetting something really important that overcomes everything else. We call it Kingdom Mathematics, and it's based on God's power. Let's talk about it.

Key Ideas

God multiplies our efforts

- Here, I have five seeds (put on ground). Not very many. If I have two piles of five seeds (add pile), that is five multiplied by two. 10 seeds. A little more. (Add more piles of five seeds). Multiplying turns small numbers into larger numbers in mathematics.
- This is also true in the Kingdom of God. For example, if I plant those five seeds, God will multiply them so that each seed becomes many seeds. Let's look at some stories from the Bible where we see God's power to multiply like this.

- John 6:1-14 (A boy and his lunch)

Crowds of people followed Jesus. Once, Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with His disciples. When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming towards Him, He said to Philip, 'Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?' (There were about 5000 men, plus women and children!)

Philip said, 'We can't! It would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each person to have only one bite!' Andrew spoke up,

'Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?'

Jesus said, 'Tell the people to sit down'. There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down. Jesus then took the loaves and the fish, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted.

- Jesus didn't need the boy's lunch to feed the crowd. He could have called food to come down from heaven, as He did with manna in the Old Testament (Exodus 16:4). Why did Jesus choose to take the little boy's only food? He wanted to show His disciples that it doesn't matter how small the gift is but Who the gift is given to.

When they had all had enough to eat, He said to His disciples, 'Gather the pieces that are left over'. So they gathered them and filled 12 baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over.

- The boy gave Jesus his lunch. Jesus multiplied it.
- **Two fish and five loaves multiplied by God = food for more than 5000 people.** That's Kingdom Maths!

Even the poorest are able to give something

- 1 Kings 17 and 18 (The widow of Zarephath)

There had been no rain in the land. The Lord told Elijah, 'Go to Zarephath and stay there. I have directed a widow there to supply you with food'. So he went to Zarephath. At the town gate, a widow was gathering sticks. He asked, 'Would you bring me a little water in a jar? And please bring me a piece of bread'.

'I don't have any bread', she said, 'only a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, and we will eat it—and then die'.

Elijah said to her, 'Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small loaf of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. This is what the Lord says, "The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the Lord sends rain".'

She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. The jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, just as the Lord said.

- The widow was very poor. (She is eating her last meal.)
- God has a heart for poor people. God could have sent Elijah to a rich family in town, but He didn't. Instead, He sent Elijah to this very poor widow to rescue her and her son.

- God did not excuse the widow from giving. The poor can give, and God will bless them as they give. In this story, God took the widow's willingness to give her last meal to God and multiplied it into enough meals to last for three years!
- **One meal multiplied by God = meals for three years.** That's Kingdom Maths!

God will hold us accountable for what He has given us

One last story. This one is not so happy but it is also Kingdom Maths.

- Matthew 25:14-30

There was once a wealthy man going on a long journey. Before leaving, he called his three servants. To the first servant, he gave five bags of money and said, 'Put it to work until I return'. To the second, he gave two bags and said, 'Put it to work until I return'. To the third, he gave only one bag and repeated, 'Put it to work until I return'.

The wealthy man went away and, after a very long time, he came back. He called his three servants and asked how they had done. The first servant reported he had used the master's five bags of money to earn five more. To this, the wealthy man replied, 'Well done! You were faithful with few, now I will give you more'. The second servant reported he had gained two more bags and again the man replied, 'Well done! Faithful with few, now I will give you more'.

Then lastly, the third servant explained, 'I know you are a hard and difficult man. I was afraid to lose the money you gave me, so I buried it'. To this the wealthy man replied, 'Lazy and wicked servant!' He took his money, gave it to the first servant, and threw the lazy servant out of the kingdom.

The master represents God. The servant with one bag of money represents a poor person. But see what happened to him? He was thrown out of the kingdom.

- God cares about the poor, so why did He throw this servant out of the Kingdom? Because this servant is lazy and wicked. He did not even try to give anything to his master.
- The master gave the *same reward* to the servant with five bags and the servant with two bags, even though they made *different amounts* to give back to Him. If the servant with one bag made only one more bag, he would have been rewarded the same as the other two.
- **One bag NOT given to God, not multiplied by God = Nothing.**
- God will hold us accountable for what we are given. He doesn't ask us to do more than we are capable of. He does ask us to be faithful with what we have, even if it is only a little.

