
LIFE TEEN PARENT LETTER

Thank you for allowing your teen to join us tonight at Life Teen. Below you'll find some information about tonight's topic. Please dialogue with your teen and encourage them to share what they learned.

LIFE NIGHT: BEGGAR

CONTENT OVERVIEW

Take a moment to think about all of the images of Jesus we see in our homes, our church, and the media. These images influence our perception of who we think Jesus is. Some see Him as judgmental and condemning, others see Him as all-loving and maybe even permissive. Still others might see Jesus as a legend or maybe only as a historical figure, but not God. Your perspective might be something else entirely.

The Church and Scripture teach us exactly who Jesus is - First, Jesus is God. Second, Jesus is our Savior - He gives His life so our sins would be forgiven. Third, Jesus is going to return as judge at the end of time. Fourth, Jesus is all-loving and wants what is best for us and that plan doesn't include sin. (CCC 430-445, 1039; John 8:11)

Jesus is the full revelation of God, so when we look at all that Jesus said and did, we get a beautiful picture of who God is. There are some things, however, that we sometimes shy away from when we talk about Jesus. They are parts of the picture that His life paints that make us uncomfortable. (CCC 51-53, 65; John 1:1-5, 14)

When we start to ignore or censor these parts of who Jesus is, we create a "fake Jesus." But, if Jesus is God's full revelation, it is vitally important that we do the best we can to fully understand who Jesus is and separate the "fact" from the "fiction."

One uncomfortable image of Jesus is that of beggar. Jesus shares in the life of the poor. He is born into poverty, the manger. He experiences hunger and thirst and identifies Himself frequently with the poor and lowly. Finally, on the cross, Jesus is stripped naked and laid bare with nothing as a final act of solidarity with the poor and broken. (CCC 544, Luke 2:7, Luke 4:2, Mark 15:24)

To follow Jesus's example of identifying with the poor, we must be willing to be poor and detached from material items. In the Gospel of Mark, there is a story about a rich young man who asked Jesus what he needed to do to follow Him. He was told that he needed to sell everything and give it to the poor. It wasn't the response he expected and he walked away sad. When we come to Christ desiring to follow Him, we must be ready for Him to ask us to give up things that are important to us. (Mark 10:17-22)

In another story from Luke, Jesus tells us about a great feast where all those invited were "too busy" to attend and the host went into the streets and invited the beggars and outcasts to come and dine instead. In this story, Jesus teaches us to be detached, willing to be "poor," so that we are ready and able to accept the invitation of Christ. (Luke 14:15-24)

Furthermore, to follow Jesus' example of caring for the poor, we need to share His heart for the poor. We cannot judge them nor ignore their presence. If we feel uncomfortable giving money to those who beg on the corner because we don't know what they will use the money for, we can find other solutions: perhaps giving a gift card for food or telling them about a shelter close by. Also, rather than just going through the motions of serving

or sharing, we need to be aware that it is our brother and sister in Christ that we are caring for. We are called to treat them with dignity and love.

In our homes, we are called to teach the importance of caring for others to our children. Do we welcome new people when we see them at Church? Do we participate as a family in canned food drives, adopt a family at Christmas or support a missionary? Do we only give money or do we give of ourselves?

Caring for the poor is not an option. It is a necessary component for us if we want to follow Jesus.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

1. How do you identify with those who are in need? Have you ever been in need or an outsider in a community?
2. Have you ever felt uncomfortable serving or helping the poor? Why? How did you overcome?
3. What are some ways that you and your family can be Jesus to those who need your help?