

MAKING A DIFFERENCE Devotion

by Helen Bice

Remember Zacchaeus? I am sure we all know that familiar Bible story. There are two things that come to mind when I think about Zacchaeus. First, he was short in stature; and second, he wanted to see Jesus. Sometimes we almost forget all the others that lined the streets of Jericho that day because they also wanted to see Jesus. This made it impossible for Zacchaeus to see Him . . . until he went out on a limb.

The Gospels are full of stories of individuals, small groups and large crowds of people, wanting to see Jesus for a variety of reasons. Some people wanted to hear His preaching and teaching; others came and brought those in need of healing. I'm sure there were some there out of curiosity and hoping to see a miracle performed!

Jesus drove evil spirits and demons out of people. He healed paralytics, people with leprosy and other illnesses, gave sight to the blind, and raised some from the dead. Crowds of 4,000 and 5,000 gathered around Jesus and when He realized they had nothing to eat, He fed them with loaves and fishes. All these acts Jesus performed could be considered deeds of *Human Care* or *Mission Service*. He was touching the spiritual lives of people through His ministering to their physical needs of hunger, illnesses or death.



Many Bible stories about Jesus are so familiar to us we almost feel like we have seen Him. Surely if we had been alive in those days or if Jesus were here today we would be a part of those crowds gathering to see Him and needing His touch.

Picture in your mind your favorite picture or image of Jesus. A couple of mine are Jesus the Shepherd, holding the lamb; or Jesus knocking at the door. I'm sure each of you has a favorite. But what about those that do not know Him or have never read those Bible stories? Those are the people we need to reach with our *Human Care/Mission Service* projects and work.

Like Jesus did, we minister to the physical needs of feeding the hungry, providing clothing or blankets to the cold and homeless, touching the lives of the sick (cancer, AIDS, or other illnesses), caring about single parents, widows and . . . Surely, all those whose lives we touch see Jesus through us. The love of Jesus that shines through us may be the only Jesus they have ever seen. How important this makes the work we do!

Many of us are pretty comfortable with our lives. Personally, I don't have much direct contact with the unchurched. A lot of my work is in my church, the LWML, a rural farming community and agriculture organizations. There are not a lot of unchurched people in my life.

It is pretty easy to send quilts to LWR, give food to a food pantry, etc (and these things are important) but we really need to get personally involved so others have an opportunity to see Jesus. You know . . . kind of go out on a limb.



Sometimes we need to get out of our comfort zones and into our communities where the unchurched are . . . the soup kitchens, homeless shelters, free clinics . . . you know those places in your own community. Out there where people look different, talk different, smell bad, dress shabbily . . . and don't know Jesus.

I would like to share two thoughts written by Alma Kern. From her "Deeds Demonstrate Love" in the book You are Loved she writes,

God showers bounteous, undeserved love upon us.
We respond to His love with love.
Such love impels us to listen in wonder at His feet,
then moves us to action.
In ordinary, undramatic deeds of kindness we say,
"God loves you. That's why I do.
I love Him dearly. I'm loving Him by loving you."

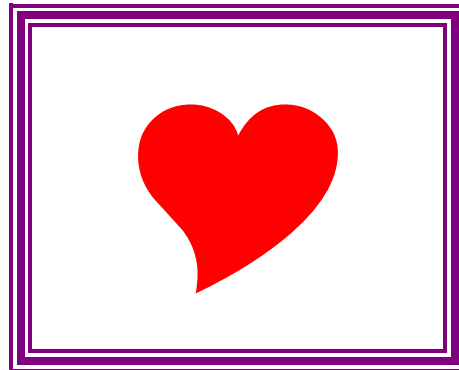
And then in her book, You are Precious, from "Care to Share" she writes,

"Oh, Lord,
help me remember
my neighbors

don't really care
how much I know

They need to know
how much
I really care.

May I care
enough
to share Your love
with them."



*Lutheran Women
in Mission*

Let's really try to make a difference in the lives of others. Let them see Jesus through our love, our service and our caring. Hopefully that is what we will share and learn, and then share with our sisters in Christ and those in our communities that do not know Him.