Conclusion and Application

- God has given us many things besides material blessings—our health, our families, time, ideas, and skills. When we talk about giving to God, we don't only mean money or food. Even the poorest are able to give something. As they do, God will multiply their efforts in remarkable ways.
 - In the story of the boy who gave his lunch, the community benefited. Sometimes God blesses us by allowing us to be part of making a difference in our community or seeing someone come to Christ.
 - Other times He blesses us materially, like He did with the widow.
- 2 Corinthians 9:8

And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

 - The reason God blesses us is so that we can continue to be generous on every occasion so that God will be praised.
- (Prayer) Our Father, we confess that many times we have failed to use the talents You give us to bless others and glorify You. Please forgive us and give us generous hearts. Show us how we can start using everything You have given us to serve and love others in our daily life.

Lesson 8: Acts of Love

Main Idea: We can love our community through Acts of Love. The characteristics of an Act of Love are: done to show God's love, done in obedience to God, done in God's strength, done so God is praised, done using local resources, small and simple, and involving as many people as possible.

Review of Lesson 7

- Even the poorest are able to give. As they do, they will see God multiply their efforts in remarkable ways. This obedience results in God being praised.

Introduction

Next week, during our service, we are going to plan an Act of Love, a small project done by our whole church to demonstrate God's love to our community. There are seven specific characteristics of an Act of Love. As I introduce each one, I'll teach you a hand motion that will help us remember it.

Note to pastor: As you introduce each characteristic, review the hand actions for all the preceding characteristics.

Key Ideas (Seven Characteristics of an Act of Love)

Done to show God's love (motion: make heart with hands)

Galatians 5:14

The entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: 'Love your neighbour as yourself'.

- As we learnt from lesson 3, we love God by loving our neighbour. The motive of our action is to show God's love, not to manipulate people.
- Think about those we don't usually show love to; for example, those who don't attend church. It is very important to show God's love to non-Christians. Many of them are unwilling to come to church and hear about God. When they see and experience God's love, however, it can have a significant impact.
 - In one community, the church decided to do an Act of Love. They felt that God was telling them to help the wife of the gang leader in the area. The gang leader had a reputation for becoming very angry and beating people with little reason, but the church wanted to obey God. When the gang leader was out of town, they helped his wife to harvest the fields and prepare the crops for selling. When the gang leader came home, he shouted, 'Who did this?' His wife was afraid to tell him, but eventually confessed that the church had helped. The gang leader stormed off and pounded on the church door. After calling the deacons for back up, the pastor opened the door, and the gang

leader came in. 'Why did you do that?' He demanded. They replied that they simply wanted to show God's love. The man started to cry, sharing that no one had ever loved him before in his life. The gang leader became a Christian, turned his life around, and then led six more families from the gang to Christ.

- I don't think that the gang leader would have had the same reaction if the church had just shared the gospel with him.

Done in obedience to God (motion: praying hands)

- As with everything, we want to make sure we are always walking in obedience to God. When we plan our Act of Love next week, we will start with prayer, asking God what He wants us to do.
- Sometimes the things that God might ask us to do won't make sense to us. The church in the story prayed, and God told them to love the gang leader. They wouldn't have focused on the gang leader if they had not asked God for direction.
- We can be confident that if God leads us to do something, it will accomplish what He desires, and we will be blessed by participating in His plans.

Small and Simple (motion: fingers to show something small)

- We should start by choosing an Act of Love that is very small and simple. It should be able to be done in one day. That way, four things will happen:
 - We will be able to complete it. If we try to do something large, we may get overwhelmed and find it harder to achieve our goal.
 - More people can get involved. Isn't it easier for people to sign up for a small project and commit to it if they know that it's just one day or an afternoon? If it is a big project that takes many days to finish, then it's more difficult to commit time and resources.
 - We will have opportunities to build our skills and confidence. This will let us do something simple and get experience before we try to do something complicated.
 - We will get quick success. When we first attempt an Act of Love, perhaps only a few people will get involved. But as we are successful in small projects, others will join who see our success.
- It is better to do small Acts of Love frequently (once every week or two weeks) than to do one big project. This will help people in our community frequently see our church being loving and caring.

Done using our own resources (motion: act out shoveling)

- It is important that our church do Acts of Love using our own resources—not seeking outside help. Why?
 - First, it is more of a demonstration of love. Remember the story of the saris I told you several weeks ago? The gift of saris would not have had the same

impact if an outside organisation had brought many saris to the community. The people felt loved because they saw the love of the church through their sacrifice. If the community doesn't feel that any sacrifice or effort went into it, they will not see God's love towards them in the same way.

