

The Watford Word

www.watfordchurchofchrist.org

What's on

Sunday 13 April: 10:30 AM.
Lance speaking

Monday 14th April: Mentoring training

Wednesday 16 April, 8 PM - "Seed to Harvest" - outreach equipping series fifth Zoom session

Sunday 20 April: 10:30 AM. Easter Sunday. Danny speaking.

Monday 26th May: Mentoring training

Sunday 08 June: 10:30 AM. International Service

Sunday 06 July: Outdoor service hosted by the Thames Valley churches of Christ

Monday 7th July: Mentoring training

Sunday 20 July: 10:30 AM. Dr Rolan Monje is our visiting speaker from the Manila ICOC.

Monday 1st September: Mentoring training
3-5 October: Young Professional's retreat



Caring for Our Neighbours: A Look at Helping the Nearby Needy

Last Sunday, Matt Penny shared about the work being done at the Watford YMCA.



On

On Wednesday night, we explored the topic of "Demonstrating the Gospel Through Service". I wonder if God is asking us personally and

collectively a crucial question - what does it truly mean for us, as disciples of Jesus, to express our concern for those in need right here, in our own neighbourhoods and among the people we know?

OT Background

To understand this responsibility better, we turn to the Scriptures. In Leviticus 19, the Israelites were instructed as follows:

"When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. I am the Lord your God."

This early teaching reveals God's concern for the Israelites, the people of God, and those outside of that community.

What about Jesus?

Jesus's ministry further exemplifies this concern. The encounter with the Canaanite woman, who was not an Israelite, beautifully illustrates Jesus's compassion extending beyond his initial focus on the "lost sheep of Israel" (Matt 15:21-28). Despite his initial statement, her persistent faith led Jesus to grant her request, demonstrating that his power and compassion were not limited to his followers. Indeed, the entirety of Jesus's life reveals his deep care for the marginalised.

The early church

The early church also grappled with how to care for the needy. Paul, in Romans, mentions the churches in Macedonia contributing to the poor among the Lord's people.

"For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the Lord's people in

Jerusalem. They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings." Romans 15.26-27

The New Testament often highlights wealthier Christians helping poorer Christians within the faith. Galatians 6:10 states: *"as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers"*. This underscores the importance of caring for our fellow believers who are in need. Furthermore, 1 Timothy 5:8 teaches that anyone who does not provide for their relatives, especially their own household, is worse than an unbeliever. This principle extends beyond just believer relatives, emphasising the fundamental responsibility to care for our immediate family, regardless of their faith.

Nearby Needy

Reflecting on these teachings, it becomes clear that our concern should extend to the "nearby needy," which undeniably includes our physical families. Many of us have stories of supporting aging parents or relatives facing illness. These acts of service, whether it's taking someone to a medical appointment, helping with household chores, or providing meals, are vital expressions of caring for the nearby needy and should not be seen as lesser than helping strangers. Moreover, many of us are engaged in professions that inherently involve helping others, such as nursing or social work. It's important to recognise and validate the compassion fatigue that can sometimes accompany such demanding roles. We must avoid unfairly comparing our capacity to help, as we are all in different circumstances.

What matters most? Soul or body?

Crucially, we must not create a false dichotomy between addressing people's material and spiritual needs. Both are important to God, who desires the healing of the whole person. While individuals may have a stronger personal

conviction towards one aspect, we must understand that God cares for the complete well-being of those he has placed in our path. As followers of Jesus, who came to serve, our response should be driven by love and a desire to make a difference in whatever way we can, whether it's meeting a spiritual, emotional, physical, or other need.

For reflection

Therefore, let us consider: who are our nearby needy – our family, friends, colleagues, and neighbours? What resources of time, gifts, and experience do we possess that can help those around us who are in need? And how can our congregation collectively support the nearby needy in practical ways, focusing on emotional, physical, and material needs? As we continue this conversation in our fellowship, let us prayerfully consider our individual and collective response, asking God to open our eyes to the needs around us and guide us in how we can serve with a pure heart of love, following the example of Jesus.

Your brother, Malcolm

Watford Contribution Details

Church bank account: Three Counties churches of Christ HSBC

Sort Code: 401915

Account Number: 04759613

Watford Media

