

Stepping Out through Service with Love

Romans 10:15

Have you ever wondered what the world would be like if every Christian took seriously the words of Christ? Really, what would the world be like? I can only imagine. Can you? As you go through this program, ask yourselves the questions and discuss them together.



When tested by the Pharisees with the question, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus answered plainly, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matt. 22:36-39) Because we are sinful, not one of us lives up to this commandment faithfully. We often forget that love is not just a “feeling.” Love is an action. It requires us to step out, perhaps even getting out of our comfort zone.

Jesus also commanded His disciples to be His witnesses “in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8b) Sharing His love and making disciples begins at home and with those around us. Sometimes ‘stepping out’ at home can be very hard. Think about how we treat our families. Do we act like Christians at home? Are we always showing Jesus’ love? We serve our families in various ways; we cook, clean, wash, make a living, deliver children, etc. Do we serve our families with love and compassion, or are we resentful? What difference does our attitude make? Are we making disciples in our homes?

How about those around us - neighbors, friends, the sick, the lonely, the abused, and the homeless? Are we making disciples of those around us? Do we excuse ourselves, saying that we don’t have time or energy? Do we leave it to others? As a Christian, do we have any responsibility to those around us? There are many opportunities to help those around you no matter what your physical condition or time allotment. Donations of food, clothing, money and prayer, even notes, cards and visits can help those in need of an encouraging word. Could we help at a homeless shelter, deliver meals, drive those without transportation to the doctor, provide a safe haven or be a voice for the abused and trafficked, or help with job training for those out of work. Keep your eyes, ears, and hearts open for opportunities. How are you ‘stepping out’ for those around you (in Jerusalem)?

Looking at a wider venue, how about those across our country? Many people are hurting from personal problems, economic issues, natural disasters, injustices, etc. There are a multitude of opportunities across our denomination, and our country, to spread Christ’s love, compassion and the Good News. Short-term mission trips to help rebuild communities after tornadoes and other natural disasters, supporting cross-cultural ministries, working with groups such as Habitat for Humanity and Carpenters for Christ, and volunteering for Children’s Fest are just a few ideas. What are you doing individually and as a church? Are you making disciples across our land? How are you ‘stepping out’ in your Judea?

There are situations when we feel especially uncomfortable. Working with the disenfranchised, cross-cultural ministries, low-income ministries, hospital visitation and volunteering, prison ministries, and human trafficking can make us very uncomfortable. This may be our Samaria. Are you `stepping out` in your Samaria?

Many times when we mention missions, we are thinking about missions in foreign lands. In the last few years, there have been more opportunities for individuals to make mission trips to other countries. Of course, not all of us can travel abroad to help carry the Gospel by serving others. However, we can support those who do travel and reach out in other ways. We now have the opportunity of supporting missionaries through the Stott-Wallace Missionary Offering. Does your Women's Ministry or you as an individual contribute to the Least Coin, Dimes for Clean Water, World Vision, or Compassion International? Do you contribute to the South American hot lunch program or scholarships? And, most importantly, do you remember to pray for people and projects all around the world? Are you `stepping out` to the ends of the earth?

As Jesus sat with His disciples on the Mount of Olives answering their questions and teaching them (Matthew 25:34-46), He very clearly spoke about our responsibility to Him and others. If we do not serve "the least of these," we are not serving our Lord. No one knows when the end of our time comes. We could have a heart attack, an accident or even Christ could come again; therefore, we must "make hay while the sun shines." Take a chance and `step out` today!

Group Activity and Discussion:

1) Divide a sheet of newsprint into four sections. Label each section with one of the four following categories –Jerusalem (local city/town), Judea (US/Country), Samaria (places we might avoid), Ends of the Earth (International)

2) Now list all the activities that your church or women's ministry group does in each of the four areas. This should take about 5-10 minutes.

3) Now reflect upon the list – are there some areas that are lacking in your attention? Is there an area that tends to receive more of your efforts? Why? What can you learn from this exercise? Are there things you might want to change now that you've seen your ministries listed in such a way?

Prayer:

Most loving Heavenly Father, we praise You and thank You for Your great love, mercy and grace. Give us strength and courage to `step out` in all the ways that You would have us to serve. May we truly be Your hands, feet, voice and heart here on earth as we serve with our brothers and sisters in Christ. We ask these things in the name of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.