

**DEVELOPING
A MEN'S TEAM MINISTRY
TO WIDOWS, WIDOWERS
AND SINGLE PARENTS**

Herb Reese

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Also by Herb Reese

*Developing a Men's Team Ministry
to Widows, Widowers
And Single Parents
(Orientation Video)*

*Doing Good Well:
Thirty Daily Meditations
on Developing
a Biblical and Focused
Discipline of Good Works*

DEVELOPING A MEN'S TEAM MINISTRY TO WIDOWS, WIDOWERS AND SINGLE PARENTS

Herb Reese

New Commandment Men's Ministries

Developing a Men's Team Ministry to Widows, Widowers and Single Parents

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To Teresa Moulder,
whose tears
God did not forget.



About New Commandment Men's Ministries

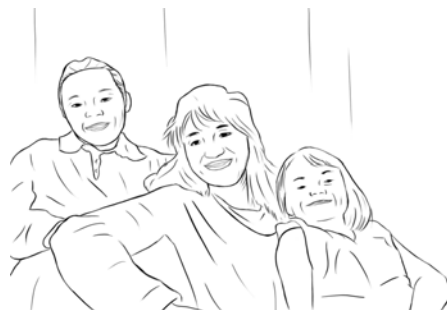
New Commandment Men's Ministries helps churches recruit, train, organize and deploy teams of men who permanently adopt the widowed, single parents and others in their church and community with long term needs. New Commandment provides churches with a ninety minute training session—called an orientation—that emphasizes the biblical teaching on the love of Christ, the role of good works in the Christian life, and God's heart for the widowed and single parents. New Commandment then invites men to donate three hours of time, one Saturday morning a month, and forms those men who respond into teams of four.

On service days, all the teams meet at their church at 7:00 AM for prayer, bible study and last minute planning. At 8:00 AM the men split up into their teams and go out and work in the home of their care receiver until 10:00 AM. They do basic tasks around the home that the care receiver cannot do. Most tasks, such as cleaning out gutters and raking leaves, require no skill. Every month, the teams return to the same care receiver, so their ministry to their care receiver lasts for years.

At the end of each service time, the men pray for their care receiver as well as for the street the care receiver lives on. If there are other widowed or single parents on the block, the team is encouraged to make its services available to them. In this way, teams can begin ministering to others up and down the street and their work becomes an outreach ministry for the church.

To date there are 10,000 men donating 200,000 hours of service annually to over 3,500 care receivers in 42 states, 550 churches and dozens of denominations. One new church every two days begins a men's team ministry.

New Commandment Men's Ministries is a Colorado 501 c(3) non profit corporation located in Colorado. Additional information can be found at NewCommandment.org.



Introduction

They're in every church, everywhere: thousands upon thousands of people with long term needs—widows, widowers, single parents, the disabled. Though we see them every Sunday, sit near them in the worship service, and greet them as we come and go, still they often suffer alone and silently. How do we minister in a way that is practical and effective to people like these?

You're here because you want to learn to do just that. You know the Bible talks about widows, single moms, fatherless children and other people with needs. You know that believers are to serve these people in some way. But perhaps you have never been given a way to do it.

This workbook and accompanying DVD is intended to equip you to serve people who have significant needs that last for years. When you are done, you are going to have a clearer understanding of what it means to love these people the way Jesus Christ does, what the purpose of good works is, and how you can make a practical and long lasting difference in the lives of those with long term needs in your church and community.

Let's begin with an overview of what we're going to cover in this workbook and DVD.

Overview

- Part 1: Biblical Principles
 - What? Love Like Jesus Christ.
 - How? Good Works.
 - Who? Widows, Widowers, Single Parents, Distressed People.
- Part 2: A Practical Model
- Part 3: Your Commitment
- Part 4: Organizing Your Team
- Part 5: Getting Started
- Part 6: Your Team's Three Spheres of Influence
- Part 7: Suggestions for Ministering to Your Care Receiver
- Part 8: Recommended Policy
- Part 9: Safety
- Part 10: Example of a Team
- Part 11: Appendix

Part 1: Biblical Principles

What are we to do?

We are to love like Jesus Christ.

A worthy goal of any men's ministry is to teach men how to love like Jesus Christ.

"The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith." 1 Timothy 1:5 (NIV)

"This is my command: Love each other as I have loved you." John 15:12 (NIV, see also John 13:34-35; 15:17)

Problem: We often fail to define what it means to love like Jesus Christ.

We tend to think of Christ's love _____.

We tend to think of Christ's love as _____.

We tend to confuse Christ's love with _____.

The difference between kind gestures and the love of Christ:

Kind Gestures

Project Oriented
Temporary
Random
Convenient
Little Impact on Recipient

The Love of Christ

We've seen the problems that come from not defining what the love of Christ is. So let's now look more carefully at Christ's command to love as he has loved us as it is expressed most fully in John 13:34-35.

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (NIV)

There are four things we need to note about this command.

This is a _____ from our *Lord*.

This is a _____ command given to the church.

This is an _____ command.

This is a _____ command.

Focusing now on this last point, what is it that makes Christ's love so unique that everyone will know we are disciples of Christ when we show it? There are at least three qualities of Christ's love that make it unique. They're expressed in the Incarnation and Redemption.

First unique quality of Christ's love: _____
_____.

Jesus Christ identified completely with us in the incarnation.

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1:14 (NIV)

"Who, being in very nature God, did not consider

equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness." Philippians 2:6-7 (NIV)

Second unique quality of Christ's love: _____

Jesus Christ became a human being permanently.

He allowed his love for us to change himself forever.

This commitment results in unending love.

"It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. 1 Cor. 13:7-8 (NRSV)

Third unique quality: _____.

Jesus sacrificed himself for us, taking ultimate responsibility to meet needs that cannot be met any other way.

And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Philippians 2:8 (NIV)

So a men's ministry that trains men to love like Jesus Christ will involve these elements:

- It will train men to _____ with people in their life situations so that they come to have a deep and profound understanding of them, leading to compassion.
- It will train men to _____ to the person they are showing love to in a life-changing way.
- It will train men to take ultimate responsibility for the person they are showing love to by being willing to _____ for them.

The promised result when we express this kind of unique love:
Everyone will know that we are disciples of Jesus Christ.

How are we to show the love of Christ?

We are to practice good works.

The way we are to show the _____ in practice is through good works.

“Let us consider how to encourage one another to love and good works.” Heb. 10:24 (NIV)

“Through love, serve one another.” Galatians 5:13 (NIV)

We must be very clear to say that good works do not _____ us.

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.” Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV)

“People are declared righteous because of their faith, not because of their work.” Romans 4:5 (NLT)

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in union with Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 6:23 (ISV)

But while we are not saved by good works, good works are what God saved us _____.

“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ to do good works, which God has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:10a (NIV)

We are to be _____ for good works and to make them a hallmark of our life.

“Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be }

generous and willing to share" 1 Timothy 6:18. (NIV)

"Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous for good works" Titus 2:14. (NIV)

We are to be _____ of good works to others and encourage others to do good works.

"In all things show yourself a pattern of good works" Titus 2:7. (NIV)

"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works" Hebrews 10:24. (NIV)

We are to let people _____ our good works so they will glorify God.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" Matthew 5:16. (NIV)

"Having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the Day of visitation." 1 Peter 2:12 (NKJV)



Who are we to do good works for?

They are especially for widows, fatherless, immigrants and any distressed person.

There are many kinds of good works and they are to be directed to _____.

“As we have opportunity, let us do good to all.” Galatians 6:10 (NIV)

But we are especially to direct our good works to _____ within the church.

“As we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” Galatians 6:10 (NIV)

In Isaiah 1:17, the Bible teaches us who our good works are primarily for.

“Learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.” Isaiah 1:17 (NRSV)

God is particularly concerned with _____, the _____ and _____.

“Do not take advantage of a widow or an orphan. If you do, they will cry out to me and I will certainly hear their cry. My anger will be aroused and I will kill you with the sword, your wives will become widows and your children fatherless.” [“Orphans” and “fatherless” are English translations of the same Hebrew word. Because widows often had almost no source of income in the Old Testament, a fatherless child was considered to be as desperate as an orphan.] Exodus 22:22-24 (NIV)

“He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves

the stranger, giving him food and clothing." Deuteronomy 1:18 (NKJV)

"You are the helper of the fatherless... You hear, O Lord, the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry, defending the fatherless and the oppressed, in order that man, who is of the earth, may terrify no more." Psalm 10:14, 18 (NIV)

"A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families, he leads forth the prisoners with singing; but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land." Psalm 68:5 (NIV)

"Jehovah preserveth the sojourners; He upholdeth the fatherless and widow." Psalm 146:9 (KJV)

"The Lord will tear down the proud person's house, but he will protect the widow's property." Proverbs 15:25 (NCV)

"In thee the fatherless findeth mercy." Hosea 14:3 (ASV)

Because of this special concern, God instituted laws in the Old Testament designed to _____ widows, the fatherless and immigrants

"At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns, so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied." Deuteronomy 14:29 (NIV, See also 16:11, 14)

"Do not deprive the alien or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge." Deut. 24:17 (NIV)

"When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands." Deuteronomy 24:19 (See also 24:20, 21)

“When you have finished paying all the tithe of your produce in the third year (which is the year of the tithe), giving it to the Levites, the aliens, the orphans and the widows, so that they may eat their fill within your towns...” Deuteronomy 26:12 (NRSV) (See also 26:13.)

A hallmark of a righteous man is the way he _____ widows, the fatherless and immigrants.

“Whoever heard me spoke well of me, and those who saw me commended me, because I rescued the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to assist him. The man who was dying blessed me; I made the widow’s heart sing.” Job 29:11-13 (NIV)

“If I have denied the desires of the poor or let the eyes of the widow grow weary, if I have kept my bread to myself, not sharing it with the fatherless—but from my youth I reared him as would a father, and from my birth I guided the widow—if I have seen anyone perishing for lack of clothing, or a needy man without a garment, and his heart did not bless me for warming him with the fleece from my sheep, if I have raised my hand against the fatherless, knowing that I had influence in court, then let my arm fall from the shoulder, let it be broken off at the joint.” Job 31:16-22 (NIV)

A hallmark of a wicked man is the way he _____ widows, the fatherless and immigrants.

