



THE BIG IDEA

Be with people when they're in need.

THE BIBLE

I Kings 17:8-16; Matthew 25:40;
Luke 12:32-34

WHAT? What are we talking about today?

QUESTION | "What are some things every person needs?"

- In real life, **what are some things every person needs?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give a few students a chance to respond.
- There are so many reasons why we might need each other's help. At any given time, we might have . . .
 - An emotional need.
 - A practical need.
 - A relational need.
 - A spiritual need.
- In the last two weeks, we've talked about some of the ways we can help meet each other's needs emotionally and relationally, but today let's focus on how we can help meet each other's practical needs.

SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

DISCUSSION | Our Practical Needs

- We're human, which means we all have the same important practical needs. **What do you think those practical needs are?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** With a [white board](#) or [sticky notes](#), make a list of practical needs all humans have. For each need, ask students to share an example of what happens when those needs aren't met. Be sure the discussion includes our need for . . .
 - Food.

- Water.
- Shelter.
- Clothing.
- Education.
- Safety.
- Medical care.
- Caring adults, like parents.
- There are people everywhere (all over the world and close to home too) who need greater access to essential things like clean water, shelter, food, education, and more.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*
- **What's one thing you really want, but don't really need?**
- **What's one practical need you have but hardly ever think about? Why don't you think about it?**
- ❖ **How would your life be different if you didn't have access to that thing you need?**

SCRIPTURE | I Kings 17:8-16

- One of the most common messages in the Bible is the reminder to be on the lookout for those in need, and often those needs are practical. Jesus and His disciples said it many times, but it's a common theme in the Old Testament too.
- Today, let's see how God used the prophet Elijah to help meet some people's needs.
 - A prophet is a messenger from God. God would often give a message to a prophet and then the prophet would share it with as many people as possible.
 - In Elijah's day, the nation of Israel (God's chosen people) were being led by kings. There were good kings and bad kings — kings that followed God and kings that rejected God and followed other fake gods instead.
 - One of these kings was King Ahab, the seventh king of Israel and the most evil Israelite king so far. Ahab and his wife Jezebel both rejected God and worshipped a fake god named Baal instead.
 - God sent Elijah to give Ahab a message: because of their wickedness, there would be a drought in the land.
- In the midst of this drought, even Elijah was struggling to find food, so God sent him to a creek to get water and sent ravens to bring him food. When the creek dried up and the ravens ran out of food, here's what happened . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read or summarize I Kings 17:8-16.*
- Let's think about how weird this story is for a minute.
 - At first, God and Elijah kind of sound like jerks. Sure, Elijah is hungry and thirsty, but so is this widow! In fact, she and her son are preparing to die of hunger and thirst when Elijah shows up and says, "Hey, God told you to give me the rest of your stuff."

- But because Elijah knows God's character, he understands why he's been sent. Elijah wasn't sent to this widow to take whatever she had left. God sent Elijah to help her.
- Through Elijah, God provides this woman and her son with the miracle they need. As a result, they're able to make all the food they (and Elijah) need.
- But here's something you may not have noticed: Elijah doesn't just secure food and water for this family and leave. He stays with them for some time too.
- This is a simple story, but I think it communicates a few important things about how what to do when someone is in need. Whether you identify more with Elijah or with the widow and her son, this story shows us:
 - **WE NEED EACH OTHER.** God gives us each other to help meet each other's needs. Elijah may have helped provide for the widow and her son, but the widow provided for Elijah's needs too.
 - **GOD WORKS THROUGH US.** There are many people in our world, country, neighborhoods, and schools who are in need, but like Elijah, we have to be willing to go where God sends us.
 - **THERE'S ENOUGH FOR EVERYONE.** Rather than being driven by selfishness or fear, Elijah and the widow trusted God would provide enough for all of them. But it required sharing their extra resources instead of hoarding them.
 - **RELATIONSHIPS MATTER.** Elijah didn't just send this family a check in the mail or perform a miracle and leave. This wasn't just an obligation or charity work. They also built real relationship over time.

SCRIPTURE | Matthew 25:40

- In Elijah's time, it was clear God cared about caring for people in need. It's clear that was still God's heart when Jesus was here on earth.
 - In Jesus' time some people believed God wanted certain people to suffer. They thought maybe those people deserved it. But when Jesus showed up, He showed us a different way.
 - Jesus cared deeply about people. He sought out people who had needs, and helped meet those needs, but He also spent time with them.
- In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus said when He returns, He'll ask all of us how we helped our neighbors when they were in need. Did we . . .
 - Give food and water to the hungry and thirsty?
 - Take care of strangers?
 - Give clothes to those who need them?
 - Care for sick people?
 - Visit prisoners?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Matthew 25:40.*
- Jesus saw people's needs — but He also saw their humanity. And He calls us to do the same. Instead of ignoring or not noticing the needs of the people around us, we are asked to do what Elijah and the widow did, and what Jesus did, and **be with people when they're in need.**

NOW WHAT? What does God want us to do about it?

