



Vision and Commitment 2018
A year to focus on discipleship

Every day, in
everything
&
everywhere

Acting Out: Practising the Kingdom (Luke 13:10-17)

You will need:

Bibles

Towels

Wash basins

Soap

Introduction

- What was your first job?
- Was there anything you had to do in the job that you didn't like, or that felt beneath you? How did you deal with being the lowest in seniority and authority at your workplace?
- What lessons did you learn about how to treat, or how not to treat, employees?
- Give an example of a great leader you have known. What made their leadership great?

Reflection

Read out John 13:1-17.

Jesus demonstrates here what servant leadership looks like. It involves taking the lowliest possible position, being humbled, counting others more significant than yourself (Philippians 2:3). Jesus tells his disciples to follow his example in washing one another's feet.

This is not just an act of love between brothers and sisters; it is an act of worship: God is praised as we love each other in this way. If you think your group is ready for it, put on some music, get out some wash basins, soap and towels, and wash each other's feet, praying for each other as you do so.

If you think your group is not yet ready for this type of intimacy (though this is a place you do want to get to), begin by sharing encouragements around the room. Ask each person to share an encouraging word about someone else in the room, and make sure everyone gets encouraged. Then thank the Lord together in prayer for each other.

Discussion

Read Luke 13:10-17.

List all the obstacles that stand in the way of Jesus healing this woman.

- Which of these obstacles would you consider the most difficult to overcome? Why?
- How does Jesus deal with each of the obstacles in turn?
- Is Jesus' example here a model that we are meant to follow? Why or why not?
- What do you believe is the Christian responsibility to those who are suffering?
- What resources can you personally, or as a group, draw on to help those in need? (List as many as you can.)
- What do you think a life of active Kingdom-living looks like? In other words, what





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should Christians be known for in terms of their lifestyle?

- What obstacles or difficulties prevent us from acting out the Kingdom in the same way that Jesus does in this story?
- Are there any religious obstacles that may prevent us from serving suffering humans?
- Can these obstacles be overcome? If so, how?
- How can we train ourselves to overcome these obstacles and serve in the way Jesus did?

Action

What is an act of service that your group can practise? Think first about how you might serve your brothers and sisters in Christ. Then think about a way your group can serve your neighbourhood or city. (An excellent way to start is to ask people in your neighbourhood about any practical needs they think exist.) Make some concrete plans to begin serving the Church and your neighbours.

Leader's Guide

The woman in this story is beyond medical help, and has been so for 18 years. Unfortunately (or so it seems) she has encountered Jesus in the synagogue on the Sabbath, the one time and place where he should surely not perform miracles. Her obstacles include a physical malady (which Jesus describes spiritually as being 'bound up by Satan' (v16)) and the resistance of the synagogue leader and onlooking crowd who believe it is religiously inappropriate for Jesus to meet her need on the Sabbath.

Jesus is not intimidated, however. Neither the physical ailment, nor the spiritual root, nor the religious spirit of the synagogue president can prevent him from meeting this woman's need. He calls to the woman, lays hands on her, and heals her of her affliction, overcoming both Satan and the ailment in one go. Jesus then overcomes the objections of the president and crowd by pointing out their hypocrisy - they would untie an animal so it could drink water on the Sabbath, but this woman should be left bound by Satan? This accusation of double standards was strengthened no doubt by the miracle they had just witnessed. Jesus clearly has the authority to do and say these things.

We may feel like we are not capable of following in Jesus' footsteps here. Sure, we can call out hypocrisy, but we would likely be open to the same charge ourselves in certain aspects of our lives. And as for healing diseases or long-standing physical ailments, well, that's why we have doctors, isn't it?

We may feel like we just don't have the faith to do this kind of thing. But if we really follow the story of the New Testament, we aren't doing these things. It is Jesus who does these things in and through his followers. If Jesus had the authority to help the woman





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2,000 years ago, he still has the same authority today. He is simply calling us to faithfully act when and where he calls us to act. Our responsibility is to listen, obey, and trust.

What's more, there are loads of ways we can serve suffering humanity that don't involve spontaneous miracles. We can meet people's needs in all kinds of practical ways, and we can learn to be the kind of people who daily put others ahead of ourselves in small acts of loving service. We can also examine our own hearts for any hypocrisy that might exist there, religious or otherwise. In the end, the biggest obstacles to living out the Kingdom life are our own fear, compromise and apathy. But God is calling us on to deeper faith, trust, and Kingdom living, and he has already overcome sin, the flesh, the devil and the world.

Further resources

The book *Greater Things: 41 Days of Miracles* by James Thompson and Stephen Court is available in paperback and on Kindle. It helps the reader explore what living a life of hope and expectation in God might actually look like.