“You would even cast lots for the fatherless and barter away your friend.” Job 6:27 (NIV)

“And you sent widows away empty-handed and broke the strength of the fatherless.” Job 22:9 (NIV)

“They drive away the orphan’s donkey and take the widow’s ox in pledge.” Job 24:3 (NIV)

“The fatherless child is snatched from the breast; the infant of the poor is seized for debt.” Job 24:9 (NIV)

"They prey on the barren and childless woman, and to the widow }
show no kindness." Job 24:21 (NIV)

"They prate, they speak arrogantly: All the workers of iniquity boast themselves. They break in pieces thy people, O Jehovah, And afflict thy heritage. They slay the widow and the sojourner. And murder the fatherless. And they say, Jehovah will not see, Neither will the God of Jacob consider. Psalm 94:4-7 (ASV)

"They judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them." Isaiah 1:23 (ASV)

"There is no end to the evil things they do. They won't plead the case of the orphan or help the poor." Jeremiah 5:28 (NCV)

"Father and mother are treated with contempt in you. The alien residing within you suffers extortion; the orphan and the widow are wronged in you." Ezekiel 22:7 (NRSV)

"Who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation." Mark 12:40 (NKJV)

God _____ those who mistreat widows, the fatherless and immigrants.

"Cursed is the man who withholds justice from the alien, the fatherless or the widow." Deuteronomy 27:19 (NIV)

"Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people." Isaiah 10:1, 2 (NIV)

"And I will come near you for judgment; I will be a swift witness against sorcerers, against adulterers, against perjurers, against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans, and against those who turn away an alien—because they do not fear Me," Says the Lord of hosts." Malachi 3:5 (NKJV)

God commands believers to _____ and
_____ widows, the fatherless and immigrants.

“Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed.” Psalm 82:3 (NIV)

“Do not move an ancient boundary stone or encroach on the fields of the fatherless.” Proverbs 23:10 (NIV)

“Learn to do right! [Literally: “Learn to do good.”] Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow. Come now, let us reason together,” says the Lord. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow, though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.” Isaiah 1:17, 18 (NIV) [This passage is the foundation for the concept of good deeds so frequently mentioned in the New Testament. It also gives the conditions for national repentance, cleansing and restoration.]

“If you do not oppress the alien, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm, then I will let you live in this place.” Jeremiah 7:6 (NIV)

“This is what the Lord says: Do what is fair and right. Save the one who has been robbed from the power of his attacker. Don’t mistreat or hurt the foreigners, orphans, or widows. Don’t kill innocent people here.” Jeremiah 22:3 (NCV)

“Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor.” Zechariah 7:10 (NKJV) [Zechariah 7:1-14, along with Isaiah 1:17, 18; Jeremiah 7:1-11 and 22:1-5 form an historical progression describing Judah’s refusal to repent and focus its good deeds on widows, the fatherless and immigrants.]

“Honor widows that are widows indeed.” 1 Timothy 5:3 (Paul’s teaching on widows extends to verse 16.)

“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this:

to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world." James 1:27 (NIV)

"The number of followers was growing. But during this same time, the Greek-speaking followers had an argument with the other Jewish followers. The Greek-speaking widows were not getting their share of the food that was given out every day." Acts 6:1 (NCV)

"They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do." Galatians 2:10 (NKJV)

Scripture makes it clear that ministry to the widowed, fatherless children, immigrants and others with long term needs in the church is a mandated ministry.

A mandated ministry is a ministry in the church that is commanded by Scripture. Mandated ministries are not optional for the church.

A non-mandated ministry is a ministry in the church that is not commanded in Scripture. They are not wrong, just optional.

**Examples of
Mandated
Ministries**

Preaching the Word
Communion
Evangelism
Discipleship
Widows, fatherless, etc.

**Examples of
Non-Mandated
Ministries**

Buildings
Nursery
Sunday School
Choir
Youth Ministry

So when it comes to ministry to the widowed, single parents and others with long term needs, the question is not whether we should do it, only how we should do it.

Part 2: A Practical Model for Men's Ministry

A Working Model of A Men's Ministry to Widows, Widowers, Single Parents and Others in Distress

Our goal for applying the Biblical teaching: We want to minister the love of Christ to every widow, single mom or any other distressed person, first in our church, and then reaching into the community, using good works in an open-ended commitment so that we come to understand each individual person in need deeply and profoundly and so that we guarantee that their needs will be met.

It is not possible to do this as an individual believer.

There is a _____ problem.

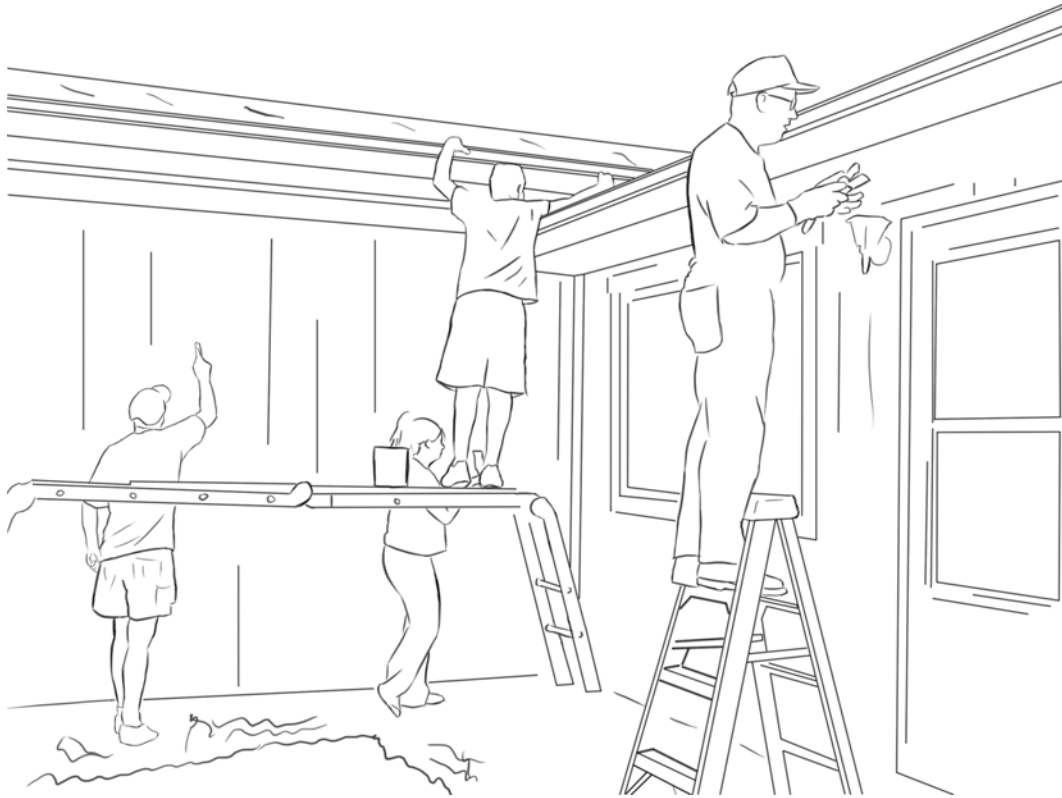
There is a _____ issue.

But it is possible to accomplish this goal by using _____ of men as a practical, organized expression of the body of Christ.

A simple model for men's ministry to widows and single moms.

- Men donate three hours one Saturday morning each month.
- The men are divided into teams of 4 and are assigned a widow, single mom or other person in distress in the church.
- Each team chooses a "caller" who is responsible for calling their widow or single mom the week before they are to meet and finds out what projects need to be done.
- The caller then calls the other members of his team, reminds them of the meeting on Saturday and tells them what tools and materials to bring.

- From 7:00 to 8:00 a.m., one Saturday morning a month, all the teams meet together for prayer, Bible study and last minute planning.
- Then at 8:00 a.m., the men split up into their teams and go out and work in the homes of their adopted person until 10:00 a.m.
- Each month, the team returns to the same widow or single mom.
- At the end of their visit, each team reads scripture, prays for the widow or single mom, and prays for other widows and single moms on the block.



Part 3: Your Commitment

So now you have learned a practical method for ministering to the distressed. As you can see, this is an exciting ministry that meets significant needs and builds friendships among our men at the same time. Our desire is to see as many men in your church as possible participate in this ministry so that we can eventually cover every person in distress in your church with a team.

In a few minutes we're going to take a break and we're going to ask you to decide during the break whether you feel God is calling you to participate in this ministry. As you make this decision, we want you to know exactly what will be expected of you as you minister with others in serving those in need.

- Three hours of your time one Saturday morning a month from 7 to 10 a.m.
- A small amount of financial sacrifice in the realm of \$5 to \$10 a month.
- The use of your skills, though none are required.
- You will need to okay a background check.
- Be on call in case your care receiver has an emergency. (We ask care receivers to use this privilege only in emergencies.)



Part 4: Organizing Your Team

During the break, we want you who are committing to this ministry to form teams of four with other men from your church. You do not need to personally know other members of your team. Nor do you need to have specific skills represented on your team. Please consider your team membership provisional. Your pastor or lay leader may need to shift team members around as needs arise. You will be assigned a care receiver on your first service day.

My team members are:

Name	Address	Phone	e-mail
------	---------	-------	--------

Our team caller is (he must have e-mail and check it daily):

Our care receiver is:

Part 5: Getting Started

The following date is the first service day your church will be holding:

Our Church's first Service Day is—

The week prior to the Saturday you meet, the team caller should contact your team's care receiver (usually on a Monday or Tuesday) and talk to her about what needs to be done. Then the team caller calls the other members of his team and tells them what tools and materials to bring. (The exception is the first visit, as noted below. The team caller does not call anyone prior to the first week. This will be done for him by the ministry leader.)

