

Bible Study Notes for Small Groups WB 2nd July 2023

Loving the Community

This week our preacher was Tim Wood. Tim works for Through the Roof, a Christian organisation that takes wheelchairs to people who can not obtain them for themselves [usually abroad] and provides holidays and short breaks for disabled people here. Through the Roof works across church denominations and across diverse disabilities to serve God's Kingdom

1 Samuel 16:1-13

Disabled people are often judged to be unable to do things that able bodied people can, but with support and encouragement this becomes possible. They can be just as useful in God's work as anyone, but because of their appearance they are often overlooked. God does not look at the outside of us. He looks at the heart and sees the truth about each person. We are called to do the same. To discriminate is not God's way.

- **Has there ever been a time when you have felt left out or discriminated against?**

Read **Luke 14:12-24**

In the reading in Luke, we see Jesus chatting to people over dinner. He took the opportunity to listen and to discuss, to teach and to spread the good news. Among those at the table were the host of the meal, family, ordinary people and pharisees.

- **If you could invite anyone, from any time in history or place around the world to dinner, who would it be and why?**
- **Who would you honestly rather not have at your table?**

There are three questions to consider here. **Who? What? How?**

Who was Jesus concerned about in this conversation?

He used the situation of inviting people to dinner to explain that to only invite the same friends and family every time was to miss an opportunity. He advised that inviting people who were living on the margins of society for whatever reason would bless them and bring blessing to the host as well. This focussing on those the world would overlook was a regular attitude of Jesus.

Attitudes in present day society do not seem to have improved since Jesus' day. Statistics have shown that 66% of people interviewed said they were uncomfortable talking to disabled people. As children disabled people are often marginalised. A woman who was disabled said throughout her childhood she

noticed when other children were included in invitations to birthday parties, she was always left out.

And the church is little better. It was discovered that only between 5% and 10% of disabled people had heard the gospel. And yet it is also known that when they do get to hear about Jesus, those who told them are also blessed. During the holidays that are provided by Through The Roof, the love of God is tangible to everyone present, disabled and able bodied alike. It's because Jesus is at the centre.

- **Do you know of anyone who is marginalised that you think would benefit from coming to church?**

What to do about it? Jesus likened the banquet in His story to the heavenly banquet that God offers.

In the Luke reading those giving excuses were more concerned about worldly matters and their own personal affairs than wanting to spend time with the host. They showed him no gratitude. So, the table was filled with those who would come, those from the outskirts of society. It is the same with God's invitation to benefit from His generosity. The invitation goes out to whoever will come no matter who or what they are. God will feed them and their lives will benefit from Him.

As in the parable, it is up to us to be proactive; to go out and invite people in; to initiate contact with people who otherwise would be ignored.

- **What do you think might stop us from inviting someone disabled or on the outskirts of society?**

How do we respond to God's instruction? In verse 23 of the parable, they were compelled to go out to invite everyone, not by force but by love. God's house is not complete without them.

The biggest need in church life for disabled people is friendship; the need to be equally included. This is not a difficult thing for us to achieve.

We meet with people every day, at work, out shopping, in school, in the neighbourhood. These can all be opportunities to share the gospel, quietly and without pressure. When we do we discover a new perspective, God's perspective. We will only achieve this by staying close to Jesus and responding to His love for us. As we receive, we can then give.

When the disabled and marginalised are included within our society they also see that they are recognised as whole people, complete and acceptable. It is life changing for everyone involved.

**Father, help us to receive your love more freely and give it away more readily.
Amen**