



“Saved From ... Saved For”

Acts 2, 4, 20

Small Group Plan

What difference can one person or one action make? Let’s answer this question by asking another question. What difference can indifference make?

On April 12, 1999, Elie Wiesel delivered a speech to the President and members of Congress in Washington, D.C. Best known for his time spent in a Nazi concentration camp as a young boy, Wiesel spoke on “The Perils of Indifference.”

What is indifference? Etymologically, the word means “no difference.” A strange and unnatural state in which the lines blur between light and darkness, dusk and dawn, crime and punishment, cruelty and compassion, good and evil ... for the person who is indifferent, his or her neighbor are of no consequence. And, therefore, their lives are meaningless ... Indifference, after all, is more dangerous than anger and hatred. Anger can at times be creative. One writes a great poem, a great symphony. One does something special for the sake of humanity because one is angry at the injustice that one witnesses. But indifference is never creative ... Indifference elicits no response. Indifference is not a response. Indifference is not a beginning; it is an end.

When we actively follow Jesus, we are choosing to make a difference by breaking the cycle of indifference. We care. We let someone matter. We plant the seeds of hope. This is the price of compassion — planting the seeds and trusting that God will use them to make a difference.

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- How have you felt the pain of indifference?
- How have you observed small acts of kindness produce huge human results?
- Who has sown the seed of hope in your life? How did they do it?

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

— GOD AND THE POOR —

Luke 4:17-19

¹⁷ The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: ¹⁸ “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

- What is the common theme in this announcement by Jesus?
- What does it mean to “preach good news to the poor”? How do you do this?
- Why is Luke careful to tell us that Jesus “found the place” (vs. 17)?
- The “year of the Lord’s favor” was the year of Jubilee when all debts were canceled and property returned to its ancestral owners (Lev. 25:8-55). With this in mind, what does it really mean to give the poor good news?

— GOD AND THE RICH —

Luke 18:18-24

¹⁸ A certain ruler asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”
¹⁹ “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good — except God alone. ²⁰ You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.’” ²¹ “All these I have kept since I was a boy,” he said. ²² When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” ²³ When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth. ²⁴ Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!”

- Why does Jesus omit (initially) the first four commandments as he answers the man?
- Describe what Jesus means when he says there is “one thing you lack.”
- Why couldn’t this man give up his wealth?
- Why is it so difficult for the comfortable and self-satisfied to “enter the kingdom of God” (cf. Mark 4:18-19)?
- Imagine this man responding to Jesus in a positive way. Describe how his future life might have unfolded?

— GOD AND THE CHURCH —

Acts 2:44-45

⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.

Acts 4:32

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.

Acts 20:35

We must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

- How does this early church look when compared to most American churches today?
- How could someone have "possessions" but not claim to "own" them?
- What is the blessing in giving? What happens to the giver and the receiver?

USE IT / APPLY IT ...

— A TALE OF TWO CITIES —

- How would you describe the economic lower class of Dallas — physical and emotional conditions, social and religious involvements?
- How would you evaluate the same conditions and involvements of the middle and upper classes of Dallas?
- How would you describe your connection to all three groups?

— COMPASSION NOT TRANSACTION —

- Describe the difference between a business and a church (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).
- What could cause a ministry to become merely a program?

— SAVED FROM AND SAVED FOR —

- What happens to grace received from God but not extended to others (1 Peter 4:10)?
- What does it become? What does it lose?

— LOVE CANNOT BE OUTSOURCED —

- How can individual Christians "outsource" their love to their church?
- What happens to my view of life and my heart for people when I step away from the pain and suffering of others (1 John 3:17)?
- This week ask God to refresh your heart and to entrust you with the reality of the second city — the pain of Dallas 2?