Your first visit:

Your first visit, however, should be seen as a get-to-know-you session. Spend most of your time just chatting and introducing yourselves. Then you should walk through the home with your care receiver and get ideas for future projects. These should be prioritized and tentative plans should be made for your next service day.

Be sure and inform your care receiver of the dates of your next visits.

Always remember that your primary purpose as a team is building relationships, not completing a project. Be sure and finish each visit with a time of prayer and Scripture reading. Pray especially for your care receiver's needs and for her neighbors.



Part 6: Your Team's Three Spheres of Influence

Your care receiver

It will take your care receiver a few months to realize that your commitment to her is real and to see just how valuable it is. As you minister to her, you will learn her unique needs and begin to tailor our ministry accordingly. Because of the love you are showing your care receiver, you will have an impact on everyone she knows, including her relatives, her friends and her neighbors.

Your care receiver's block or housing complex

Over time, your care receiver's neighbors are going to notice your team working with your widow or single mom. Ask your care receiver to let any widows, single moms or other distressed people on her block know that your team is available to help them too. In this way, you will have a very natural opportunity to share your faith in Christ.

Your Church

Scripture tells us that we are to encourage one another to love and good deeds. Share what you are doing with other men in the church and invite them to the next orientation meeting. In this way, your men's ministry to the distressed in your church can grow to cover every need in your congregation.



Part 7: Suggestions for Ministering to Your Care Receiver

Clean

- Clean carpets
- Clean windows inside and out
- Clean refrigerator
- Clean stove
- Clean and arrange garage
- Haul trash

Organize

- Arrange closets
- Build storage shelves
- Install closet organizers
- Hang pictures
- Seasonal decorations

Check

- Check smoke and CO detectors
- Check central air filter
- Check weather stripping and windows
- Check lights
- Check faucets for leaks
- Check roof
- Check for tripping hazards

Repair

- Repair drywall
- Paint rooms
- Repair furniture
- Paint or stain cabinets
- Repair plumbing

Paint exterior
Repair porch or patio
Repair cement cracks
Repair fence

Upgrade

Install deadbolts
Install peephole
Install smoke/CO detectors
Install wheelchair ramps
Install grab handles in bathroom
Install outside security light
Install garage door opener

Maintain

Trim bushes, trees
Fertilize lawn
Clean gutters
Flip mattresses
Winterize car
Check tire pressure
Check fluid levels on car
Wash/wax car
Vacuum car
Detail car
Change oil and filter
Drive car and diagnose problems
Check car maintenance schedule

Teach

Set up a computer and Internet
Teach basic computer skills
If financial problems: (first notify pastor)
Work on budget
Teach basic financial skills
Work on debt reduction plan

Research

Federal, state and local social programs
Contractors
Auto mechanics, plumbers, electricians
Auto purchases

Minister to Children (always at least two adults)

Talk
Have them help you
Read books out loud
Play video games
Play ball
Watch cartoons
Ask about school/friends

Interact

Talk with your care receiver
Take out to breakfast as a team
Invite to dinner with your family
Share your life—talk about your wife, kids, work, hobbies

Encourage

Pray
Read Scripture

Reach Out to Neighbors

Get neighbors involved
Start a Bible study



Part 8: Recommended Policies

The safety and security of both care receivers and care givers is of primary concern to New Commandment Men's Ministries and to your church. To that end, NCMM recommends the following policies:

- No team member should go to the home of a care receiver alone.
- No team member should be alone in a room with a care receiver's child of any age.
- If a care receiver needs help with budgeting, debt relief, etc., your pastor or appropriate staff person should be notified.
- At no time should a team member give a care receiver investment advice.
- Building codes and city ordinances should be followed.
- Work requiring licensed professionals should only be done by professionals.
- Please do not skip the 7:00 a.m. group meeting and go directly to your care receiver's home at 8:00 a.m.



Part 9: Safety – Please Read Carefully

Homes are dangerous places. You are working at your own risk. Please exercise caution when working in the home of your care receiver. Here are some safety guidelines to follow:

- Electrical—other than extremely minor repairs, use an electrician. Station someone at the breaker box when turning off circuit breakers—or better yet, lock and red tag them. Make sure all cords for power tools are grounded. Never operate power tools around water or on wet grass.
- Overhead lines—make a mental note of where overhead lines are when carrying tall objects.
- Ladders and heights—always have someone hold your ladder. Exercise extreme caution on roofs and use a tether.
- Gas—use a plumber at all times.
- Digging—call in advance for placement of gas and electrical lines.
- Cars on jacks and ramps—have someone double check safety. Use chock blocks, jack stands and the emergency brake.
- Operating hazardous equipment—use safety devices, such as goggles, ear plugs, etc., when appropriate. The person who owns or rented the equipment should operate it.
- Lift with your back straight. Ask for help with heavy objects.

**Part 10: Example of a Team
From Crossroads Church
Northglenn, Colorado**

Jay and Esther Hayman, Care Receivers
2000 W. 102nd Ave. #432
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Part 11: APPENDIX

Frequently Asked Questions

Should we limit this ministry to just the widowed and single parents?

No. The Bible simply uses these categories to generally describe “the oppressed,” “the weak,” etc. These might also include widowers, single dads, the disabled, divorcees, and single people in general. What your church should do, though, is prioritize the groups it wants to minister to and work down.

Why use men only?

This type of ministry is particularly well suited for men. Men are task-oriented and relate well with each other while doing things together. It also seems more appropriate to have just men in teams, since they will be spending a lot of time together over the months and years. Men work best with widows and single moms who have their own homes and cars—something they can work on. Women in retirement homes and with no cars seem to be ministered to best by other women.

How do we choose and prioritize care receivers?

The pastor and other appropriate staff members should determine who receives a team. While the criteria used to choose care receivers varies, in general, we encourage churches to have a balance between people who are destitute and people who are socially isolated, but may be financially stable. Additional suggestions can be found in this appendix under “What to do Before and After Your Orientation.”

Are we joining a franchise ministry?

No. New Commandment Men’s Ministries is not a franchise ministry. There are no membership requirements or annual dues. Nor are churches required to use our material. We are simply providing a model for churches to use any way they wish. Churches can modify it according to their own needs and they can call their ministry anything they want. We keep a list of churches with men’s team ministries as a way of demonstrating the validity of the ministry model and as an encouragement for other churches to begin their own men’s team ministry.

Isn't this type of men's ministry the same as the "list" of widows Paul mentions in 1 Timothy 5?

The widows' list in 1 Timothy 5 refers to widows with no means of income, including no relatives who can support them. Total support is not what is being provided with this type of ministry. This ministry is supplemental in nature. Today, with the advent of Social Security, we tend to ignore 1 Timothy 5 as unneeded, since no widow is completely without financial support. What we forget, however, is that most widows, widowers, and single parents, etc. still have very significant spiritual, emotional and social—and sometimes financial—needs that a team of men can and should attempt to fulfill.

I haven't even been doing the things my wife wants me to do around my own home. Why should I be doing projects for someone else?

You shouldn't. That's why we stress to every man involved in this ministry that when they finish working with their team serving the care receiver they are working with, they need to go home and say to their wife, "Now honey, what do you want me to do for *you* today." And then they need to do it. Rather than encouraging men to do things for someone else *instead* of their wife, this ministry trains men to have servant hearts, both for someone else *and* for their own families.

Won't this ministry encourage inappropriate relationships between men and women?

No, men's team ministry does just the opposite. It teaches men that there is a type of love that has nothing to do with sex, and it's called righteousness. Because we use teams of men and train them to show compassion, commitment, service and sacrifice to women from within that context, the men come to realize that there is a type of non-sexual love that is extremely fulfilling. Paul talks about this love in Romans six when he says that as we present ourselves to God, and the members of our body as instruments of righteousness, we become slaves of righteousness (Romans 6:11-18). This explains why men who get involved in this type of ministry become so passionate about it and why, in the many years we have done this ministry, inappropriate relationships have not been a problem. This isn't to say inappropriate relationships couldn't be a problem, but it hasn't been to date.

Why only once a month?

The specific plan that is presented here is only a working model. It has worked in many churches of different sizes, demographics, and locations. You have to do what works best for your church. The important thing is not to burn your men out with large projects and frequent meetings. Emphasize the long haul. We have found that once a month over months and years is more than adequate to communicate committed love.

Why finish at 10 a.m.?

By finishing at 10 a.m. husbands and fathers don't sacrifice their entire morning at the expense of their wives and children. A team of older men with no children at home might feel comfortable with a four hour or more commitment a month. These types of teams might be assigned to care receivers with greater needs.

Are there other churches doing this?

As of August, 2011, over 500 churches in 18 denominations, 44 states and 5 foreign countries are doing this ministry. There are 11,000 men donating 220,000 hours of service to 3,500 care receivers.

Who decides which widows, widowers and single parents should be ministered to?

The pastor or appropriate staff person should be consulted. They are the ones who know the congregation best.

Won't this ministry strain a church that is already strapped for workers?

No. It will do just the opposite. You will see a renewed energy and zeal for all types of work in the church. This ministry is incredibly refreshing and infuses a church with love and joy. As a result, the men want to do more, not less, for the Lord. The women who are being ministered to often respond by asking, "What can I do in the church?" One sixty year old widow in poor health who was being ministered to by men in her church volunteered for the youth ministry in her church! She became a wonderful grandmother figure for the girls in the group. That is what happens when love like this begins to permeate an entire church.

What about people in need outside the church?

Scripture tells us to emphasize needy people within the church first, followed by those outside the church. "Let us do good to all men, *especially* to those who are of the household of faith." But having focused first on those in your church, you will find that over time there will be many opportunities to take men's team ministry to people in your community.

Are there security issues?

Yes. It is the church's responsibility to guarantee the safety of the people the men are working with. Background checks should be done on all men participating in this ministry. This should be worked out with the church leadership in some kind of policy statement that is strictly followed. The women should be informed that if they feel uncomfortable in any way with who is coming into their home, they should notify the church immediately. Relatives of care receivers should also be notified about this ministry. But again, these security issues should not deter us from obeying the Word of God.

How should men be recruited?

