

# THE GOSPEL *and* the Poor.

August 16, 2015 - Efrem Smith

- **Open in prayer.**

- **Introduction.**

- Efrem Smith is the President and CEO of World Impact. World Impact is committed to facilitating church-planting movements by evangelizing, equipping and empowering the unchurched urban poor. Their purpose is to honor and glorify God and to delight in Him in the inner cities by knowing God and making Him known.

- He is totally into Superhero movies and comic books.

- o Discuss his introduction using Superman and the alternate world called “Bizarro”.
- o How did he compare our current world and Bizarro world?
- o How is Jesus going to reach the poor, the lost, the marginalized, the addicted, the dysfunctional, and the arrogant? (HINT: His Bride...the Church...you and me.)
- o What does it look like when the poor, under resourced person experiences the Gospel?
- o Discuss the statement he said, “When Jesus comes back that will be ultimate justice. But until then, it’s just us”.

- **The Gospel and the Poor.**

- **Read and discuss Matthew 25:31-46.**

- Collectively, as His Bride, we are to embody and extend God’s love, grace, justice, and mercy to everyone around us.
  - o According to this Scripture, how are we His heart, hands and feet? (Tangible expressions)
  - o What do the “least of these” look like in your life, your community, your world?
  - o Not just reaching the poor but empowerment of the poor...to become pastors, evangelist, business people, and entrepreneurs.

- **A passion and urgency for the poor.**

- **Read and discuss Matthew 25:1-13.**

- The story of the ten bridesmaids—five wise and five foolish.
- In Jesus’ day, when a man asked a father for his daughter’s hand in marriage, he had to have a house built on his own father’s land before the wedding would start.
- Jesus used this practice in John 14 when he talked about the many mansions in His Father’s house.
- He was saying the Good News is like planning for a wedding.
- Bridesmaids had two jobs and they do them every day until the wedding happens:
  1. Help the bride with wedding plans.
  2. In the evening they go out and light the road, holding lamps.

The bride is always ready on her wedding day.

- o What does it mean for you to make sure the bride (the Church) is ready for the groom (Jesus)?
- o How can the Church be beautiful and glamorous on her wedding day?
- o What does it look like for you to have a “kingdom of God” urgency for people who don’t know Him?
- o How can you (as a Christ follower and a member of the body of Christ) love, care for, and empower the poor, the weak, the incarcerated, the under resourced?

- **Seeing the potential and empowering the poor.**

- **Read and discuss Matthew 25:14-20**

- The master with three servants/slaves
- Master going on a journey and gives each slave talents (portion of his wealth).
- To one several talents, to another a few talents, and to the third one talent.
- The first two invested and multiplied their talents. The last one buried his one talent.

- In Jesus' time, one form of slavery occurred when you were in debt to someone and you became their slave until you paid off your debt.
  - o Why was it so strange that the master gave these slaves a portion of his wealth? (HINT: They all owed him money.)
  - o How is this a picture of what Christ did for us? (HINT: We can never repay the sin debt that Jesus paid for us on the cross.)
  - o Discuss Efrem's statement, "Jesus is the greatest stimulus package ever!"
  - o How do people try to "work it off"? (Discuss salvation is a free gift of grace—not works)
- Through His blood, redemption and justification we are no longer slaves to sin but we are now made stewards of what Jesus gives us...His kingdom capital.
- No matter how many talents you have—or think you have—He wants to invest you into the lives of others.
  - o How can you multiply His kingdom capital in the lives of the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized?
  - o How has He empowered you to use your talents, experiences, and gifts?
  - o Pray for your group members that they would see themselves as His Kingdom capital and that He wants to invest them in the lives of people.
- **Kingdom compassion and justice.**
- **Read and discuss Matthew 25:31 – 40.**
- The way we commune with the poor is correlated with our connection with God. (HINT: Upward, loving God completely.)
- In the Greek compassion means "guts/intestines". When God looks at the poor, the broken, it touches His core—where His grace, mercy, healing, and love flow out.
- When you look at the poor, the broken, the incarcerated and it touches your head it becomes political, ideological, you compare it to your personal experiences, or place judgements.
- When it goes into your heart, your guts, it gets to the Holy Spirit and it draws His mercy, love, and compassion towards them.
- Discuss Efrem's information regarding prisons.
- Many prisons are become privatized...they need to make money. One way they forecast growth is to look at third grade math and reading scores in under resourced schools in communities...they are more than likely to be incarcerated.
  - o At TC, we say "If our community doesn't change because we're here, we shouldn't be here".
  - o What does it look like for us to be His heart, hands and feet to our local schools? (Discuss what we are currently doing)
  - o How can you be a "Gospel paradise" in this "Bizarro world"?
- When the church collaborates amazing things can happen.
  - o Read and discuss the following Values of TC and how they apply to this message:
  - o The Transformative Gospel of Grace.
  - o Kingdom Partnerships.
  - o Servant Community.
- Fifty years ago, between Montgomery and Selma, the church stayed on the bridge...marching and singing hymns. They were met with violence as they stood for the equality. That day is now known as Bloody Sunday.
- Not too long after that there was a larger group of people from several churches who stood on the bridge—multi-ethnic and multi-generational—as a sign of equality.
- For you, no matter how tough things get, stay on the bridge—at church, at home, at school, to the poor, to the broken, to the marginalized, to the arrogant.
- Jesus on the cross is a bridge over troubled waters.
- Together, we can plant churches and empower the poor. We can change systems, mindsets, and cultures. You and I together—together everyone achieves more—can bring healing and hope to this Bizarro world through Christ.
- **Close in prayer.**
  - o Pray that God will use our financial gift to see the poor encouraged and empowered through the ministry of World Impact.
  - o Pray for our upcoming baptism celebration September 13.
  - o Pray for Transformers to move to the 8:30 and 11:45 service so we can free more seats at 10:00 because "people matter to God and they matter to us".