

5.7 Caring as an Expression of Christian Communication

Aim

- To understand the significance of caring
- To learn to understand the biblical perspective of caring
- To get to know ways to practice caring in society

Materials Required

- Pen and Paper

Procedure:

- Let the participants identify major ways in which the church is an instrument of caring for the society.
- Or
- Invite the participants to recall from memory the instances when Christ expressed caring by touch.

Input

- One of Paul's earliest admonitions to Christians was that they have genuine reverence for one another. (1Cor. 12:24-25)
- It was Paul's conviction that Christians are members of the body of Christ in much the same way as physical parts are related to the entire body.
- Caring for others (as Christians), in the deepest sense demands involvement and commitment. It is an affective movement towards another that is both honest and relevant.
- To care is to feel. Caring in a biblical sense, whether expressed by a quiet concern or a gentle reaching, never leave us unmoved. It evokes the full range of emotions, some pleasant, some unpleasant and even agonizing.
- For Jesus, caring for 72 who came back after a mission brought excitement and the taste of success, caring for multitudes, the sheep without shepherds...brought weariness and often sadness, caring for Mary Magdala brought criticism and gossip about his judgment. Caring for Nicodemus brought frustration.

Caring

- In the first letter to the Thessalonians, caring is likened to a mother providing for her children. (1 Thes 2: 7-8)
- The Greek *homeiromai* means to have affectionate desire for someone "to love so much". Feeling affection for another and wanting to provide care for that person often go together in relationships. This must be distinguished from *merimnao*, which is a kind of anxiety as in Lk 10:41 when Jesus rebukes Martha.

Paul's Affection

- Paul naturally felt pride and admiration towards the community of Christians in Thessalonica for their commitment under difficult circumstances including remaining faithful to Christian teaching during persecution.
- His letter to them is filled with unstrained expression of affection caring (Thes 2:17-18).
- Paul not only felt care and concern for the communities himself, but he also rejoiced when he saw evidence of caring among his brothers and sisters. (2 Cor 8: 16 -17)

Luke's Description of Caring

- Luke like Paul was particularly concerned about the manner in which Christians provided care for those in the community.
- He identified the true follower of Jesus as a caring person, as one who took risks and incurred cost in attending to others.(Lk. 10:33-34)
- The Samaritan in Luke's story was moved with compassion. The Greek *splagchnizomai* implies powerful movements from within that wells up with energy. It really means to "churn from the bowels". The Samaritan in the story was overcome with powerful feelings of pity for the beaten man to extend care. Christian caring comes from the feelings. The compassion/pity in the biblical understanding goes beyond feeling to action that brings about positive result in the doer of the action and the one(s) who benefit from the action.
- Luke identifies the call to care for others as having its beginning in Yahweh's care for the Israelites. Even though the people are wicked and unfaithful, God never abandons them (Acts. 13:18).

Jesus' Compassion

The early Christians found a model for human caring in Jesus. Jesus extended his care to people, and in particular to the oppressed who had no one to look after them.

His care was so pervasive, so much a part of his total personality, that it touched all creation (Jn 16:14-15), (Mt 6:28-30).

For Jesus, caring for others was by far more important than the Sabbath observance.

He went about doing good and healing (Acts 10:38). He had compassion on them and healed their sick (Mt 14:14), my son your sins are forgiven (Mt 2:5)

“Take heart...your sins are forgiven (Mt 9:2)

The involvement of Jesus with people and the expansiveness of his connectedness with them stayed in the minds of the disciples. The images of Christ as the shepherd, the healer and the master who washes feet were powerful examples of caring.

Human Caring

According to Gerald Egan “*The Skilled Helper*”, human relations experts often identify the ability to care for others as an important dimension of psychological health.

Caring for others means seeing their worth and letting them matter in our life. To care for someone suggests that we have a particular way of seeing that person, an inner attitude that is basically for that individual.

Human caring is expressed in a variety of ways depending upon characteristics of the relationship. They include: supportive feedback

Presence and behavioral gestures that communicate receptivity

Warmth

Regard for others' self-determination

Physical touch used frequently in the gospel stories for caring often expressed the concern associated with genuine care.

Today the word care refers usually to two broad categories of response: Caring in order to be helpful and Caring in the sense of being involved in intimacy.

Avoiding Extremes

There is a fine between caring and controlling.

A truly caring person has discovered the middle grounds of genuine caring amid its extremes of coldness and control.

Some individuals carry concern for others to such an extreme that they appear more doting than caring (pseudo-caring) tends to be more common in women, particularly housewives who have learnt that their primary role is to care for others.

Genuine caring does not overwhelm people. It is attuned to the response of the person being cared for in a situation. It does not rush in to do for others what they can do for themselves.

People who cannot care for others are often those who have not experienced being cared for in their own personal life.

Review

Caring for others (as Christians) in the deepest sense demands involvement and commitment. It is an affective movement towards another that is both honest and relevant.

To care is to feel. Caring in a biblical sense whether expressed by a quiet concern, a gentle reaching, never leaves us unmoved. It evokes the full range of emotions, some pleasant, some unpleasant and some even agonizing.

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Reflection

Caring for others means seeing their worth and letting them matter in our life. Write a 1^{1/2} page reflection on this.

Relevant Skills

Compare the gospels: Lk 13 and Jn 4 on Jesus' care for the two women. Identify persons in similar situations in the community/society around you. What kind of caring can you offer them?



References

Ferder, Fran. *Word Made Flesh: Scripture, Psychology and Human Communication*. Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1986.

Gerard Egan, *The Skilled Helper* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, Inc., 1982).