Probably the best way is to have an orientation meeting and invite new recruits to it. This way you can screen the men before they begin working with the widows. You can also explain the philosophy of the ministry and orient them to procedures.

Should we do a skills inventory for the men?

A skills inventory isn't necessary and could be counterproductive by keeping men who don't feel "handy" away from the ministry. The tasks around the home are generally pretty simple. For that reason, we stress that no skills are needed. In fact, this is a great opportunity for men without skills to learn basic home and auto maintenance from more skilled members of the team. If someone on the team does not have a skill required for a widow's particular job, members from other teams can be loaned to the team.

What about financing the projects?

First, we ask the care receiver to provide money for the material. Sometimes, he or she does not have it. If that is the case, for small pro-

jects, we ask the team members to chip in. Sometimes relatives of the care receiver help out. If the projects are larger, charities or government agencies should be researched. Ultimately the church leadership can be approached and asked to consider the need. One church automatically budgeted \$100/month per widow and the team could spend this amount and get reimbursed for it automatically. Amounts above \$100 needed prior approval.

Won't men tire of a long-term commitment?

Boredom seldom occurs in this ministry. Every now and then something comes up and a man has to stop working with his team. Some men move away. But the team goes on, with new men filling the void. What we have seen is that over time the commitment becomes stronger as the team comes to know their care receiver and each other on a deeper level

We also encourage men's ministries to the widowed and single parents to take a break every twelve months or so and do something fun for the entire day together.

How many men does it normally take to cover everyone in the church who needs and wants a team?

While churches vary widely in the makeup of their congregations, in a typical church, about three to five per cent of the congregation needs a team. To cover that many people with four men each usually requires about a third of the men in the church.

Can we make copies of this workbook?

If you cannot afford additional copies of this workbook, contact New Commandment and we will work something out. But you need to know that the average cost to New Commandment for each church starting a men's team ministry is over \$200 and the average income from churches starting a men's team ministry is under \$100. The difference is made up by donors.

WHAT TO DO BEFORE AND AFTER YOUR ORIENTATION

Before Your Orientation

Review the entire orientation DVD and workbook with your men's ministry leadership so you know exactly what you are promoting and what to expect during the orientation. Order additional workbooks at least two weeks in advance. Overnight shipping can get expensive. Additional workbooks are \$5.99 each. Additional DVDs are \$70 each.

Give your upcoming orientation sustained and wide exposure over at least four weekends. Use bulletin announcements, bulletin inserts, pulpit announcements, and posters. In particular, place posters in your men's restrooms. It would be helpful if your pastor could send a letter to all of the men in your church inviting them to come to the orientation.

Make sure the men know that no skills are required and that they are not committing to the ministry simply by attending the orientation. They will be given a chance to do that at the orientation.

Be sure to avoid offending the widowed and single parents with condescending and patronizing attitudes in the announcements. Convey the idea that your widowed and single parents are courageous and capable people in difficult situations and you want to come alongside them and stand with them in obedience to the Word of God.

Feel free to call your men's team ministry to the widowed and single parents anything you like. This is not a "franchise" ministry.

Begin working on a potential list of care receivers. Do this with your church leadership. *But do not publicize this list or contact anyone on the list until after the orientation when you know how many teams you have.*

After Your Orientation

Here are some basic suggestions to help you implement the ministry smoothly and without feeling overwhelmed.

Forming Your Teams

The first thing you will do is form your teams, normally at the end of the orientation. Don't make a big deal out of this. It doesn't matter who is on what team. The reason is because you don't know what projects the teams will be doing since they will be changing from month to month. Men with special skills can be "borrowed" for particular projects on an as needed basis.

It is recommended that the person leading the ministry assign himself as a fifth member of a team so that he can rotate around and visit other teams throughout the year. This way, he can keep his finger on the pulse of the ministry.

Background Checks

New Commandment Men's Ministries' policy is to strongly encourage all churches to do background checks on the men who are participating. You should run background checks on all men prior to your first service day.

As you review the background checks, some men will have issues in their past that are unrelated to this ministry. For example, a man may have a conviction twenty years ago for marijuana possession. Other issues, such as assault or sexual molestation would be cause for exclusion. If you are a layman, be sure and review all issues with your pastor or other appropriate church staff person.

Recruiting Care Receivers

When choosing potential care receivers, be sure and work through the proper channels, such as your pastor, elders, deacons, etc. in developing your list.

After you decide who should be on the list, prioritize by extent of need or by those who deserve the ministry most. For example, a widow who has been faithful in the church for forty years may not have the same need as a single mom with three kids who has been attending for two months. But she certainly should be given at least equal consideration. It is not uncommon for a widow who is financially well off to receive this type of ministry. Help your men understand that well to do widows have spiritual, physical and social needs to be met.

You should also take into consideration whether or not a potential care receiver has relatives or others who are actively involved in helping them. Those without this type of support should also be given priority.

Next, contact the potential care receivers individually and privately to see if they are interested in having a team. Generally, you will receive three basic types of responses: 1) Those who immediately respond positively, 2) Those who are concerned about security issues, 3) and those who take pride in their independence and feel slightly insulted that you asked them at all. To address the second and third types of responses, be sure you emphasize that the men have been screened with background checks and that you would consider it a privilege to serve them. Again, avoid condescending and patronizing attitudes.

If you have more care receivers than teams, feel free to contact me for advice. There are various ways to deal with this type of situation.

Preparing for Your First Service Day

On the Sunday or Monday prior to your first service day, use your e-mail to contact your team callers. Remind them to call their care receiver and their team members. However, they will not be asking their care receiver for projects at this time. They will simply be reminding them that they are coming on the next Saturday. *Be sure and ask your team callers to report back to you later in the week and let you know how it went. If you do not hear from them, contact them yourself.* It is very important that you verify your communication and not rely solely on one e-mail or voice mail. Tell your team callers that they also need to verify communication with their care receiver and team members and not assume they got the message.

For the first couple of months, you might also ask your church secretary to send out postcards on Wednesday (so the men get them Thursday or Friday) to remind the team members. It is important that as many men as possible attend the first couple of service days to develop a successful track record.

You will also want to have a devotional ready. We try to send out a newsletter monthly (though we miss some months) that includes a Bible study you can use. Be sure we have your email address if you want to receive it. Of course, you may want to use your own material. We suggest you emphasize different aspects of ministry to widows and single parents in your devotional time. There are many passages from the seminar that deserve fuller treatment. Our book, *Doing Good Well*,

Thirty Daily Meditations on Developing a Biblical and Focused Discipline of Good Works, is an excellent resource for your devotional time.

Make sure you do your background checks by your first service day. We recommend Trak-1.com for national background checks. The cost is \$27 per person. They give discount rates for groups.

Prepare maps of the care receiver's location for each team by going online to sites such as MapQuest®. You will need one map for each team member.

You will also need to develop a team roster with the care receiver for each team and their contact information. Each person should be given a copy of the team roster with care receivers on the first service day. For larger groups, you may want to just give the men individual team rosters with their care receiver and contact information.

Your First Service Day

The key to a successful first hour is to keep it as simple as possible. You are meeting in order to go to work. This is a preparation and planning time, not primarily a social time.

Start on time regardless of how many men are present. You can begin by having teams share what they are going to do. (On the first service day, begin by describing each care receiver to their team members.)

Review procedures for contacting team members and care receivers and ask if there were any problems. If some team callers say their team members told them they were going to come but are not present by 8:00, have the team caller call them at 8:00 and find out what happened. (Usually the team member has accidentally slept in.)

Next, do your devotional and prayer time. You may want the teams to split up and pray together.

Remind your teams to pray and read scripture with their care receiver and to pray for the block they are working on.

End a few minutes before 8 a.m. in order to give your teams time to get to their care receiver's home on the hour.

Plan for the Future

The real success of your men's team ministry to the widowed and single

parents won't be known until years in the future. This is a long term ministry designed to meet long term needs. Here are a few insights to help you achieve that goal.

Remember that attrition is normal. Over time, some of your teams will dwindle. This is one reason why we have teams in the first place. They are designed to function even with just two men. Don't get discouraged when this happens.

Start planning now for your next recruitment. Set a date nine months to a year from now. Take pictures and video of your teams in action. Identify care receivers and care givers who can give testimonies to the church. See if your pastor can preach on this topic.

Handling Special Project Requests

Men's team ministry in the local church can result in a common misunderstanding: Because there are men in the church that are serving people with long term needs, expectations can be heightened on the part of the congregation as a whole. The result is that your church office may get an increase in calls that go like this: "I understand you have a group of men that do things for people. Can you send someone over to fix my leaky faucet?"

We call these special project requests. If your men's team ministry is to succeed in maintaining its focus on meeting long term needs with long term ministry, then it has to address the issue of special project requests in a way that does not allow them to overwhelm your men's team ministry as a whole.

Here are some suggestions:

Have your men's ministry teams be on call for one month at a time and rotate through the teams each month. The on call team then deals with special project requests on their assigned month. We have 15 teams at the church I attend, so a team is only on call once every 15 months. Smaller churches will rotate through faster, but their special project requests will be fewer as well.

Talk to your church staff about screening special project requests for only those that are true emergencies, and not just requests of convenience, such as help with moving. Your church staff needs to have some spine and be able to say no to non emergency requests and so does the leadership of your men's team ministry. Your responsibility is to protect

your men from frivolous work that will wear them out and discourage them from meeting the long term needs in your church.

For example, I and the staff at my church normally turn down requests for help with moving. We encourage the person who is moving to ask individuals in the church on their own, to hire a moving company, use a man power type of agency (MovingHelp.com® is an excellent resource for hiring one or two customer-rated movers in a given area), or hire teens out of the youth group. But if it's an emergency move, then the church needs to help. Once someone in our church was being evicted from their apartment and was about to lose all of their possessions if they weren't out in three days. Since this was an emergency, we had the on call team handle that move.

This system has worked well for us and we are passing it along to all churches now as a way of addressing this particular issue.

Our prayer for you is that you will have a successful men's team ministry to the widowed and single parents for years to come. We like to keep in touch with churches that are doing this ministry. You'll probably be hearing from us down the road. And please feel free to email NCMM with any questions you may have.

