

**MISSIONAL CHURCH:
Treasure in Clay Jars**

Lesson Five: Risk Takers for the Sake of the Gospel

Outcome Objectives:

1. Learners will examine ways in which scripture often calls for Christians to exchange personal comfort and predictability for risk taking and dependence on God.
2. Learners will recognize the risks involved in being set apart from the world because of the gospel.
3. Learners will explore how the Spirit of God empowers believers to be risk takers for the gospel
4. Learners will gain understanding of the implications of personally becoming greater risk-takers in taking the saving gospel of Jesus to culture.

Introduction

1. The Teacher will remind learners that the gospels have a great deal to say about disciples of Jesus taking risks for the gospel and depending on God's Spirit to lead and guide. Just as first century people asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?", so too must we constantly be asking, Who is my neighbor and how are to respond to our neighbors? On one occasion when Jesus was asked to clarify what he meant by, "Love your neighbor as yourself," he told this story. "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers? The expert in the law replied, 'The one who had mercy on him.' Jesus told him, 'Go and do likewise.'" (Luke 10:25-37)
2. Invite the learners to think about a time when they stepped out of their comfort zone and became a risk taker for God in serving their neighbors. Ask the learners to share (about one minute or so) that experience with one or two other participants in the class. Invite some of the learners to tell the entire group a time when their conversation partner was a risk taker.

3. With the same conversation partner, ask the learners to tell which of the three individuals in the Luke 10 narrative they most naturally identify. Is it the “priest” who turned his head away from the danger and walked on by? Is it the “Levite” (spiritual leaders in the priestly tribe of Israel devoted to the sanctuary, I Kings, Ezra), who refused to get involved in a questionable situation? Or is it the Samaritan (mixed race considered by Jews as pagans, and thought of in the same way as they perceived tax collectors and sinners) who personally risked his security, generously gave of his resources, and went beyond what was expected to care for the injured man? Rather than ask for the response with whom they identify, ask, “What are the theological principles Jesus is communicating by telling this story?”
4. Review II Cor. 4:3-6. Refer to the fifth principle, or fifth pattern, in the book **Treasure in Clay Jars** which says, “The missional church is learning to take risks for the sake of the gospel. It understands itself as different from the world because of its participation in the life, death, and resurrection of its Lord. It is raising questions, often threatening, about the church’s cultural captivity and grappling with the ethical and structural implications of its missional vocation.”

Exploration:

1. Ask the learners to identify ways in which they perceive Christians as being different or set apart from the world. Possible responses include how Christians use their time or resources, how they treat fellow workers, employees, how they speak, etc. Ask students to define and give examples of “the church’s cultural captivity.”
2. Ask learners to reflect on the risks involved in moving into a neighborhood with great needs, allowing homeless people to sleep in the buildings, or taking on unbudgeted expenses.
3. Taking the discussion one step further, ask learners to respond to this quote: “These congregations (in this study) seem to be living by a set of rules different from that of the dominant culture. Their priorities are different. They act against the “common sense.” They are trying to conform to Jesus Christ rather than to the surrounding society.” (p. 75)
4. Consumerism v. Being Present with the Poor
 - a. In Matthew 5:1-12 Jesus indicates “the poor are blessed more those with great financial resources.” Read the attached story (Attachment 1) and then use the diagram (Attachment 2) ask class participants to respond to the story by thinking of situations that didn’t turn out to be what they expected. For instance, an event that might have seemed to be unfortunate turned into a blessing or something that seemed to be a advantageous turned out to not be as expected.
5. Creative Generosity – How does a church responsibly respond to needs, some of which are ‘spur of the moment’, such as a natural

disaster (reflect on ways in which God used the faith community in reaching out to Katrina evacuees), when those funds are not in the budget?

Response:

1. Use this case study to encourage disciples of Jesus to be greater risk takers for the gospel. *The congregation begins a ministry to “help the underemployed through personal academic and spiritual development” in their building. The socially marginalized population display poor interpersonal skills and conflict often arises among the group. The congregation equips the students with job training, personal and group counseling, biblical instruction, and Christian community. During their six week non-paid internships students work side by side with Christians in the work settings. The mentoring and spiritual formation which occur during those week lead many to confess Jesus as Lord and be buried with him in baptism.*

2. Invite learners to respond to these questions:
 - How can we encourage each other to be greater risk takers in taking the gospel into our culture?
 - In what ways does God’s Spirit empower and lead Christians when they are risk takers for the gospel?
 - How do we answer the question today, “Who is my neighbor?”



WHAT IT MEANS TO BE POOR

One day a father of a very wealthy family took his son on a trip to the country with the firm purpose of showing his son how poor people can be. They spent a couple of days and nights on the farm of what would be considered a very poor family.

On their return from their trip, the father asked his son, "How was the trip?" "It was great, Dad." "Did you see how poor people can be?" the father asked. "Oh Yeah" said the son. "So what did you learn from the trip?" asked the father.

The son answered, "I saw that we have one dog and they had four. We have a pool that reaches to the middle of our garden and they have a creek that has no end. We have imported lanterns in our garden and they have the stars at night. Our patio reaches to the front yard and they have the whole horizon.

We have a small piece of land to live on and they have fields that go beyond our sight. We have servants who serve us, but they serve others. We buy our food, but they grow theirs. We have walls around our property to protect us, they have friends to protect them."

With this the boy's father was speechless. Then his son added, "Thanks dad for showing me how poor we are."

Rich

Poor

Once I thought I was rich. . . .

But I found I was poor.



But I found I was rich

Once I thought I was poor. . .



Creative Generosity

“A company owned by a member of the congregation hires homeless people and street kids to manufacture artificial rock. The company loses money, but the owner sees it as a business motivated by compassion. It is the kind of business that unemployed people could start for themselves, they say. He has had endless problems with the business, but he believes in what he does. The monetary losses are secondary to the opportunity to mentor his employees.” (p. 78)



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