- Second, we receive blessings when we give. 2 Corinthians 9:6-11 says:
Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written, 'They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever'. Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

- God has told us that He will bless us in the same measure as we give. He has good intentions for us!
- Why does God bless us?
 - So we can be generous on every occasion.
 - So that He will be praised.
- As our church sacrifices to do Acts of Love, I believe God's promise that He will bless us! As He does, we will be able to be even more generous.

Done through God's strength (motion: show muscle)

John 15:5

Jesus said, 'I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing'.

- We cannot do much by ourselves. We need to depend on God's strength. The only way to bear fruit is by remaining in the Lord Jesus.
- Helping people can be really hard. Only God can bring the change we hope to see in our community. If we want to see our community changed through Acts of Love, we really need to be looking to God and asking Him for help.
- We should always be praying before, during, and after we do Acts of Love. When we face challenges or obstacles, we will need to ask God to make a way through it. If we get tired or discouraged, we must trust God to give us His strength to keep going.

Involve as many people as possible (motion: wave to show all people in room)

- God calls everyone in the church to serve, not just the pastor or leaders. People will grow in their faith when they serve others.
- If we all work together, we benefit from many people's creativity and energy. A good Act of Love is not just collecting money from everyone to give away, but involving everyone in doing a project together. Maybe we could clean our water system, clear litter from drainage ditches or the roads, or clean a medical clinic.

Done so that God is praised (motion: hands up to praise)

Matthew 5:16

In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

- The reason for letting our light shine by doing good deeds is to glorify the Father in Heaven. So when we do Acts of Love, our goal should be to glorify God.

After we do an Act of Love, we will take time to evaluate the result. Were people helped? Was the project done in a loving way? Was God praised?

Sometimes people will see our Act of Love and be open to hearing about God. But not always. We won't have the opportunity to speak about God every time we do an Act of Love. That is OK. We should try to glorify God all the time by doing things in a way that honours Him. Even our attitude, our joy, and our motive to serve others can be a testimony that brings God honour and praise.

Conclusion

- Let's review the characteristics of Acts of Love using our motions. Acts of Love are done to show God's love to our community, done in obedience to God, are small and simple, are done through God's strength, done using local resources, involve as many people as possible, and are done so that God is praised. These characteristics together make Acts of Love different from anything that any other organisation or religion does! Only the church can do these Acts of Love.
- We've walked through our community to look for different kinds of needs, we've thought about the resources God has given us. Next week, we will decide what God would like us to do!
- Right now, as a church, let's take time to pray for our community and to ask God what Act of Love He wants us to do to show His love to our community without using money.
- Take time for prayer. Then, close prayer time by saying:
 Father, thank you for giving us Your Spirit to help us make decisions. We pray that You will give us good ideas and unity as we choose an Act of Love next week.

Lesson 9: Organising an Act of Love

Main Idea: It's not enough to believe that Jesus is Lord, and to study and hear God's truths declared. God wants our loving obedience. We will begin to put God's truth into action by planning an Act of Love.

Review of Lessons 1-8

Let's review a few key ideas from previous sermons. (choose a few that you think your church needs to remember) For example:

- God loves all people, even those who are sinners, who oppose the church, or who are rejected or forgotten.
- He commands us, His church, to love our neighbours as He does.
- One way we can do this is through Acts of Love, which are small projects that are done by churches to demonstrate God's love to their community. Usually they are very simple and can be done in a day.

Introduction

When we become Christians, we learn so much about God's character, love, and grace. We can't help but love Him! Living in God's grace, however, doesn't mean that we don't need to obey Him. We must obey—but not because we are trying to earn our salvation. Instead, we obey God to show our love for Him. We have been learning about how God wants His people to live to bring glory to Him. Now we need to put God's truth into action.

Key Ideas

Matthew 21:28-32

'There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first son and said, "Son, go and work today in the vineyard". "I will not," he answered, but later he changed his mind and went.

Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, "I will, sir," but he did not go'.

Jesus asked, 'Which of the two did what his father wanted?'

'The first,' they answered. Jesus said to them, 'Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did'.

We know God's will and truths

- The father makes clear what he wants the two sons to do. Go work in the vineyard! Both sons know the will of the father.
- We know God's will for us: to love God and to love our neighbour as ourselves.

