



Lesson 4

Why do you want to help me?

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, you knew us as hurting ones because sin made a mess of our lives and of being with you forever. Because of your loving heart, you took action for us. You knew why you wanted to help us. In our study use your Word to lead us to see why we want to help those who come to us hurting. Bless us with a spirit of understanding and a desire to help. In your name we pray. Amen.

Introduction

If you are going to start eating healthy, you need to know why. If you are going to start managing your money better, you need to know why. If we as a congregation are going to help the hurting with hope, yes, we need to know why. Knowing *why* gives you a purpose. Knowing *why* lets you ask and answer difficult questions. Knowing *why* makes something important and worth doing. We've seen who the hurting are and what they are like. If one of them were to ask you, "Why do you want to help me," how would you answer? Let's see from Scripture what our answer can be.

Search the Scriptures

1. When Jesus removed himself visibly at his ascension, he gave his followers directions as to what they were to do as his Christian people. Read Matthew 28:18-20 and pick out what his followers were to do and then give a reason why each one is important to those who are hurting. Use the table below to record your answers. Take two minutes to complete this on your own. We'll hear samples.

Possible answers are listed in the table.

Matthew 28:18-20

¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

What did Jesus tell his followers to do?

Why is this important to the hurting?

Go	We don't sit back and say, "We're here, now find us." It's an activity. When the hurting come to our congregation, we don't flee the other way to the safety of our friends. We go to the hurting. We go over by them and talk to them.
Make disciples (learners or followers) of all nations	We aren't sent to just the best of society, the educated, or those who have their life all in order and are model citizens. "All nations" means no one is excluded, including the hurting.
Baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit	Baptism brings people into God's kingdom. It brings Jesus' forgiveness to someone. It makes them part of the family of God. The hurting need to be washed and cleansed with forgiveness.
Teaching them to obey everything Jesus has commanded them.	That means teaching both law and gospel. It means pointing out sin and that poor choices have consequences and can make life difficult. It means also teaching them the gospel of forgiveness that Jesus brings. The hurting need to grow in the Word.

2. Jesus didn't distance himself from those in society who were seen as outcasts and misfits. He saw the hurting for who they were and what they needed. As you read Jesus' response to those who looked down upon the hurting in his day, use his response to give reasons why we want to help the hurting.

We want to help the hurting because we all need a Savior. The Pharisees needed a Savior, and so did the "sinners" (tax collectors, prostitutes, outcasts of society, those living unclean lives). Jesus came for those who realize they need a Savior. The hurting can be ones who realize they are not righteous. Sunday worship is a hospital where people who are sick and hurting can come.

Mark 2:15-17

¹⁵ While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. ¹⁶ When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" ¹⁷ On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

3. Jesus' forgiveness that he brought was not just for "sinners" in general but was also for his own tormentors. As the sections of Scripture are read, try to determine how many ways Jesus was tormented and star * them. Circle which star you think would be the most difficult for you to forgive and be prepared to tell why.

Possible answers for the "starred" ways Jesus was tormented are underlined. The leader could explain details of what the mocking by the soldiers and the actual crucifixion entailed to explain further how Jesus was tormented. Answers will vary for what the participants circled as the most difficult for them to forgive.

Matthew 27:27-31

²⁷ Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. ²⁸ They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, ²⁹ and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand. Then they knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said. ³⁰ They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. ³¹ After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

Luke 23:33-37

³³ When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. ³⁴ Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

³⁵ The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is God’s Messiah, the Chosen One.”

³⁶ The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar ³⁷ and said, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.”

- a. How does Jesus’ forgiveness toward his tormentors help you when it comes to helping the hurting?

There is something for me to strive for in my forgiveness and compassion as I see Jesus’ forgiveness and compassion toward his tormentors. A forgiving spirit for those whose sinful decisions hurt themselves and others or made problems for other people’s lives is what Jesus had toward his tormentors.

- b. How can Jesus’ forgiveness toward his tormentors help someone who has been a victim of a crime and now sees someone coming to their congregation who carried out a similar crime?