- Why don't more people do more to help meet the needs of others? It's a question we should all be asking ourselves. What about you? What barriers prevent you from meeting the needs of others?
 - *When's the last time you noticed someone else's needs?*
 - *When you see someone in need, what's your usual reaction?*
 - *Is your reaction different depending on the person's need?*
 - *Have you ever been judgmental when you've seen someone in need?*
 - *Have you ever felt powerless or overwhelmed when you've seen someone in need?*
 - *What is preventing you from helping to meet more people's needs?*

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*
- ❖ **In the story of Elijah and the widow, how did their needs get met? Why do you think God decided to do it that way?**
- What are some of the needs that exist in the world? In our country? In your community or school? In our church?

DISCUSSION | What is Shalom?

- There's a Hebrew word in the Bible that is often translated as "peace." But when the Bible says "peace," it's not only talking about "the absence of war." It's talking about a world that's complete, whole, and in perfect balance. The word is *shalom*.
- In the world, in our country, and in our neighborhoods and schools, there are needs, but there is also excess. Some people have more than enough while others are in desperate need.
 - Some people think there isn't enough to go around, so they hoard things and only help people who they think are valuable. Do you believe there's enough to go around, or do you think we need to hold tightly to what we have?
 - Other people think there isn't enough to go around because they've never had enough. They may only have secondhand shoes that don't fit right. Their pantry might be empty because their family can only afford to buy food one day at a time. They might be new to this country and are still trying to acquire the things they need. For some of you, you don't have to imagine this because you already live with needs like these daily.
- The tragedy is, although people all over the world struggle to get access to basic resources like food, water, sanitation and education, there is enough to go around.
 - There's enough food in the world to feed everyone, but our systems don't prioritize sending food to all the places in need.
 - There are enough shoes for everyone. We won't run out if everyone has a few good pairs.

- There is enough space and materials for houses, and many houses all over the world are standing vacant, but some people are still without homes.
- There are imbalances in the world, but we can help bring *shalom* by working to put things back in balance. **How could we help create *shalom* wherever needs exist?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Return to your white board or sticky notes. Use the needs you already brainstormed and discuss what "shalom" would look like for some or all of those needs. Start by discussing needs in the world, then in your country, then in your neighborhoods or schools. Once again, try to cover as many of these necessities as you can:*
 - Food.
 - Water.
 - Shelter.
 - Clothing.
 - Education.
 - Safety.
 - Medical care.
 - Caring adults, like parents.
- One person working alone can't cure these immense imbalances. It takes a community to care for people in need – that's why Jesus tells His followers to help set things right.

HOW TO BE WITH PEOPLE IN NEED

- God seriously cares about people in need. If you follow Jesus, meeting the needs of those who are in need is a huge part of this whole Jesus-following thing. So here are a few tangible ways we can be with people who are in need.
 - **START SMALL:** The big needs we've talked about today might seem overwhelming, so start by looking for small needs around you. Maybe someone in class needs to borrow a pencil or someone forgot their lunch money. Once you notice these little things, it will be easier notice the big needs around you too.
 - **IDENTIFY NEEDS IN YOUR COMMUNITY:** There are so many programs and non-profits working to meet needs for our neighborhoods, and there are plenty of ways to get involved. We can fundraise, show up to help, or donate supplies that they give to people who need them – like food for food banks, socks and coats for homeless shelters, or school supplies for students who can't afford them.
 - **IDENTIFY NEEDS AT CHURCH:** Our church is working to meet needs too! See if there are any needs here that could be helped with your energy and time. Maybe the children's ministry needs all their chairs washed, or there is garbage outside that needs picking up, or the care ministry needs someone to distribute supplies.
 - **BRING YOUR OWN TALENTS:** Think of unique talents you have, like playing sports, calligraphy, making movies, or being a leader people follow. Think of the groups you are already involved with from school or outside of school. Then get creative about ways you can use the activities you already enjoy to help meet other people's needs.
- We all have the power to address the imbalance in the world and help set it right. The only way we can do this is in community and with God's help. Sometimes you're the one in

need and sometimes you're the one who has more, but whether it's someone across the ocean or across the street, we're called to **be with people when they're in need**.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*
- ❖ What can we do to become more aware of other people's practical needs?
- What are some of the barriers that keep you from helping meet the needs of others?
- ❖ Read Luke 12:32-34. What is Jesus saying here? Which part do you most need to hear right now?
- Who is someone with a need you can help meet? What's one way you're going to be "with" them?