God wants our obedience

- The first son said he would not obey his father, but then he changed his mind and obeyed. The second son said he would obey but then didn't.
 - Jesus praised the son who was obedient.
 - Jesus was using this parable to expose the disobedience of religious leaders.
 - He said that tax collectors (corrupt government officials) and prostitutes who repented and began to obey would go into the Kingdom of God before the religious leaders who said they loved God but weren't obedient.
- It's not enough for us just to study and hear God's truths declared. Now we need to put God's truth into action. God wants our loving obedience.
- We need to start obeying God's will in our lives by loving others through an Act of Love. Our communities and our lives will not change until we put into action what we have been learning.

Story Illustrations: Acts of Love

- Perhaps it's hard to imagine what types of things we could do to show love. I want to tell you some stories of other churches who have done Acts of Love, and I hope they will get you excited about what God might do here in our church!
- (Choose at least two stories to read from appendix 1, more if time.)

Conclusion and Application

Step 1: Now we will choose our first Act of Love. First we need to pray. Brothers and sisters, let's take a few minutes of silence to listen to God. God, our Father, show us what You want us to do as our first Act of Love. (Pray silently for a few minutes.)

Step 2: Together, let's agree on what God is leading us to do. Let me remind you of some of the ideas for Acts of Love that we talked about a few weeks ago. (Add any others that your church has talked about as well as these.)

- Clearing rubbish that blocks a ditch
- Fixing the leaking roof of a widow's house
- Repairing a road
- Providing food for orphans

In deciding which of these ideas to do, let's remember that this is our first time. Because this is our first time, let's choose something small and simple we can do in just one day. Let's choose something that uses local resources, and involves as many people as possible.

Did God give anyone inspiration while we prayed? Please share any ideas He gave you of what would make a good Act of Love.

(Note down the ideas they share. Discuss what will be the first Act of Love.)

We have decided to _____. After church, our leaders will make sure we have all the details settled for our plan. (use appendix 2: How to plan an Act of Love).

Let us thank God that He calls us as His church to bring His love to others.

Father, You have helped us to see that You care about everyone, and You care about all areas of our lives, and that You want all relationships to be restored. We want to obey You, to be a light to our community, showing Your goodness and Your good intentions for us. We trust that You will take our small Act of Love and multiply it by Your power to transform our community.

APPENDIX 1: Acts of Love Stories

STORY 1: One group of 12 villages in Malawi had no way of carrying sick or injured people to the hospital. The churches who had been studying TCT saw this as an opportunity to show love to their communities. They conducted a paper drive in order to raise money to buy a bicycle ambulance and a bicycle, allowing them to carry people to a hospital and transport the dead to a burial place. The churches handed over the bicycle ambulance to the village health committee in the presence of the leaders of all 12 villages. This act greatly strengthened the church's relationship with the community leaders and the hospital. Seeing how appreciated the bicycle ambulance was, a friend of the pastor donated two more bicycles to be used for this purpose. As the church used their own resources, God multiplied the bicycles—just as we learned in our sermon on Kingdom Mathematics!

STORY 2: Decades ago, Marare village was assisted to have a protected well. Over time, the well became polluted with silt, rubbish, and debris. Because of this, the community was prone to water borne diseases. Two youth leaders from the local church, after studying TCT, decided to show God's love to their community by cleaning the well one Saturday. When women came to draw water, they saw the two youth working and joined in to help. When the Water Source User Committee saw the community members taking responsibility for the well, it encouraged them to be active again in helping to maintain it. Before, most people believed that the leaders needed to address the problems with the well. But after this one Act of Love, the community members are empowered. One mother was overheard telling her child, 'We can be responsible for our own health'. God used the obedience of two young men to change the mindset and improve health in the whole community!

STORY 3: In one community, there was a very small church with only 10 families. They had just studied TCT Module 1 and wanted to show God's love to their community. There was one family that they saw had many needs. The wife was in the provincial hospital awaiting surgery. The husband had to look after his wife, so he could not go home to harvest the rice crop. Their family either didn't care about them or felt too busy with their own fields to help out. So the husband and wife were very worried about her illness, the medical bills, and losing the crop, which was their main income for the year. Seeing the need of this family, 30 people from the church harvested this couple's 4000 square metre field, threshed the rice and transported it to their home. When this couple came back from the hospital, they were amazed! This couple, along with nine other families in the village, accepted Jesus because they saw God's love expressed through the people in the church.

