

Life Group Topic # 25

WELCOME: (15 minutes)

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 sermon summary before moving to the heart of this section: the discussion around the application questions.

Read Isaiah 61:1-4 and Luke 4:14-21

Jesus stood up in the temple one day at the inauguration of his ministry and he quoted the prophet Isaiah. He identified himself as the anointed servant of God and then described what his ministry would be. He also set an example of how all those who follow Him Lord would serve others. Jesus is all about rebuilding that which has been ruined, he is about restoring that which has been devastated. He puts back together that which has been broken. And he does it today through us.

Imagine for a moment that a child in your house has disregarded the rules you have established for "inside behavior" in your home. After recklessly throwing a ball, the child breaks something in your living room. You now have two choices. You can throw it away or you can try to restore it to its original beauty. It all depends on how valuable it is to you. You also have to decide how you will respond to the child, who after recognizing his mistake, is also broken inside. Will you execute justice or will you show mercy? Or is there a way to accomplish both?

Read Micah 6:8

Today we are going to talk about broken people here in our city of Abbotsford. And by that we mean those who have committed some offense, who have caused some harm to others and been caught for it. From young teens to adults of all ages...we have various labels that we use: youth at risk, offenders, criminals, etc. They have victimized others but at the same time seen their own lives shattered and broken. How do we as the people of God respond? *The prophet Micah says: What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy...and to walk humbly with the Lord.* But how do we act justly and love mercy? How do justice and mercy (both of which reflect the heart of God) come together for us?

During our weekend worship services, we asked a panel discussion to consider the following questions. I have edited them below for application in our Life Groups. I hope you find them useful as you grapple with God's mandate to restore the broken:

1. When someone in your life (a child, grandchild, friend or colleague) really messes up, and causes some offense to you, the family or the community, how do you tend to respond? Can you think of some example that is weighing on your heart?
2. As Christians we believe that God can do the impossible; He can completely transform people's broken lives. But how does that belief coincide with how we think about offenders? Those you know who have criminal records, drug or alcohol addictions, or are chronic troublemakers?
3. This is our 5th ROC weekend...we have uncovered many needy people in our city. We can become overwhelmed when we look at their needs and see how many broken lives are out there. How do we know where to focus? How do we keep from being overwhelmed?
4. Do you see South Abbotsford as a place that can welcome and effectively integrate those who have been in prison? Youth offenders? The homeless? Those with backgrounds of alcohol and drug addictions? What will it take for that to happen?
5. In our church and in our Life Groups, how do we find a balance between our own concern for safety and security and compassionately integrating those who could re-offend?

WITNESS: (15 minutes)

There are many opportunities to restore the broken in Abbotsford. This weekend we heard from various members of our church who challenged us with ways we can get involved. Consider reaching out as a Life Group to the broken by dialoguing with one of the following:

- Lorraine Schmidt (Abbotsford Restorative Justice) Website: www.arjaa.org
- Pascal Adams and Vanessa Siemens (M2W2);
- Neil Klassen and Henry Zukowski (Alpha Prison Ministries);
- Tony Helary (Tony's Place)