



...educate...equip...mobilize...

## Park Street Café Service Month: Equip for Service, 6/19/07

*Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.*  
- Matthew 5:16

### **Announcement!**

The **City Service Fair** is tonight from **8:30pm-9:30pm** in the **Ockenga Lobby**. Come meet with representatives from Park Street ministries and local non-profits to find out how you and your small group can get involved. Dessert will be served!

### **Background**

Boston is a city in need. Two weeks ago we reviewed a few of the issues plaguing our local community, including *youth violence*, *poverty* and *homelessness*. If you weren't in small group a couple weeks ago, or if you didn't get a copy of the EDUCATE study sheet, you can download it online from the Café Service web site at [parkstreetcityworks.org/cafe.html](http://parkstreetcityworks.org/cafe.html). This week we focus on EQUIPPING for service: once we recognize that injustices exist in our local community, how do we respond as Christians?

### **God's Heart for the Marginalized**

Why should we be concerned that injustice exists in our community? Why should we help feed the hungry, house the homeless, and be advocates for the powerless - those who have been forgotten or marginalized by society? Throughout Scripture, God reveals His heart for the poor and needy:

*Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed.*  
- Psalm 82:3

*Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.*

- Proverbs 31:8-9

These passages demonstrate the clarity and directness with which God has called us to action. In addition, Scripture reveals that our service honors God. In essence, serving our community becomes a means of serving God.

*He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.*  
- Proverbs 14:31

*I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.*  
- Matthew 25:40

### **Our Response: Reaching Out to the Less Fortunate**

So what does it look like to respond to God's call and reach out to the poor and needy?

*The commandments...are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself."*  
- Romans 13:9

In the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) Christ shows us not only who our neighbor is, but demonstrates how we are to love our neighbor as our own self. Love for our neighbor should be a highest calling. Just as the Samaritan stopped to help the beaten, half dead traveler, we are challenged to go beyond our natural response when we are confronted with injustice. In service to the poor and suffering we are to serve those most in need, those who otherwise would be left alone. This is more than mere charity: this is our calling as followers of Christ.

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## **A Call to Action**

In James 2:14-17, James tells us that our faith, without action, is useless. Our spiritual growth, in part, hinges on our willingness to follow the example of Christ and serve those in need. Just as Christ met the physical needs of those he ministered to, we are called to do likewise.

*What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.*

- James 2:14-17

Serving is not always easy and often we may find ourselves drawn out of our comfort zones. However, these situations stretch us and allow our faith to grow as we are used by God to meet the needs of others. *Serving in the context of a small group* provides unique opportunities for spiritual growth as we learn to provide support, strength and accountability to those working alongside of us. In these acts we are strengthening the body of believers as well as furthering the kingdom of God.

## **Response Questions**

1. Why is it important that we as Christians tend to the physical needs of the poor and needy? How does Jesus meet both the physical and spiritual needs of those he ministers to?
2. Why would God choose to use us to show his compassion to those in need? Why does he call us to do things like "defend the cause of the weak"?
3. As Christians, do you feel we must recognize and respond to the injustices we see around us, or do you feel like it is something that would be nice to do but not necessarily required?
4. What kinds of needs or injustices, if any, break your heart when you see or hear about them? Are there any particular areas where you feel well-suited to serve?
5. Do you have any examples in your life where God has called you to serve him in a way that was outside your comfort zone? How did you respond? Have you had a good Samaritan experience in which you had to go far out of your way to help someone?
6. How might a small group atmosphere aid in alleviating hesitancy to serve? Would you be more willing to stretch your comfort zones knowing those around you were in a similar situation?

## **Prayer**

- Pray that God would move in the hearts and minds of the Café community to live active faiths and reflect Christ's love in communities outside Park Street Church.
- Pray for increased awareness of the needs we encounter on a daily basis.
- Pray for an active heart in addressing these needs.
- Pray for the support of fellow small group members as we consider serving in ways that stretch us beyond our normal comfort zones.

## **Additional Information**

- For additional information about service at Park Street Church, please visit the Park Street CityWorks web site: [parkstreetcityworks.org](http://parkstreetcityworks.org)
- Information on the Biblical foundation for service is available at: [parkstreetcityworks.org/biblical\\_foundations.html](http://parkstreetcityworks.org/biblical_foundations.html)

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