It could also bring memories or thoughts of a crime or hurt that was brought on a friend or family member. I need a spirit of forgiveness. I need to see that sin is sin. My sins are just as much sins as the one who carried out a crime. I need to go back to Jesus’ forgiveness for my own sins. Jesus also forgives the one who carried out a crime. Jesus forgave his tormentors even though they had not asked for it. When someone comes to our church who committed a crime similar to the way we’ve been affected or hurt, it can be difficult and take time. Growing in Christ’s forgiveness for us and seeing Jesus’ forgiveness in action helps me to forgive. The discussion may head into a direction of talking about having a struggle to forgive others. Only Jesus’ forgiveness for me is going to make me strong to forgive another. Forgiveness is not a feeling. I may not feel forgiveness in my heart. But forgiving another is something I do as part of my new nature.

4. Read the following three Scripture sections that help us see why we as a congregation want to help the hurting. Then take four minutes to answer the questions below on your own. We’ll hear samples.

Option: Instead of having the participants complete the questions below on their own, pair them up or put them into groups of three to five people. Let those who wish to work on their own do so. After four minutes, hear a sampling from the groups for each question below.

Acts 10:34,35

³⁴ Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism ³⁵ but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right."

Galatians 3:26-28

²⁶ So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, ²⁷ for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Matthew 18:1-5

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" ² He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. ³ And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵ And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

- a. How do you think these passages would look from the viewpoint of the hurting?
Write down what you think they would observe in these passages.

Possible answers: God accepts people from every nation and doesn't show favoritism. So he accepts me. We are all one in Christ, equal before him. Greatness in God's kingdom is being in the lowly position. Jesus says greatness in his kingdom is trusting him with a child-like faith. Jesus wants me to trust him that what he says about my sin is true. Jesus wants me to trust him that what he says about him being my Savior is true.

- b. How would you finish this sentence?

"We want to help the hurting who need help, conveying to them that they are part of us here at our congregation, because _____."

Possible answers: we've all fallen short, them *and* me; Jesus has done the same for me; we are all children of God (even those whose background has been ripped apart by sin).

5. Jesus notices what his people do when they put their faith into action. In Matthew 25, Jesus tells us about what will take place on the last day when he comes back as our king and judge. How do these Bible verses help us understand why we want to help those who are hurting?

What we do for the least, the hurting, we do for Jesus. We are doing this out of love for Jesus. Our welcoming actions toward those who are hurting are being done toward Jesus. From a law

point of view, when we don't welcome the hurting, we are not welcoming Jesus. Or what we didn't do for the least of these, we didn't do for Jesus. Let us see Christ in those who come. It's him we are truly serving.

Matthew 25:34-36,40

³⁴ "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' ... ⁴⁰ "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'"

Bringing It Home

6. On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being poor and 10 being outstanding), how well does our congregation know why we are a congregation who helps the hurting? Take 30 seconds to write down your number and prepare a reason why you chose that number.

Answers will vary. Be sure have them explain why they chose the number they did.

7. What are things we can do to get to be a "10" congregation that knows why we help the hurting with hope? On your own, name two things you think would help our congregation improve in this area. After you have your two, share them with a person next to or near you. We'll hear a sampling.

Answers will vary at each congregation. Most likely no one gave a "10" as their answer for activity number 6. This activity now allows the participants to state concrete ways improvement can be made. Some things that might be suggested are: we need to be in the Word; we need to know ourselves and how much we need Jesus' help personally.

8. After what we've seen in this lesson, what's our *why*? What three reasons would you give if someone who is hurting would ask, "Why do you want to help me?"

Answers will vary. Possible answers: You are just like me. We all need help; we are all works in progress. God wants everyone to be saved and that means you; I want to show my thanks to Jesus for all he's done for me.

9. Draw a picture that illustrates the main point of today's lesson. We'll see samples.

Take volunteers to show their drawings. For those who think they can't draw, perhaps they could explain what they hoped to draw.

Living My Faith

We can be part of a problem, or we can be part of the solution. Our congregation needs to a group of believers who understands why we want to help the hurting with hope. From the suggestions named in question 7 that would help our congregation improve in this area, pick one of the suggestions and actively seek to be part of the solution at our congregation. What are you going to do to help?

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, you have been with us today in our study through your Word. We heard your messages of care, love, and a desire to help those who are hurting because of sin. As we carry on our life of Christian service to you and others, bring to mind the reasons why we want to help those who are hurting. By your Spirit through the Word, instill in us a strong desire to live and bring your message of hope to those who so desperately need it. In your name we pray. Amen.