

Life Group Topic #12 March 28-29
Reaching the Poor in our City

WELCOME: (15 minutes)

-Tell about a time in your life where you felt particularly poor or helpless?

WORSHIP: (15 minutes)

Use whatever means possible to turn the group's attention to the wonder and majesty of our God- including music, prayer, meditation on the Psalms, and other art forms.

WORD APPLICATION: (45 minutes)

Briefly read or paraphrase the following summary before moving to the heart of this section: the discussion around the application questions.

In comparison to the rest of the world, Canada is consistently ranked as one of the wealthiest nations on earth. In fact for anyone who has walked the streets of Calcutta, wandered through the refugee camps of Darfur, or bused through the coastal villages of Haiti, it seems ludicrous to talk about the poor in our own city.

We enjoy great wealth in Abbotsford. And though poverty will look very different here than in the developing world, it is a growing phenomenon. Surveys tell us that we have somewhere between 200-400 homeless people in our city. In the early 1980's the Food Bank was assisting approximately 900 people every month. Today the Food Bank is helping over 4000 people each month with approximately 50% of those being children. Many of the hungry today are the working poor, whose meager incomes cannot support their basic necessities. With the economic downturn, the number of poor in our community is bound to grow.

Poverty is a messy and complex issue. Desperate people can easily find themselves caught in a snare of alcohol and drug addictions, prostitution, or criminal activity.

A generation ago, we had to travel to another continent or at least the Vancouver East Side to encounter poverty and the accompanying social tragedies. Today it is increasingly among us in our own city. We have the curious juxtaposition of living in the Bible belt with supposedly 90 churches in our city, and yet living in a city with alarming gang violence, poverty and security risks.

How do we respond as the chosen people of God? Can these two worlds co-exist side-by-side with little thought on our part to what goes on outside the walls of our Christian sub-culture?

Word Application Questions:

Please keep in mind that these questions are meant as catalysts designed to get the group talking about life application.

- 1. Read Isaiah 58:6-7. What are the signs of authentic worship for the people of God?**
- 2. Read Matthew 25:31-40. Why does the Son of Man identify Himself with those who are hungry, thirsty, naked, homeless and imprisoned?**
- 3. How do you reconcile salvation by grace through faith with this passage which declares Kingdom entry is for those who provide for the needy?**
- 4. Consider the story in Acts 3:1-10 and particularly the outcome in Acts 4:4. Note that the apostles did not give the beggar the money he was asking for. Beyond material goods, what are the deeper needs of the poor?**
- 5. Overwhelming need and solicitation around us often causes donor fatigue. How do we keep from becoming cynical and callous toward need around us?**
- 6. We often appease our conscience by one-time gifts or service projects for the needy. How do we get beyond that to on-going relational support for the poor that will lead to rebirth and integration into our Life Groups?**

WITNESS: (15 minutes)

The Lord may give some of our Life Groups a deep burden for the poor- however we might choose to define that. My heart's desire is that this will lead beyond just an occasional service project or financial gift to the needy. Our mandate is to make disciples. Can you imagine if some of our Life Groups would be able to identify, pray for, love, evangelize, disciple and integrate needy people into their groups? Can you imagine?