STORY 4: Bad weather always caused problems for one village. Flooding wiped out roads during the rainy season, and the high heat of summer made life miserable. In that village there were only 15 Christian families among 80 Buddhist families. But after learning about showing God's love to their community, the church prayed and decided to plant trees. Gradually, they started to plant trees along the main road. In a year they had planted 300

trees! The trees protected the road from erosion and gave shade to those who were travelling. After a year, the Buddhist families started to join with the Christians in planting trees. Since then, they have planted a total of 1000 trees! The community has completely changed in unity and willingness to work together. Everyone saw that they didn't have to suffer from the weather anymore. Now people have growing hearts to help each other, and are looking forward to other ways to build up their community.

STORY 5: After studying the first module of TCT training, a church in Idioche, Benin, mobilised to help an elderly widow whose house was destroyed during heavy rains. The woman had lived in the ruined house for two months. The church worked to rebuild the mud wall of her home. The woman, who was not a Christian, was so grateful to God that she joyfully told everyone she met about what the church had done for her. The people in the village were astonished to see that the church would do such a good thing for an unbeliever. 'We didn't know you like this before!' they said to the Christians. Before this Act of Love, there had been disputes between the Christians and unbelievers every year, because the Christians did not want to participate in the traditional rites and ceremonies. But after the Act of Love, the traditional priest came to the pastor and told him that Christians would be free to worship God in the village.

APPENDIX 2: How to plan an Act of Love

Step 1: Prayer (done with full congregation)

The first thing to do is to pray. Take time now. Ask God to show you what you should do for your Act of Love. Take a few minutes of silence to listen to God.

Step 2: Select an activity (done with full congregation)

As a group, decide what you will do as an Act of Love. Did God give any inspiration? If anyone has any ideas of what would make a good Act of Love, ask them to share. Also look at ideas that you listed in lesson 5B: God wants the church to help and lesson 6: Needs we can help with. If you are working in small groups, have each group share their ideas and get feedback from the others. Evaluate your ideas.

- Does it help someone, and show love?
- Is it small and simple?
- Can it be done using resources you have available?
- Does it involve as many people as possible?

Together, agree on what you feel God is leading you to do. (You may want to use pebbles to vote, as described in the sermon.) Once you have selected a topic, make sure it is something small that you can do in just one day.

Step 3: Prepare a plan (leadership will do this step)

Discuss the following questions. If possible, have someone record the answers so that you don't forget.

- Who are you going to help?
- What are you going to do?
- What resources do you need? Where will you get those things? Who will get them?
- Who is going to participate in helping? Who will invite everyone?
- What date are you going to do it?

Share the full plan with your congregation and encourage them to participate.

Step 4: Pray (leadership and congregation)

Once you have finished writing the plan, take time to pray again. Ask God to help you complete the project and to multiply the results. Pray that His name may be glorified. And during the next week or two, while you and the congregation are preparing for your project, you should all be praying that God will help you with the project.

***Facilitator Instructions:** Explain to the group that there are two more steps that we are not going to do today. Then read the descriptions of the two remaining steps.*

Step 5: Do the project (done with as many people as possible)

The next step is to do the project that you planned. Start the day with prayer and dedicate your efforts to God. Remember that you are doing this project to demonstrate God's love to your community. Try to maintain an attitude that matches this goal.

Step 6: Evaluate and report (done with full congregation)

After doing the Act of Love, the final step is to report and evaluate. We need to evaluate because it helps us to learn. We can think about what we did well and what we can do to improve next time. It doesn't need to be a long process; you can just take a few minutes to discuss these questions:

- What went well? What didn't go well? What improvements could you make to the plan?
- Was the response as you intended? If not, why not?
- Was God glorified?

Finally, thank and praise God for being with you and helping you!

Module 1 Lesson 1 Sample Sermon: The Whole Story

Introduction

Good morning church. Today I want to tell you a story. This story is about the God of the universe who loves people and wants to have a close relationship with them. As I say this, you probably think that I am referring to the story of Jesus and how He loved us so much that He died on the cross. You are partially correct!

We usually say that Jesus came to save us from our sins. This is true, but He came to do so much more than that. His death on the cross is only one part of the whole story. To understand the whole message of the Bible and why Jesus came, we need to understand the different stages of the biblical story from beginning to end. Here are the five stages: the Creation, The Fall, The Mission, The Cross, and The Return of Jesus Christ.

Let us look at each of these stages in detail.

