



Part 3 Discussion Guide

Face the Issue:

This week Jeremy turned our focus towards the dangers of being judgmental. He reminded us that at one time we were in need of a Savior just like those that we are called to minister to.

When we (or those that claim to be Christian) appear to be judgmental then the message that is sent is that the Gospel of Christ is not for everyone. It is only for people that meet a certain criteria. People outside the church believe that Christians don't care about anyone but themselves. No one sees the transforming power of Jesus at work because it is hidden inside the walls of the church. Even worse, people may look at the Christians they see on television or hear on the radio and think that Christianity is just about rules and morality. Morals are important, but following Christ is about so much more. It's about new life—the life we were meant to live, a life reconciled to God and in relationship with Him. We are called to be the light of the world, but the light will not make a difference in our world if we don't let anyone see it.

In what ways have you seen Christianity appear to be judgmental?

What specific populations have experienced the most judgment from those proclaiming to be Christian?

Have you ever experienced judgment from a "Christian"? If you are comfortable, please share with your group.

Into the Word:

When someone asks how we are doing spiritually, we are likely to respond by focusing on the frequency of our prayer and Bible study, the ways our lives are being transformed, or how close we feel to God. Few of us would respond by evaluating our sacrificial efforts to serve the needy. We may believe that serving the needy is good, but it doesn't take a prominent place in our conception of being a Christian. However, this is one of the ways in which God judges his people's faithfulness.

Read Isaiah 58: 1–10.

In today's politically charged climate, what are some "judgments" that you have heard about the poor and needy in our communities?

What does the above passage say about how God feels about people who proclaim His name and belief in Him but their actions are judgmental towards the poor and needy?

The Bible references the poor more than 170 times. These passages refer primarily to those who are physically poor. Despite all our studying of the Bible, we often fail to comprehend God's heart for the needy. There are many aspects to the Christian life, and caring for the needy is an essential one that

often gets relegated to the back burner. Spiritual disciplines, study, and worship will not please God if we are hardhearted toward those in need.

Reaching out to the needy is not as difficult as you might think. In most towns and cities, there are numerous organizations that provide assistance for the needy and need volunteers. There are needy people in our churches and neighborhoods. We may miss people in need because we're not really looking.

Serving the needy will increase and strengthen our faith in ways we might not expect. If you've ever been on a short-term mission trip or participated in a service project, it probably changed you more than you changed the people you were serving. Service has a way of giving us a different perspective and showing us what is important to God. As we respond to God's call to serve the needy, it will bring us closer to Him.

Apply The Word

Have you been a part of a church or heard of a church that is good at reaching out to the needy in their community? What did they do? How did they make this a priority?

What are some organizations in our community that provide for the needy?

What keeps you from being more aware of the needy?

Are there certain groups of people in our church who are in need? In our community? If so, what might you do to help?