

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

A Sheep or a Goat?

October 15, 2006

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Donation Drive for the Homeless** - We are collecting foot powder, lotion, toothpaste, toothbrushes, and deodorant to be given to the homeless at the Thanksgiving Outreach hosted by the San Diego Rescue Mission. Bring your donated items to church October 21 - November 12 and look for the San Diego Rescue Mission bins throughout the Sanctuary and Lobby. Please note: We are only accepting the listed items at this time.
- **Volunteer at the Thanksgiving Outreach for the Homeless** held on Saturday, November 18. Volunteer needs include food servers and outreach teams. For more info, go to www.therocksandiego.org/eventcalendar/2274.
- **Men's Retreat** - October 27-29, sign up online at www.therocksandiego.org/ministries/mens.
- This month is **Pastor Appreciation Month!** It's as simple as picking a pastor, sending them appreciation cards, and being their prayer warrior. For more information, contact adoptapastor@therocksandiego.org.
- **For all other Rock Announcements** please go to <http://www.therocksandiego.org/announcements/> or see the Rock Event Calendar at <http://www.therocksandiego.org/eventcalendar/>.

MEMORY VERSE

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring the good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted; to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners. Isaiah 61:1

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS – THE LONGEST LIGHT

We've all experienced it. We're in a hurry to be there on time. We feel the pressure of being late to another appointment. It never fails, we hit red light after red light, and we begin to think, "Is everybody going to the same place as I am?" And just when we reach the limit of our patience there he sits--a young man who looks quite capable of finding a job rather than holding up a sign asking for money. You pull up beside him, your eyes briefly meet, and now you experience the longest light of your life.

Immediately, your mind races through a series of rhetorical questions: "*If I give him money what will he do with it? Will my act of generosity just enable him to support his habit? I wonder how many times he has turned down opportunities to earn a honest living, rather than begging? I wonder how much money he makes doing this? Could his income be more than mine?*"

As Christ-followers we all experience the tension between wanting to be like Jesus and yet, not willing to be taken advantage of. It's so easy to go through this life in such a hurry, that our own needs become paramount. Yet, in the quiet moments of our lives we remember the eyes of the needy people we've passed by; we feel guilty and unloving. What adds to this tension are sections of scripture that seem to suggest that our eternal destiny depends upon how we act in these crucial moments.

Getting Started

1. Take time to talk about some of the pressures you're feeling in your life right now. Do these difficulties cause you to be more or less sensitive to those who are in need around you?
2. Do you think there's a link between meeting the needs of others and having our own needs met? Could you share a time when you met someone's needs unselfishly? What was the result? How did you feel?

Digging Deeper

3. Read together Luke 10:27-37. In this passage, Jesus was responding to a lawyer who wanted a formula for inheriting eternal life. Instead, Jesus gave a picture of what it looked like to love unconditionally. Jesus began His story by throwing His audience a curve. He made the hero of the story a Samaritan, a group of people who the Hebrews loved to hate.
4. Are there “people groups” that you have difficulty loving more than others? Why do you think these particular “types” of people are more difficult for you to love?
5. Why do you think Jesus answered the lawyer’s question this way?
6. 1 John 4:20 states, *If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.* Who do you think John is referring to as “brother” in this passage?
7. Throughout Christian history Matthew 25:31-46 has sparked debate. Some have pointed to this passage as proof that good works are necessary for one’s salvation. Unfortunately, sometimes lost in the argument is the understanding that this section of Scripture is a part of a longer dialog where Jesus was urging people to be ready for His return by examining the true motives of their heart. Where do you think the ability of loving others unconditionally comes from?
8. Why do you think Jesus went to such great lengths to help us understand the nature of true love? (The purpose of this question is to help your participants understand that the Bible urges us to examine ourselves to make sure our faith is genuine.)

Bringing it Home

1 John 4:7 has one of the shortest and yet profound definition of who God is: God is love. In fact, throughout the whole of Scripture it is God’s unconditional love flowing through His children which serves as the “proof” of a genuine faith. Not only are we to “check and see” if we have this love present in our lives, we are commanded to continually grow in love. One of the best ways to grow in love is to step out in faith and love those who we deem unlovable.

Encourage your group members to share a name of a person who has been “difficult to love” and then discuss some practical ways they can demonstrate God’s love this week. (Make sure you write it down so you can revisit their stories at your next meeting)

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10. Use the Rock website by clicking on the “Service Project Ideas” (www.therocksandiego.org/smallgroups) to help your group plan a “random act of love event” to get out of the four walls of your meeting and put God’s love into action. Maybe you’ll want to help with the Thanksgiving Outreach to the homeless coming soon. May you be blessed!