



Introduction/Icebreaker:

What is something you never saw yourself doing...positive or negative? Something you're surprised at yourself that you do now?

Sermon Discussion:

- Was there anything in today's sermon or service that stuck out to you, challenged you, or really spoke to you?

Scripture Discussion:

- **Read Matthew 25:31-46**
 - What is your first reaction to this story?
- Look at verses 34-36.
 - What are the six areas of serving the needy that Jesus identifies?
 - Describe the needs met in each of these areas.
- Look at verses 37-40.
 - What does the response of the righteous tell us about their intentions in serving the needy?
 - What can we assume they were trying to accomplish when they served people?
 - Remember that in that culture, at that particular time in history, there were many religious laws in place to help people maintain their ceremonial cleanliness. How might Jesus' response here challenge the religious system of the day?
- Look at verses 41-45.
 - What might these people have been trying to accomplish by not serving the needy?

- How might we have a similar perspective as these people in our culture today? And why might we avoid helping those in need? Discuss some of the excuses you've heard, or maybe even used yourself, to avoid assisting the needy.
 - Think about the irony of Jesus' teaching here.
- Look at verse 46.
 - Why is it important to serve those in need?
 - What might be the cost of refusing to do so?
- It's important to note what Jesus is NOT saying in this passage. **Look at Ephesians 2:8-9.**
 - Paraphrase this verse in your own words.
 - How is a person saved?
 - What are we saved from?
 - Why can't works save us?
- **Read Ephesians 2:10.**
 - This verse states that we were created to do good works. Do you think this was the only we were created for?
 - What do you think is meant by good works? Give some examples of what "doing good works" might look like.
 - Looking again at verses 8-10, describe the relationship of works to grace? Which comes first? Which is the response to the other? Can we negate either of them and still fully follow Christ?
 - What would be the result of trusting in ourselves, in our good works, to merit our salvation?
- **Read James 2:14-26.** Look especially at verses 17, 18, 26
 - Do you find it difficult to not think of God as tallying points for us based on our good deeds?
 - How might an imbalanced focus on works lead to problems in our spirituality? In our view of God? In our view of ourselves?
 - What does James say about a person who claims to have faith, but who never demonstrates it by action?
 - What is the warning that is issued here, similar to the warning found in Matthew 25:31-46?

Application:

- Describe a time when you had needs beyond what you could meet and others stepped in to help meet your needs. How did this make you feel?

- Describe a time when you helped meet someone else's needs? How did this make you feel?
- What can you do to help out someone in need?
- Study isn't enough? Good Bible study and in-depth discussion are crucial elements for spiritual growth. But it takes more than just studying and listening. We don't want to be people who hear a lot of good sermons and participate in a lot of good discussions, but who remain unchanged and inactive. We want West Side to be a community of people who actively listen to the Word of God, and then who go out and act on what they have heard and learned. Faithful obedience to Christ is not simply the gathering of Christian information (though that's part of it), it's also active participation - doing what God has called us to do. We want to "know" and "do".
- So, this week's application is simply to find a way to reach out to someone in need. We recommend that you take your normal group time for this, thus eliminating some of the headache and challenge with trying to coordinate schedules of group members. We're providing you with a list of ways to reach out to people. Obviously this is not an exhaustive list. These are just some ideas to get you thinking of ways you can reach out to others, whether people you know or complete strangers, to impact and influence them for God.

Suggestions for Helping the Needy:

- a. Help out at a nursing home
- b. Take dinner to someone in need
- c. Buy groceries for a needy family
(contact Stephanie Dugan, Director of Community Care at WSCC at StephanieD@wschurch.org or 793-2800 to get in contact with people with needs)
- d. Serve at the St. John's breadline
430 N 5th St
Springfield, IL 62702-5202
Call: (217) 528-6098 to set up a date to help serve a meal
- e. Serve at the Ronald McDonald House
610 N 7th St
Springfield, IL 62702-5329
(217) 528-3314
- f. Serve at Inner City Mission
714 N 7th St
Springfield, IL 62702-6320
(217) 525-3940
<http://www.innercitymission.net/MakeaDifference/WaystoGetInvolved/tabid/125/Default.aspx>
- g. Serve at Contact Ministries
1100 E Adams St
Springfield, IL 62703-1030
(217) 753-3939
<http://www.contactministries.net/help.php>
- h. Serve at Sojourn House

1800 Westchester Blvd
Springfield, IL 62704-5600
(217) 726-5100
<http://www.sojournshelter.org/vol.htm>

i. Serve at Lewis Memorial Christian Village

3400 W. Washington St.
Springfield, IL 62711
(217) 787-9600

j. Serve at Harvard Park School

Attn: Tracy Deal
2501 South 11th Street
Springfield, IL 62703
(217) 525-3214
<http://www.springfield.k12.il.us/schools/harvardpark/>