The Whole Story - Key Ideas

The Creation

In Genesis chapter 1, we see that God created the whole earth and everything in it in 5 days. After each day of creation, the Bible says '*And God saw that it was good*'. And on the 6th day, God created human, male and female. Genesis 1:31 says '*God saw all that He had made, and it was **very good***'.

So, at this stage of the story - the Creation - there were three relationships, and they were perfect.

- The relationship between people (Adam) and God was perfect – God walked in the garden with Adam.
- The relationship between people with each other was perfect. At this time Adam and Eve had a perfect relationship. We didn't see them arguing with each other and there was no shame. Genesis 2:25 says '*And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.*'
- The relationship between people and creation was perfect – God had commanded people to rule over the creation and provided for all their needs, and there was no lack of food.

That is the first stage of the story.

The Fall

But we know the story, don't we? In Genesis chapter 3 we saw the Fall of human beings. We call this stage the Fall. Adam and Eve sinned against God by eating the fruit that God commanded them not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In this stage of the story, the three perfect relationships were broken by sin, resulting in both moral and physical evil. We see that:

- The relationship between people and God was broken – Adam and Eve were afraid and hiding from God. They were kicked out of the garden.
- The relationship between people with each other was broken – we see Adam and Eve arguing and accusing each other for what happened.
- The relationship between people and creation was also broken – In Genesis 3:17 - God tells Adam, *'Cursed is the ground because of you'*. Famine, floods, earthquakes, drought, and all other natural disasters are the consequences of sin. Work becomes harder.

Sin had destroyed the three perfect relationships, and the consequences of sin were devastating. Human beings die both spiritually and physically. But praise God that He didn't leave Adam and Eve in this stage forever.

The Mission

The next stage of the story is the Mission. It is from chapter 3 to the rest of the Old Testament. In this stage, God seeks and raises up people to restore three broken relationships.

In Genesis chapter 12, God called Abraham - Genesis 12:2-3 says *"And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonours you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."* God blesses Abraham and promises to bless all the nations through his family. God's plan was to save the whole world and restore the three broken relationships. Through the church, His family, God also wants to bring blessings to the nations.

Another person God raised up was MOSES. God gave the Law through Moses to reveal His intentions for every area of life, not just spiritual. His laws restore all three relationships.

For example: Let's look at the 10 commandments. The first four commandments are to restore our relationship with God. The next six commandments are to restore our relationship with each other. There are even specific laws about personal health and healing creation in Leviticus.

2 Chronicles 7:14 says *'If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land'*.

If we look at what God will do in this verse, they are both spiritual and physical. God will hear from heaven and forgive our sins. It means our relationship with God is restored. God will heal our land, that is our relationship with each other and with creation are restored.

Notice that God didn't call the whole world but only 'My people' - the people of God. God's people at that time was Israel, and now the Christians are called to humble and pray and seek God's face and turn from our wicked ways. God will use us to bring restoration to the three broken relationships.

God also raised up kings and prophets to restore these three broken relationships, but people failed again and again to obey God's law. This leads to the next stage of the story - the Cross. This is the most important and the most beautiful part of the story, where God the Son came to die on behalf of mankind.

The Cross

John 3:16 says *'For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life'*.

Contrast this with other religions, where people have to sacrifice to please their gods. In Christianity, God offered His Son Jesus Christ to pay the penalty for the sin of the whole world. Do you remember that at the beginning of this sermon, I told you that you are partially right about why Jesus came?

Let's look at Colossians 1:20 - God's full plan was *'through Jesus, to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross'*.

Jesus died on the cross to reconcile all things - and where are those things? Things on earth or things in heaven. This means that Jesus came to die so that all three relationships can be reconciled. Through Jesus, not only is our relationship with God healed, but also our relationship with each other and our relationship with creation are healed.

We can see God's plan to restore the three relationships in the Great Commission. In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus gave His disciples a Great Commission, which is to make disciples of all nations. Making disciples is to help people have a close relationship with God and live in obedience to Him in all areas of life. The Great Commission is not merely evangelism but to restore the three relationships. We are living in this stage of the story. As the church, you and I are called to continue the work that Jesus started to bring healing to these three relationships. In 2 Corinthians 5:18-20, the Apostle Paul said that we are given a ministry of

reconciliation, and we are ambassadors for Christ. When you are discipling someone, remember to do all three relationships, don't just focus on the relationship with God.

The last stage of the story is the return of Jesus. We are still waiting for this part of the story to happen. We don't know when Jesus will return but He surely will.