Two Alternate Models for Churches Under One Hundred

Some smaller churches have a high ratio of care receivers to care givers and cannot provide teams of four men for each person in need. Below are two alternate models for this type of situation.

First Alternate Model

- Men are placed in teams of four but each team is assigned two or three care receivers instead of one.
- The team caller calls all care receivers monthly, but the team rotates through one care receiver each month.

Second Alternate Model

- Each care receiver is assigned one man as a contact person instead of a team of four. For example, if there are twelve men, then twelve care receivers are assigned, one to each of them. Once a month, the contact person calls his care receiver and discusses what projects need to be done.
- The contact person then reports the projects to the ministry head, who then decides which projects can be done *on a team basis*. For example, the twelve men can be divided into three teams of four or four teams of three. So there could be three or four projects out of the twelve potential projects to be done.
- The ministry head tells his men and the care receivers which ones are going to have projects done.
- Each month the men have a regular service day as in the normal model.
- The next month, the teams will generally go to the homes of different care receivers, depending on need. But each care receiver can be served on a regular basis and they are still being verbally contacted on a monthly basis.

Relational/Team Ministry Vs. Project Ministry

Relational/Team Ministry

- Projects are organized and administered by the individual teams.
- Scheduling is easy and predictable because teams meet on a specific Saturday of each month.
- Teams are permanent and don't have to be recruited every month.
- The team is building long term relationships.
- Team members seldom suffer burn out because each member shares the load with three others.
- Team members can plan projects over several months and plan accordingly.
- The team often has the opportunity to minister to neighbors and friends of the care receiver.
- Care receivers don't have to ask each time they need a project done because the team automatically shows up every month.

Project Ministry

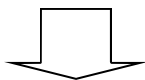
- Projects are administered by the ministry leader, placing most of the burden on one person.
- Each project often has a unique schedule that must be worked out with volunteers.
- New volunteers often have to be recruited for every project.
- Few relationships are being developed.
- Burn out occurs frequently because volunteers tend to work alone or are called upon to work too frequently.
- Most projects involve only one or two visits.
- Few additional contacts are made because the volunteers are not returning to the care receiver.
- Every time they need something, the care receiver has to make a special request.

The Natural Results of Personal Identification

Knowledge

As the team members visit their care receiver, they learn about his or her problems.

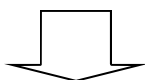
"And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge..."



Understanding

Over time, the team members come to see those problems in the context of a life that has been lived, resulting in understanding.

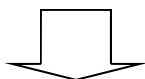
"...and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ." Philippians 1:9b-11a



Affection

As the team members understand their care receiver, their knowledge and understanding of him or her result in godly affection.

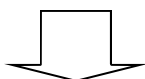
"God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus." Philippians 1:8
"If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ...if any affection"
Philippians 2:1



Compassion

Their understanding and affection result in an inner compulsion to act on behalf of their care receiver.

"...and compassion. Then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose." Philippians 2:2



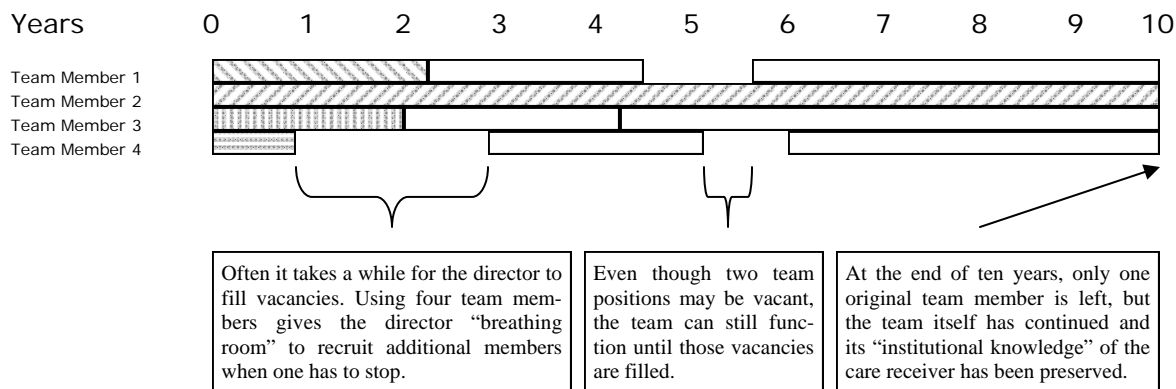
Sacrifice

Their compassion compels them to sacrifice.

"Each of you should look ... to the interests of others. Philippians 2:4

Commitment to Those With Long Term Needs

An Example of a Team Over Time

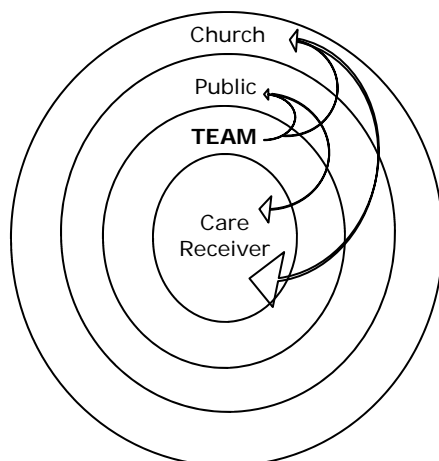


Teams provide many benefits to the church, to participants and to care receivers. Teams give the church ease of administration and flexibility. Teams provide the participants with friendships and reduce the burden on any one man. And teams provide the care receiver with consistent, quality ministry over years.

Most ministry in the New Testament occurred in the context of teams. Among the many examples of teams are: Jesus and the twelve disciples, the Seventy sent out two by two, Paul and Barnabas, and Paul and Timothy.

What it Means to Sacrifice for a Care Receiver

The care receivers themselves are responsible for meeting as many needs as they can. For needs they cannot meet, the team commits to find resources to meet those needs by acting as an advocate for them. This is in accordance with Isaiah 1:17.



No Needy Person Among Us:

Mobilize Your Men to Meet the Needs Spectrum in Your Church

Before starting New Commandment Men's Ministries in January of 2003, I used the men's team ministry concept in two churches I was the pastor of. In both of those churches, I was able to say, "To the best of my knowledge, there is not a single need going unmet in our congregation."

One of the distinguishing features of the early church is that it was able to make this claim: "There are no needy people among us" (Acts 4:34). The Apostles taught and modeled the importance of meeting the needs of people in the church. Here is Paul's teaching to the elders at Ephesus.

"You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" Acts 20:34-35 (NIV)

John, who didn't hesitate to take Mary—herself a widow and single mother—into his household after Jesus was crucified, wrote many years later:

We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters. If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God's love be in that person? Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions. 1 John 3:16-18 (NLT)

Clearly, it is God's will for every church to be able to say, "There is not a needy person among us." I believe one function of a men's ministry is to help the church achieve this goal.

The church as a corporate body is responsible for meeting “pressing needs.”

When writing to the young pastor Titus, the apostle Paul urged him to focus on meeting the needs of his congregation. “Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs so that they will not be unfruitful” (Titus 3:14 NASB). Paul is saying that there are “pressing” or urgent needs that exist in all congregations and that it is the responsibility of the individual members of the congregation to meet those needs “so that they will not be unfruitful,” i.e., so they will not lack new converts.

Distinguish between pressing needs and non-pressing needs.

The problem is, many congregations fail to distinguish between true pressing needs and needs that are not pressing at all. For example, for some reason many congregations feel it is their responsibility to help everyone who asks for help when they move. I put myself through seminary working for a moving company. But as a pastor, I think I moved more people than I ever did working for that moving company! I joke about how new believers think they’ve joined a church, but what they have really joined is a front for a moving company.

Another example is someone who has a project at home that requires skilled—and expensive—labor. Let’s say they need a pipe fixed and they find out the labor is \$120 an hour for a plumber. But then they remember that Fred at church is a plumber and so they call the church and ask if Fred can come out and fix their pipe for free. But after three or four requests like this from the church office, Fred decides that he has had enough and tells the church not to call him anymore.

In both of these examples, the individuals requesting help from the church are simply looking to save some money on labor. But getting a good deal on labor is not what the Bible calls “a pressing need.” The church as a corporate body does not exist simply to provide believers with cheap labor.

I stress that we are talking about the church *as a corporate body*. It certainly isn’t inappropriate to go to church and ask your friends to help you move, or to ask a friend at church who is a plumber to help with a plumbing problem. But expecting the church itself to shoulder the burden is inappropriate.

Because the church fails to make the distinction between pressing needs and non-pressing needs, it wastes its volunteer resources resulting in genuine pressing needs going unmet.

Learn how to refer non-pressing needs.

Whoever fields the requests for help in the church front office needs to be trained to distinguish between pressing needs and non-pressing needs and then they need to develop a little spine so they can say no to non-pressing needs.

They also need to have at hand some outside resources they can refer people to. For example, a good resource for people who are moving is MovingHelp.com®. You can get customer reviewed bids for help with moving from anywhere in the country. You might also consider contacting your youth group and seeing if any of the youth would be willing to hire themselves out (for a good wage) for moves.

Identify the three types of pressing needs that occur in the church.

Now that we've distinguished between pressing needs and non-pressing needs, we need to discuss the different pressing needs that exist in most churches. After observing the various types of requests for help that come into the church over the years, I've categorized them into three groups. (See diagram following this article.)

1. Emergency special project needs.

These are one time, or temporary, requests where there is immediate danger to life or property.

"Helen," a member of our church, was on the verge of being evicted from her apartment and couldn't afford to hire someone to help her move. She called the church office in a panic and said that if she didn't have her possessions out of the apartment by 8:00 AM the following Monday morning, she would lose everything.

This was a true pressing need and in this case, the church *as a corporate body* took responsibility for the move and got her things out in time.

Most churches do a reasonably good job with emergency special project

requests. But they struggle with the next category.

2. Long term needs.

This second category refers to people whose normal social relationships have been severed, such as the widowed, single parents and the fatherless. It can also refer to those with long term physical disabilities. The reason churches struggle with these needs is because they are long term. They can last for years and even decades.

