

WEEK 4 - How does Jesus interact with those on the social margins?

Spring Emphasis 2024 // Canopy Guide

Love Your Neighbor

CONVERSATION STARTERS

Use the questions below to kickstart a community building, all-play conversation that connects to our weekly topic. If your group meets for dinner, these might be great questions to share around a table.

- As we're talking about the way Jesus interacts with people on the social margins, whom do you think that applies to today?
- How have you seen these people helped well?
- Can you name any ministries in our area that work to help these people?

STUDY GUIDE

Sometimes we encounter people who are hard to be around - maybe looks, smell, or just reputation. In fact, most of us have to confess that we try to avoid encountering those kinds of people. That discomfort is not unique to us nor is it new: Jesus dealt with many people from society's margins. What he did and how he related can help us as we seek to love unpleasant neighbors.

Probably the most shocking confrontation in Jesus' day was with lepers. If you have read the Old Testament prohibitions about dealing with leprosy (Leviticus 13 and 14), you know how socially isolated lepers were: no direct interpersonal contact, even with family, and shouted warnings to tell people to keep distance. Yet more than one leper approached Jesus seeking healing, and he touched them in the process.

Homeless beggars accosted Jesus as he traveled in his ministry, even shouting out to Him as he passed by - often to the embarrassment or aggravation of bystanders. It was even more in your face than holding a cardboard message at traffic intersections. Once a crazy man, who had been locked up but broke the chains and lived in a graveyard, ran up as Jesus got out of a boat and shouted that he wanted to be left alone. Yet another time, as Jesus was on the way to a life-and-death situation, he was stopped by a grasp of

his garment by a woman with unstoppable bleeding, which meant she could not have public contact with anyone, but yet she reached out to touch him. She blurted out her condition in a crowded setting, but she received complete healing.

Jesus was patient and compassionate to each person, and he generally gave them more than they asked or expected, especially respect and personal attention. Beyond the healing and restoring to full capacity which he alone could provide, he demonstrated that reaching out to help even unpleasant or undesirable people is worth the effort.

Not everyone got all they initially asked or demanded, but each was treated individually and respectfully. Though we cannot usually cure people in need, we perhaps can help them find resources to improve their situation and provide encouragement. As we follow Jesus' example, we may get to know some people who may surprise us and themselves in positive and eternally important relationships.

Scripture to Read

- Mark 5:1-20 Luke 5:12-16 John 4:5-30, 39-42 Matt. 9:18-22 Luke 18:35-43

Deeper Discussion Questions

1. When you see someone on the side of the road, what is a Christian's best response?
2. What hurdles have you experienced in getting to know, support, and love people on the social margins?
3. From the Scripture and stories you read above, what actions of Jesus are ones you want to imitate in your own interactions with socially marginalized people?
4. Have the ways that society reacts to those on the social margins changed?

PRAYER

Make sure to claim some time as a group each week to pray specifically for each other.

EXTRA RESOURCES/ARTICLES/RESEARCH

1. [WJHLNews \(Jeff Keeling/John Jenco\) - increase in homeless population in NE Tennessee](#)
2. [Family Promise- JCServe Partner at Grandview, addressing family homelessness](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WulJjnY4YzM)
3. Thought provoking NPR article on giving money directly to the poor: [Is Giving Out Cash With No Strings Attached The Best Way To End Poverty](#)