

SESSION 04

Kinship

Overview

We would have to ignore large portions of Scripture to avoid God's concern for the poor and his desire for his people to care for them. In the first century, the poor or "the needy" would have included widows, orphans, or those in prison.

Today, this could be children in the foster care system, a single parent, the sick, the elderly on a fixed income, or refugees.

While our societal order often overlooks these individuals and keeps them on the margins, Jesus' order — or the Kingdom of Heaven — moves them toward equal ground at the center. Jesus so identifies with and cares for the poor that, to follow him, means we must also brush shoulders with the needy. And more than that, we must see *in them* a brother and a sister.

This is what distinguishes service in the way of Jesus: we are invited beyond charity from afar into love up close; to leave ourselves open to the reality that service may not only turn strangers into neighbors but into family.

This is the dignifying destination that true service leads us toward — kinship.

Teaching

Key Scripture

Luke 16:19-31

Session Summary

- Jesus orders his Kingdom opposite to the world's social order — placing the marginalized at the center.
- To fellowship with Jesus means to fellowship with the marginalized.
- Jesus' vision for service is rooted in kinship, not simply acting as a service provider.
- Kinship means embracing people who are not biologically family as brothers and sisters.
- We serve in pursuit of kinship — not because it works, but because every individual is worth it.

Closing Prayer

End your time together by praying this liturgy:

Father, help us remember that
despite our own poverty of spirit,
you have made the Kingdom ours,
and welcomed us into family.
Let us set our tables widely, that
you may bring to us strangers whom
we someday call brothers and sisters.

Amen.

Exercise

One act of service to someone in need

In the book of Acts, a synonym for “the poor” is the phrase “those who had need” or “the needy.” In the first century, this would have been: widows, orphans, or those in prison.

In our time, this could be: kids in the foster care system, the elderly living on a fixed income, a single parent, the sick, those dying in hospice, those in prison, or refugees. The reality is all around, often hiding in plain sight, are people who are in need. This week, go serve them.

You can do this through one of two avenues:

- 01 Either through volunteering at a local nonprofit.
- 02 Or go directly to someone you have a relational connection to.

Keep in mind that kinship is often cultivated slowly through regularly serving the same need, among common people — so consider making a commitment to weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly service as you’re able.

Reach Exercise

Take time to listen and learn a person's story

As you are serving those in need, find a person you feel a leading to, and go listen and learn. Ask them questions about their story. Listen attentively.

One of the most powerful ways we can love others is by listening deeply to their story. The purpose of this exercise is to open your heart to kinship — to see them not as an object of your pity, but as a brother or sister.

Practice Reflection

As you come to the end of this Practice, take 5-10 minutes to journal out your answers to the following three questions.

01 What fears or hesitations did I experience?

02 What emotions or thoughts was I surprised by?

03 How did I encounter Jesus through the poor?

Note: As you write, be as specific as possible. While bullet points are just fine, if you write it out in narrative form, your brain will be able to process your insights in a more lasting way.

Keep Growing (Optional)

The following resources were created to enhance your experience of this Practice, but they are entirely optional.

Read

The Active Life by Parker Palmer (Chapters 07-08)

Listen

Rule of Life Podcast on Service (Episode 04)

Continue the discussion

If you would like to slow down this four-week Practice to give your community more time to sit in each week's teaching and spiritual exercise, you can pause and meet for an optional conversation in the Appendix.

Christ has no body but yours,

No hands, no feet on earth but yours,

Yours are the eyes with which he
looks with compassion on this world,

Yours are the feet with which he
walks to do good,

Yours are the hands, with which he
blesses all the world.

So may you, like Christ, go now not to
be served but to serve.