Churches tend to address these needs as if they are emergency special project requests. We send someone over to fix widow Beverly's electrical problem, or rake her leaves. But what we are going to see is that people in this category need much more from the church than just projects done for them.

3. Catastrophic long term needs.

These are needs that arise when a catastrophe happens in someone's life that results in total dependence.

For example, a woman with twelve children walked into a church in the northeast and said that her husband was in prison and she had just been diagnosed with cancer and had only weeks to live. She asked the church to help her. And then, sure enough, she died, leaving twelve orphans.

Or a youth pastor in a church in the Pacific northwest took his youth group waterskiing. When it was his turn, he fell and broke his neck, becoming a quadriplegic.

In both of these situations, we have catastrophes that resulted in complete and total dependence—for years.

So the question is, how does the church go about addressing these three types of pressing needs? Here is a strategy that I have seen work in numerous churches.

Focus on long term needs first.

The reason I recommend focusing on long term needs first is because the Bible focuses on these needs. There are dozens of passages in the Word of God that talk about widows, orphans, the oppressed, the weak. Here are two of them:

“Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.” (James 1:27 NRSV)

“Learn to do right. Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.” (Isaiah 1:17 NIV)

But the problem with these types of needs is that they are long term, lasting for years and even decades. And not only are they long term needs, the needs themselves require more than just projects. What the widowed and single parents in our churches need from the church is to be *loved*. And specifically, they need to be loved with the love of Christ.

Men’s team ministry to the widowed and single parents meets both of these objectives. It provides consistent and effective ministry over years and it is relationship oriented, not just project oriented.

So we take our men, train them in the love of Christ, organize them into teams and assign them to people in our churches with long term needs. Once the needs of our widowed and single parents have been met, the church is prepared to address the two other categories of pressing needs.

Meet emergency special project requests by putting your men’s teams on call each month.

Ask each team to take one month and be responsible for responding to the emergency special project requests that come into the church office. So if you have four teams, for example, each team will be on call once every four months. But make sure your church office is screening the calls and only true emergency special project requests are passed on to the teams. Otherwise, you will burn your men out.

Your church is now ready to address the third and most difficult category of pressing need in the church: catastrophic needs.

Meet catastrophic needs by claiming 2 Corinthians 9:8.

Having met both long term needs in the church as well as emergency special project requests, your church has learned two very important

lessons: first, always walk toward liability and, second, when we do, God will provide the means to meet the need. After all, he has met the needs of all of your widowed and single parents, as well as the needs involved with the smaller emergency special project requests. Why wouldn't He also provide for the needs that arise in the midst of a tragedy?

Listen to what 2 Corinthians 9:8 says:

"God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things in all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."

This is an amazing promise. Scripture says that, as we trust the Lord, when we take responsibility for a need, God will provide the means to meet the need.

Take, for example, the church that had the woman with twelve children walk through the door and then die. How did that church "abound in every good work?" Twelve families each took in one of the children, some adopting the children and some taking them in as foster children. That was five years ago. As of this writing, those families are still caring for those children. Can you imagine the impact that had on the church and its community?

What about the youth pastor who fell and broke his neck. How did his church "abound in every good work?" They built him a brand new five bedroom home so that he could move in with his best friend and his best friend's wife and they help with his care.

So is it possible for a church to really say, "There is not a needy person among us?" Absolutely! The love of Christ cannot coexist with ongoing need (1 John 3:17). And Paul makes it clear that if we fail to meet "pressing needs," then we will be "unfruitful" (Titus 3:14).

Three Bible Studies

On Becoming Men of Influence

First Bible Study: Your Care Receiver Has Influence

It's easy to ignore those who are in chronic distress, but your care receiver has influence and when you minister the love of Christ to her, you influence everyone she knows.

He came to a town in Samaria called Sychar.... Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?"...

Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water...." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water." He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." "I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true." "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet.... I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." 26 Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he."... Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" They came out of the town and made their way toward him. John 4:5ff (NIV)

1. Describe the tragic life of the Samaritan woman Jesus met at the well.

For Further Thought

Betty Carlson once wrote, “No one is so insignificant as to be without influence.” This is particularly true of your care receiver. It’s easy to think that because she has been sidelined by our society that therefore she is unimportant. Shouldn’t we put our efforts and resources into programs and buildings and political movements?

While these things may be necessary, we often forget that God’s strategy is for us to minister to the lowly. Your care receiver is part of a relational grid that includes relatives, neighbors, friends and possibly fellow workers. When you minister the love of Christ to her, you are affecting everyone she knows.

Let’s think about the love of Christ for a moment. We have seen that loving someone the way Christ has loved us means we have come to know and understand them, have committed ourselves to them and that we are willing to sacrifice for them.

When we show this quality of love to our care receiver, here is what she concludes: 1) “I am known profoundly and cared for deeply”; 2) “Needs that I cannot meet myself will be met”; 3) “This love will never end.” In other words, the love of Christ has suddenly become extremely valuable and practical to her.

Once your care receiver becomes convinced of these things, something very dramatic happens—she can’t stop talking about what you are doing for her. Just like the woman at the well running back into town and telling everyone about Jesus, so your care receiver will not be able to shut up about the love of Christ that you are showing to her.

We call this “The Woman at the Well Effect.” It’s as though you have given your care receiver a bullhorn to shout the gospel in her community.

And that is influence indeed.

Second Bible Study: You Have Influence in Your Church

We are not simply to do good works. We are to encourage our fellow believers to do them too.

“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as you see the day approaching.” Hebrews 10:24, 25 (KJV)

1. Why does the writer to the Hebrews couple together the concepts of love and good works?
2. Do good works come naturally?
3. Verse 25 talks about the importance of meeting together. What is the relationship between Christians meeting together and good works?
4. The Greek verb for “consider” means “to observe carefully, look

at with reflection.” Why does the objective of spurring one another on to love and good deeds require careful consideration?

5. Personalize Hebrews 10:24.

Group Discussion Questions:

1. In what ways does our church practice “love and good works” toward each other?
2. Do you have some ideas of how our church can increase its good works?
3. Has anyone in our church ever encouraged you to practice good works?
4. How can we encourage more men to join our men’s ministry to widows, widowers and single parents?
5. Take some time to discuss some practical ways to encourage believers in our church and community to love and good deeds.

For Further Thought

We see in this verse that we are commanded to encourage other believers to love and good deeds. And we learn from other passages that good deeds are to be a central part of the Christian life (Ephesians 2:10) and that we are to be zealous for good deeds (Titus 2:14).

But the question is, if good deeds are such an integral part of the Christian life, and if we are to encourage others to love and good deeds, how are we to do that?

Here are a few suggestions.

Focus on Quality.

Jesus focused on quality during the last night of his life. We're told in John 13:1, "Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them *the full extent* of his love." Jesus showed a few disciples quality love—"the full extent of his love." His goal was that they in turn would be motivated to show that same quality of love to many. "As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (John 13:35) The principle is: *quality ministry to a few motivates others to provide quality ministry to many.*

Often we are tempted to spread our small resources too thin and try to meet every need ourselves or with our one or two teams. But this dilutes the quality of the love being shown, exhausts the participants, and discourages others from joining us.

Enjoy what you are doing.

Jesus said, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." Ministering quality love to a few brings great joy and prompts other people to join you.

Talk about what you are doing.

Don't hide your light "under a bushel." We aren't talking about boasting. But we are talking about publicizing to others the potential for ministry to those in need in your church. People need to hear of the opportunities and what you are doing to meet them.

Invite people to join you at the appropriate time.

When your church sponsors an orientation for a men's ministry to widows and single moms, be sure to do your part and personally invite men in your church. While general announcements need to be made, personal invitations from someone who is already involved are much more effective.

Don't motivate through guilt or obligation.

People respond to grace, not law. Yes, there are commands in Scripture to minister to the distressed. But don't badger. Instead, "encourage one another to love and good deeds" (KJV).

Third Bible Study: Your Service is Influencing Your Care Receiver's Block and Community

The love your team is showing your care receiver is light that you can either conceal from, or reveal to, an entire block and community.

Ye are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under the bushel, but on the stand; and it shineth unto all that are in the house. Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. Matthew 5:14-16 (ASV)

We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father.... For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3, 8 (NKJV)

1. How does Jesus describe us in Matthew 5:14 and what impact does He expect us to have on the world?

2. What do we do that makes light shine so visibly before the world (Matt. 5:16)?

3. What is the ultimate result (Matt. 5:16)?

4. Paul mentions a famous Christian trilogy in 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3—faith, hope and love. What does he say the faith and love of the Thessalonians resulted in? What did their hope result in?

5. What was the ultimate result of the Thessalonians' faith, hope and love (1:8)?

Group Discussion Questions:

1. Describe the various relationships your care receiver has with her family, her friends, her neighbors.
3. How has your ministry to her influenced those relationships?
4. Have you had an opportunity to get to know any of the neighbors on the block?
5. Does your widow or single mom know of others in distress on the block?
6. If a neighbor came up to you while you were working in your care receiver's yard and asked you why you are doing what you are doing, what would you say?
7. Spend some time in group prayer for your various neighborhoods.

For Further Thought

Your service to your widow or single mom is going to be noticed by her neighbors. Jesus says it is impossible for the public not to notice your

good works. Robert Lewis calls this result “irresistible influence.” We can also call it “grudging respect” and it provides a powerful context for the gospel. By your service you are earning the right to speak to the neighborhood.

Here are some suggestions for capitalizing on the respect you will receive.

Take the long view.

Your team has made a commitment to provide the never ending love of Christ to your widow or single mom. This means you most likely will have the opportunity to minister in your care receiver’s neighborhood for months and years to come. As time passes, spontaneous opportunities will open up for you to serve others on the block, build relationships, and share your faith.

Pray as a team for the block.

It is the Spirit of God who will give you favor in the eyes of the neighbors. Pray as a team with your care receiver that God will open hearts and doors up and down the street. If weather permits, you might consider praying with your care receiver for the neighborhood while out on her front lawn at the end of your service time. This is one way to not “hide your light under a bushel.”