The Return

Let's read Revelation 21:1-7 - Someday, Jesus will come back and completely renew everything, all of heaven and all of earth. There will be a new heaven and new earth. In this passage, we see that all three relationships will be restored completely. God will live with people again like in the garden of Eden. He will be our God and we are His people. *'There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away'*. All the old things like wars, disasters, etc which cause pain, suffering, and death will be completely gone. Our relationships with each other and creation will be healed forever.

Conclusion and Application

Let's review quickly what we talked about. God created a perfect world. Sin entered that world and broke our relationships with God, each other, and creation. God gave the law so we would understand how to restore the relationships, but people do not obey the law. God loves us so much that He sent His Son to restore the three relationships that were broken by sin in the fall. And one day Jesus will come again and make all things new. That is the whole story, a wonderful story of God's grace and love. God loves you. He wants you to have a relationship with Him and good relationships with each other and with creation.

Jesus died on the cross to restore all three relationships, not just our relationship with Him. If you are a Christian, think about these three relationships and see if there is something you can do to improve any of them. Ask the Lord to help you do it. Here are a few ideas that you can apply:

For the relationship with God - If you don't have a habit of reading the Bible, maybe spend 5-10 minutes reading one chapter a day. You can pray anytime - while cooking, walking, riding a bicycle.

For the relationship with others - invite your neighbour to have coffee or tea. Help someone with their needs.

For the relationship with creation - learn to make organic fertiliser, plant a fruit tree, clean up block drainage . If not yet a child of God, you can give your life to Jesus today, and your life will never be the same. Jesus loves you!

Module 1 Lesson 3 Sample Sermon: Love God and Love Our Neighbour

Review

Good morning church! I am grateful for the privilege to worship God with you and grow in faith together. The topic for our sermon today is Love God and Love Our Neighbour. But let us refresh our minds about what we have talked about in the last two weeks.

We learnt in week one that Jesus Christ died on the cross not only to restore our relationship with God, but also to restore our relationships with each other and with creation. As Colossians 1:20 said, *‘through Jesus, to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross’*. This was God’s plan from the beginning and will continue until Jesus returns.

In week two, we learnt that all people are created in the image of God and are valuable in the sight of God. We need to treat each human being with respect, knowing that they are precious in the sight of God.

Let’s pray that God will continue to help us apply these truths in our personal life as well as in our church as a whole.

Introduction

Ok, let’s talk about our topic today. Imagine that you have been lying in bed for days with a fever. You feel terrible. You are thirsty, sweaty, shivering, and weak. Suddenly, someone comes in your door and says, ‘God has a wonderful plan for your life! Read this tract, say the sinner’s prayer, and your soul will be saved, and all your problems will be gone’. Then, the person walks out your door.

How do you feel? (pause) Confused? Angry? Of course! This person doesn’t seem to care about you, how you feel, and what you need. Now I have another question for you. Do you think Jesus would ever have done that?

Of course not! In the Bible, we see over and over again that Jesus showed concern for people’s physical needs as well as their spiritual needs. He fed people when they were hungry. He healed people who were sick. He hugged children.

Key Ideas

The Great Commandment

We all agree that the person who visited you did not act like Jesus Christ. He did not show love, even though the mark of a Christian life is love. The Great Commandment will help us to really understand this truth.

In Matthew 22:37-40, Jesus was asked which is the greatest commandment of the whole Law. This is His answer:

‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind’. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself’. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.

Do you notice anything special in Jesus’ answer? Remember, people asked Him the greatest commandment of the Law. According to Jesus, Love God is the first and the most important commandment. The second is to love our neighbour as ourselves. Jesus said that these two commandments are the summary not just only of the Law but of the Law and the Prophets. In His answer, Jesus helped them to understand fully the core message of the whole Old Testament. Basically, Jesus was saying that Loving God and Loving our neighbour are the motive or the reason for everything we do in life. And interestingly, when the Apostle Paul narrowed down these two commandments to just one, guess which one he chose? The second one. He wrote in Galatians 5:14:

*The entire law is fulfilled in keeping this **one** command: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself’.*

Why this command, when we know that Loving God IS the greatest commandment? It’s because the way we show that we love God is through loving our neighbours. We can’t love God without loving our neighbour. And we can’t love our neighbour fully without loving God. Loving God and loving our neighbour are two sides of the same coin; they can’t be separated. These two commandments are actually one commandment because they are inseparable.