Serve others with long term needs on the block.

Ask your widow or single mom to offer your services as a team to others in distress on the block. Serving others in this way is how a ministry to widows and single moms can spread beyond the church and into the community. And it is also how non believers can experience the love of Christ in a powerful way first hand.

Depending on your care receiver’s needs and the manpower available in your church, you may need to form a second team for others on the block. Two or more teams serving at the same time can be an even more powerful witness.

Recruit other believers on the block. It is possible that there may be other believers on the block who do not attend your church. Mobilize them as an additional resource for your care receiver and for others in distress on the block. This type of Christian unity can be an effective

witness to non believers in the neighborhood.

Share your faith in Christ.

We are commanded to always be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in us. Your ministry as a team to your care receiver provides a wonderful context for the good news that salvation comes through faith in Christ. Ask your pastor to train you and your team to share your faith.

Start a block Bible study.

A Bible study would be an additional commitment and someone else in your church may need to do this. But ultimately, the long term goal is to win people on the block to the Lord and bring them together for fellowship, communion and witness around the Word and in Christ.

A block Bible study would give your care receiver an incredible gift—a community of believers who would be near to serve her and others on the block 24/7.

Think about another block.

Your experience in ministering to your care receiver will help you develop a strategy for reaching another block—your own.

Four Bible Studies on the Practice of the Love of Christ

First Bible Study: John Identifies With Mary

When Jesus entrusted his mother to John, it was the last act he did before he died. When John took Mary into his own household, it was the first act of the church after Jesus died, setting an example for how the church should treat all widowed and single mothers.

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home. John 19:25-27 (NRSV)

1. Who was standing at the foot of the cross?
1. What did Jesus mean when he said, "Woman, here is your son," and "Here is your mother"?
3. What did John do immediately after Jesus died?
4. Compare this passage with Matthew 13:55-56. How many brothers did Jesus have and what were their names?
5. What was the minimum number of children Mary had?

6. According to 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, where in the order of his appearances did Jesus appear to his brother, James?
7. According to Acts 1:14, how many of Jesus' brothers eventually became believers?
8. According to Galatians 1:19, what did Jesus' brother, James, eventually become?

Group Discussion Questions

1. At the foot of the cross was Jesus' aunt. Jesus also had at least two sisters. His four brothers eventually became believers, one of whom—James—became an apostle and a leader of the church in Jerusalem. Why, then, do you think Jesus entrusted his mother, Mary, to John instead of to any of his relatives?
2. Mary was both a widow and a single mother. How does John's care for her foreshadow the care of the church towards people like her in Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35; 6:1-6 and 20:32-35?
3. How do Jesus' simple declarations to Mary and John, "Woman, here is your son" and "Here is your mother" illustrate the principle of personal identification when we practice the love of Christ toward the widowed and single parents?
4. How do these declarations illustrate the radical nature of the love of Christ and explain why Jesus entrusted his mother Mary to John instead of to his natural siblings?

5. In what ways is your men's team ministry a reflection of John and Mary standing beneath the cross of Christ?

For Further Thought

So why did Jesus entrust his mother to John instead of to his own brothers, sisters or aunt? Jesus' sisters weren't candidates because women normally did not have independent means of support. His aunt, the wife of Clopas, presumably couldn't care for Mary for the same reason.

That leaves Jesus' four brothers. Perhaps Jesus didn't entrust his mother to them because his brothers were not present beneath the cross, or, more importantly, were not yet believers. But Jesus' brothers would soon become believers. His brother James would go on to become head of the Jerusalem church. Couldn't Jesus have simply asked John to take Mary to his brothers who would then care for her? But this wasn't the case. The text clearly implies that John cared for Mary as if she were his own mother "from that day onward," i.e., until she died. John took responsibility for Jesus' mother *even after Jesus' own brothers became believers*.

My personal opinion is that Jesus entrusted his mother to John because John was the only apostle who would escape martyrdom and Jesus wanted to spare Mary that fate.

But there is also a larger context to consider. In his death and resurrection, Jesus becomes the founder of a new family. Jesus is "the firstborn among many brethren" Romans 8:29 tells us. This family is instituted by the New Covenant, governed by the New Commandment and lasts forever. From this perspective, it was quite natural for Jesus to entrust his mother to John instead of to his physical brothers. The physical bond of brotherhood had become irrelevant to Jesus.

So now the question needs to be asked: was Jesus' act of entrusting his mother to John exceptional or normative? That is, was Jesus saying, "I know there are a lot of widows and single mothers in this world, but make sure you take care of my mother"? Or was he saying, "This is the way I expect all of my followers to treat all widows and single mothers in the church"?

The Word of God makes it clear—and history bears this out—that the church understood Jesus to be giving us an example to follow. He was not just concerned for his own mother. Regarding every widow and single parent, Jesus was saying to the church: "Behold, your mother," "Behold, your sister."

Second Bible Study: Ruth Commits to Naomi

Ruth's vow to Naomi is the greatest example of commitment in all of human literature. Her act of love and commitment formed the foundation for the Davidic dynasty that would follow.

And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each of you to her mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me. "May the Lord grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband." Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. And they said to her, "No, but we will surely return with you to your people." But Naomi said, "Return, my daughters. Why should you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? "Return, my daughters! Go, for I am too old to have a husband. If I said I have hope, if I should even have a husband tonight and also bear sons, would you therefore wait until they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters; for it is harder for me than for you, for the hand of the Lord has gone forth against me." And they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. Then she said, "Behold, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her gods; return after your sister-in-law." But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. "Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the Lord do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me." When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her. Ruth 1:8-18

1. How are Ruth and Orpah the same in 1:1-7? How are they different in 1:8-18?
2. Why is Orpah so bitter? Why does she think Ruth is of no value to her?

3. List the various phrases that Ruth uses in her vow to Naomi. How did Ruth allow her love for Naomi to change her?

4. Both Ruth and Oprah loved Naomi, but they loved her in different ways. How was their love for Naomi different?

5. What name did Naomi give herself as she entered her home town? (1:20)

6. The English form of Mara is Mary and the name of Orpah's home town was Bethlehem. How many times is Bethlehem mentioned in Ruth 1?

Group Discussion Questions

1. What parallels do you see between Orpah arriving in Bethlehem and Mary, the mother of Jesus, at the foot of the cross?
2. In what way was the commitment John made to Mary similar to the commitment Ruth made to Orpah?
3. How does Ruth's love for Orpah parallel God's love for us?
4. Describe some of the bitterness your care receivers have experienced.
5. In what ways does your commitment to them bring healing to their lives?

For Further Thought

The little Book of Ruth is only four chapters long. But it answers an important historical question. In the midst of the social and moral chaos of the period of the Judges (the previous Book of Judges ends with "In those days, Israel had no king. Everyone did as he saw fit" while Ruth begins with "In the days when the Judges ruled") this beautiful narrative tells us how Israel came to experience a spiritual renaissance with

the ascension of the Davidic dynasty (the book ends with a brief genealogy of king David). In answer to the question, "How is it that Israel attained such a spiritual high point in the reigns of David and Solomon after experiencing such a spiritual low point during the time of the Judges?", God says, "Look at Ruth."

So what was it about Ruth that brought about such a tsunami of righteousness?

The answer lies in the quality of Ruth's love for her mother-in-law, Naomi, as opposed to the quality of Orpah's love for Naomi. Except for this critical difference, every other detail of Ruth and Orpah's lives are exactly the same. Both of them are Moabite women. Both of them marry the sons of Elimelech and Naomi. Both of their husbands die premature deaths. Both of them are childless. Both of them love Naomi and follow her on the road back to Israel. And both of them are encouraged by Naomi to return to their homeland.

But it is at this point that the difference in the quality of their love for Naomi emerges. While Orpah loves Naomi, it becomes evident that she loves her with a love of convenience, a love that says, "I will love you so long as it fits into my own agenda." Her love for Orpah had a limit and it led her to kiss Orpah goodbye and return to her homeland in Moab.

But Ruth's love for Naomi was a love of commitment born out of her faith in God. It was a love that says, "I will love you no matter what." Ruth's love led her to "cling" to Naomi (the Hebrew word here is the same word used in Genesis 2:24 where a man leaves his father and mother and "clings" to his wife). Ruth had nothing to give Naomi other than herself. She was an alien, a widow, childless and destitute. In Naomi's eyes, she was worthless. But in God's eyes she was engaging in an act that would quite literally change the world. God says, "Do you want to know how it is that the Davidic dynasty could arise out of such miserable circumstances as the period of the Judges? Then look at Ruth's love for Naomi. It was her radical act of commitment that set in motion all the good that followed."

And so the question is, what kind of love are we going to have for our care receivers? Are we going to love them with a love of convenience—so long as it doesn't interfere with our lifestyle? Or are we going to love our care receivers with a love of commitment—a love that says, "I will never desert you"? The distinction is critical and has long lasting implications for our care receivers, for ourselves, for our churches and for the culture in which we live.

Third Bible Study: Judah Sacrifices Himself for Benjamin

Judah offering himself as a ransom for Benjamin reconciled himself and his brothers to Joseph and their father and facilitated the founding of the nation of Israel.

“And now, sir,” Judah continued, “if I go back to my father without the boy, as soon as he sees that the boy is not with me, he will die. His life is wrapped up with the life of the boy, and he is so old that the sorrow we would cause him would kill him. What is more, I pledged my life to my father for the boy. I told him that if I did not bring the boy back to him, I would bear the blame all my life. And now, sir, I will stay here as your slave in place of the boy; let him go back with his brothers. How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? I cannot bear to see this disaster come upon my father.” Genesis 44:30-34 (TEV)

1. Compare this passage with Genesis 37:19-35, The story of Joseph being sold into slavery by his brothers and their subsequent lie to Jacob. In chapter 37, the brothers hate Joseph, want to kill him but instead sell him as a slave, and then lie to their father and watch their father grieve for Joseph. What has changed in 44:30-34?
2. In what way is Judah willing to sacrifice for Benjamin in 44:30-34?
3. How does Judah’s concern for his father form the basis of his action.
4. What is the vow Judah has made with his father and how does he keep it?

Group Discussion Questions

1. Read Genesis 4:1-9. In what way is the story of Judah offering himself up for Benjamin God's answer to Cain's question, "Am I my brother's keeper?"
2. We have seen that John caring for Jesus' mother as his own illustrates the concept of personal identification and Ruth vowing to never leave Naomi illustrates the concept of commitment. In what way does Judah's action illustrate the concept of sacrifice?
3. Discuss the ways God changed Judah's heart and the hearts of his brothers.
4. In what ways is God calling us to sacrifice for our care receivers?

For Further Thought

The story of Judah, offering himself as a ransom for his brother, Benjamin, followed by Joseph's revelation of himself to them as their brother (in Genesis 45:1ff) represents the climax to the entire book of Genesis and it is God's answer to Cain's question, "Am I my brother's keeper."

Judah and his brothers had, in effect, been guilty of Cain's sin: fratricidal murder. But instead of actually killing their brother Joseph, they unwittingly sold him as a slave into Egypt and lied about their action to their father, Jacob. After living with this lie for years, God now tests Judah and his brothers by placing them in the exact same position they had been in before. Benjamin is now the son favored by their father and again they have an opportunity to either save him or abandon him. But it is the knowledge of how such an abandonment will affect their father, having observed his devastated response to what he thought was the death of his son, Joseph, that motivates Judah to sacrifice himself in the place of Benjamin.

To the question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" God says, "Yes, you are your brother's keeper." God brought Judah to the place where he literally saw himself as his brother's keeper. He was the one who was responsible for returning Benjamin to his father, Jacob. Failure to do so would lead to the death of Jacob in abject sorrow and result in Judah carrying this guilt to his grave. "Do not let me see the misery that would come upon my father," Jacob says as he pleads for his brother.

Cain killed his brother Abel because God had favor on Abel. Judah and his brothers "killed" Joseph because their father showed favoritism to him. Now here in our present passage, Jacob has shown favoritism to

Benjamin over Judah and his other brothers. But at this point something happens. Judah has a change of heart, not so much because he loves Benjamin, *but because he loves his father*. It is the knowledge of how much Benjamin means to his father that drives him to sacrifice himself for his brother. Judah comes to realize that it is a good thing that Jacob loves Benjamin this much. And because Judah loves his father, he sacrifices himself in love for Benjamin too.

"Am I my brother's keeper?" "Yes you are," God says, "because I love your brother."

For many of us, our care receiver was a total stranger before we began serving him or her. And yet, because we love our Father, we also love the one He loves. "He has given us this command, whoever loves God must also love his brother" 1 John 4:21.

By nature, we are selfish, self-centered creatures who are prone to sacrifice others for our own advancement. But now that we have been redeemed, God calls us to put the interests of others first. "Each of you should look, not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others" Philippians 2:4.

Fourth Bible Study: God Challenges Us to Do Good and See Results in Our Culture

Widows, fatherless and all people in distress need genuine love. And when that love is given, dramatic things happen.

Learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow. "Come now, let us reason together," says the Lord. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. Isaiah 1:16-17 (NIV)

1. In verses 1-10, is God describing individuals or the entire Israelite society?
2. Summarize what the Lord is saying in these first 10 verses.
3. What is the Lord describing in verses 11-15 and what is he saying about it?
4. What is God calling Israel to do in verse 16?
5. God wants his people to do good. How is "good" defined in verse 17?

6. If Israel does the good God wants them to do in verse 17, what does He say will happen in verse 18?

7. Given the previous context in verses 1-10, is verse 18 about personal redemption or about national transformation?

Group Discussion Questions

1. In what ways do our previous three bible studies reflect obedience to God's command in Isaiah 1:17?
2. In what ways do our previous three bible studies reflect social or national transformation as promised in Isaiah 1:18?
3. In what ways do our current social conditions reflect the social reality described in Isaiah 1:1-10?
4. In what ways might our current churches reflect the spiritual reality described in Isaiah 1:11-15?
5. In what ways is your men's team ministry an act of obedience to Isaiah 1:17?
6. What should we expect to happen according to Isaiah 1:18?

For Further Thought

I used to think that Isaiah 1:17-18 is a request for mass volunteers, that our Lord is saying, "If we just get enough people to defend the cause of the fatherless and plead the case of the widow, then we will have the power to transform a corrupt society."

But after meditating on our three previous examples of individuals practicing the love of God, I have come to a different conclusion: in Isaiah 1:17-18, our Lord would settle for *just one person*. He is saying, "If *just one person* defends the fatherless and widow, I will make your culture as white as snow."

The reason I have come to this conclusion is because this is exactly what we see with Judah, Ruth and John. The radical love these three individual people showed for others resulted in complete social revolu-

tions for good. Judah offering himself up for Benjamin resulted in the preservation and propagation of the Jewish race. Ruth committing herself to the widow Naomi resulted in the establishment of the Davidic dynasty. And John identifying himself with Mary, a widow and single mother, became the model for a church that would eventually outlast the Roman empire.

In other words, the love of God—the love of Christ—when practiced by *just one person* as a guarantee of the wellbeing of someone in need, is so powerful and so potent that it has ramifications for good far beyond the individual act itself, affecting the entire culture.

I have seen this effect of radical love on my own life. My first church was a small and impoverished church in Hitchcock, Texas. When my wife and I first arrived at the church, the buildings were dilapidated and the congregation was demoralized. So we set about to refurbish the church inside and out. The only problem was, we had no money.

But in this church was a godly woman by the name of Jacqueline Roush. Every day Jacqueline would prepare a hot meal for her elderly neighbor, take it over to him and make sure he was okay. When he died, he left Jacqueline some money in his will and she in turn donated a good portion of it to the church so we could complete our building projects.

Jacqueline's example of steadfast love for her neighbor is a major reason I am doing men's team ministry to the widowed and single parents. Jacqueline guaranteed the wellbeing of her elderly neighbor. Little did she know that her example to me would eventually have repercussions in churches throughout the United States and around the world.

And so here is the question we all must ask ourselves: "Am I going to be the one?" No matter what anyone else does, am I going to be the one who will love someone in need exactly the way Christ has commanded me resulting in glory to God, the salvation of thousands of souls, and radical social transformation for good?

Additional Related Passages For Your Study on Serving People With Needs

I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' Acts 20:33-35 (NKJV)

As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.¹ Timothy 6:17-19 (NRSV)

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Philippians 2: 1-4 (NIV)

We know what real love is because Christ gave up his life for us. And so we also ought to give up our lives for our Christian brothers and sisters. But if anyone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need and refuses to help—how can God's love be in that person? 1 John 3:16-18 (NLT)

What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? can that faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked and in lack of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled; and yet ye give them not the things needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself. James 2:14-17 (ASV)

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to

keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching a you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." 2 Thessalonians 3:6-10

Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God. The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help. But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives. Give the people these instructions, too, so that no one may be open to blame. If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. 1 Timothy 5:3-8

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17

This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone. Titus 3: 18

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Romans 12:9-13

Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality, as it is written: "He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little." 2 Corinthians 8:13-15

This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's

people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift! 2 Corinthians 9: 12-15



New Commandment Men's Ministries

The Story Behind the Name and Logo

Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he would depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's *son*, to betray him;

Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; He rose from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poured water into a bowl, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe *them* with the towel with which he was girded.

Then he came to Simon Peter: and Peter said to him, Lord, do you wash my feet? Jesus answered him, What I do you know not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter said him, You will never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I do not wash you, you have no part with me. Simon Peter said to him, Lord, not my feet only, but also *my* hands and *my* head. Jesus said to him, He that is washed needs not save to wash *his* feet, but is clean every whit: and you are clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him; therefore he said, You are not all clean.

So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and sat down, he said to them, Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Master and Lord: and You say well; for *so* I am. If I then, *your* Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are you if you do them.

Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Where I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you. A new commandment I give unto you, That you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all *men* know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another. —John 13:1-17, 33-35 (KJV)

Answers to Blanks on Pages 2 Through 13

Page 2

We tend to think of Christ's love **sentimentally**.

We tend to think of Christ's love as **impractical**.

We tend to confuse Christ's love with **kind gestures**.

Project Oriented

Relationships Oriented

Temporary

Never Ending

Random

Focused

Convenient

Committed

Little Impact on Recipient

Transforms Recipient

Page 3

This is a **command** from our Lord.

This is a **new** command given to the church.

This is an **extreme** command.

This is a **unique** command.

First unique quality of Christ's love: **Personal Identification**

Page 4

Second unique quality of Christ's love: **Commitment**.

Third unique quality: **Sacrifice**.

It will train men to **personally identify** with people in their life situations so that they come to have a deep and profound understanding of them, leading to compassion.

It will train men to **commit** to the person they are showing love to in a life-changing way.

It will train men to take ultimate responsibility for the person they are showing love to by being willing to **sacrifice** for them.

Page 5

The way we are to show the love of Christ in practice is through **good works**.

We must be very clear to say that good works do not **save us**.

But while we are not saved by good works, good works are what God saved us **to do**.

We are to be **zealous** for good works and to make them a hallmark of our life.

Page 6

'We are to be **examples** of good works to others and encourage others to do good works.

We are to let people see our good works so they will glorify God.

Page 7

There are many kinds of good works and they are to be directed to **all people**.

But we are especially to direct our good works to **fellow believers** within the church.

God is particularly concerned with **widows**, the **fatherless** and **immigrants**.

Page 8

Because of this special concern, God instituted laws in the Old Testament designed to **protect** widows, the fatherless and immigrants

Page 9

A hallmark of a righteous man is the way he **treats** widows, the fatherless and immigrants.

A hallmark of a wicked man is the way he **mistreats** widows, the fatherless and immigrants.

Page 10

God condemns those who mistreat widows, the fatherless and immigrants.

Page 11

God commands believers to **defend** and **protect** widows, the fatherless and immigrants.

Page 13

There is a **logistics** problem.

There is a **moral** issue.

But it is possible to accomplish this goal by using **teams** of men.

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