Loving means action

Now, what does it mean to love our neighbour? Love means action, not just in words or feelings. To love means to serve, to seek to meet needs. It’s easy to say we love God but not show any concern about our neighbours’ needs.

1 John 3:17 says:

If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?

It cannot be any clearer than this. If we have material possessions but we do not pay attention to the needy people around us and help them, there is no love of God in us. No matter what we say, we don’t really love God. To give no room for other interpretation, the Apostle John concludes in the following verse, verse 18: “Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth”. Love means action, not just words or feelings.

James 1:27:

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

Here, James gives us a definition of what a pure religion is, a type of religion accepted by God. He doesn't say that faultless religion is going to church weekly. It's not praying; it's not reading the Bible - though we are commanded to do these things as well. According to James, pure religion is taking care of the orphans and widows. Love means actions. Our love for God is revealed through practical actions. It is not possible to show God's love without helping people with their needs.

Let me give you an example: What would have happened to us if God the Father said 'I love you very much' but never sent His Son Jesus to die on the cross to pay for our sins? We would never be saved! We would never be reconciled with God. But Praise God that He did send His Son because He loved us so much. Love means actions, not just words or feelings.

So think about the person who visited you when you were sick. How should they act? They can still tell you about Jesus and leave a tract. But they should also do something to make you more comfortable. They should ask how they can help. They should try to bring you medicine or something to drink. They should show love not just by words, but by meeting your needs.

Our neighbour is anyone in need, even our enemy

Let's review. The whole law is summed up in one command: to love our neighbours as much as we love ourselves. This is how we show that we love God. Loving our neighbours means wanting what's good for them and helping them with their needs. The next logical question is: Who is our neighbour? Who is it that we are supposed to help? Interestingly, this is also a question that people asked Jesus. Let's read this story to know who our neighbour is.

Luke 10:25-37

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher', he asked, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' 'What is written in the Law?' Jesus replied. 'How do you read it?' The man answered, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself'. 'You have answered correctly', Jesus replied. 'Do this and you will live'. But the man wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?'

In reply Jesus said: 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out

two [coins] and gave them to the innkeeper. "Look after him," he said, "and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have." Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?' The expert in the law replied, 'The one who had mercy on him'. Jesus told him, 'Go and do likewise'.

Often we think that our neighbour is someone we know, who lives near us or is someone that we like. But in this story, Jesus gives us the full picture of who is our neighbour. We know that at the time Jesus told this story, the Samaritans and the Jews were considered enemies. In the story, three people passed by. The priest and the Levite were Jews, like the victim. We would expect that one of them would offer to help, right? But they did not. The person who offered practical help was the victim's enemy, the Samaritan. He saved this victim's life. So, according to Jesus, our neighbour is not limited to people we know or like but anyone who is in need, even our enemy.

I remember a story from a church in South East Asia. This church was trying to reach out to people of another tribe with Acts of Love. They helped repair houses for widows. They helped carry sick people to hospital and pay for medical bills. They even asked the staff of TCT to help them learn the language to evangelise that tribe. We were surprised at the church's actions because we knew that they also had needs in their own community. We asked what inspired them to reach out to that tribe. They just simply replied 'you taught us from the Bible that we need to love our neighbour, even our own enemy. This tribe is our enemy.' As a result, their relationship with that tribe improved, and they planted a church in that community.

Conclusion and Application

As we can see from the Great Commandments, God calls us to love our neighbours as a way to show our love to Him. If we truly love God, we need to look for practical ways to meet our neighbours' needs.

Let me suggest a few ideas for application:

First of all, let's ask God to show us who our neighbour is and what needs they have.

As a church, we can come around to fix or clean up the house of a widow or work on her field. If she is too old to work, find a plot of land and work together and give the produce to her.

We can provide transportation to the hospital for the sick and help to pay medical bills,

As the pastor, I can talk to the principal of the school and offer to provide a scholarship to orphans.

The women in the church can work together to support struggling single mothers. Maybe you can teach them a new skill so that they can earn a living.

The men can help the unemployed youth to find a job or help them to write a more compelling CV or teach them a new skill.

Second, is there someone whom you consider an enemy? Let's ask God to soften our hearts toward them. Say a prayer of blessing over them and their family. And do they have any need that we can help with?

Let's take time now to pray for our enemies and neighbours and ask God what we can do to serve them and meet their needs. Amen!