Action

Assigned To:

Lay Person

Let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another.

Ephesians 4:25
OBJECTIVE OF THE TALK:
To add the important dimension of Action to the Christian life of the residents: the need to be genuinely concerned for his/her brother and sister; to pass God’s love on to another, to introduce that other person to Jesus. To help the resident choose effective ways of being a Christ-bearer by relieving the fear of being perceived as "weak" as he or she reaches out with love to those nearby. To convey to the resident that the only action which is for God is love, and all love is action for God, and that, in the action of love, we not only share God with others but we find the presence of God in our own lives affirmed and renewed.

PRAYER: Kairos Community Prayer, Page 11, FG

Speaker introduces self, telling name, whether lay or clergy person and giving name of talk. This information should also be displayed on a poster board, flip chart sheet, or be written on chalk board.

I. CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A THREE-DIMENSIONAL RESPONSE TO GOD’S UNQUALIFIED LOVE FOR US. THERE IS ALWAYS GOD, OURSELVES, AND OTHERS.

A. In the Opening The Door talk, we learned about maintaining a relationship with God. Then, in the Discovery Talk we heard how we can deepen our relationship with Jesus. Action is the activity which bring everything together and cements everything into place.

B. It is the result of spiritual exercise.
C. It is the result of continuing exploration and discovery.

D. A spiritual life requires Christian action, the third leg of support.

II. IN RESPONSE TO CHRIST'S GIVING OF HIMSELF FOR US, WE, BECAUSE WE ARE CHRISTIANS, GIVE OF OURSELVES TO OTHERS. THIS IS CHRISTIAN ACTION.

A. The Christian life is a love triangle.
   1. Christian Action grows out of Opening the Door and Discovery. (3-legged stool?)
   2. Christian life involves God, self, and others.

B. The very living of a life in Christ, the very act of being a Christian, moves us to reach out so that others, too, may experience God's love and begin a friendship with God.

C. The Christian gives of self to another in order to allow the other person to grow in Christ.

III. THE ONLY ACTION WHICH IS FOR GOD IS LOVE.

A. Love is action.
   1. Jesus gave us a new commandment. Jesus said to the apostles: "And now I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you so you must love one another."
   2. 1 Jn. says there is no such thing as love for God without love for brother... for sister...

B. What does it mean to love?
1. To be open. We can't allow anyone to love us without becoming vulnerable to them.

2. To have compassion (to suffer with). We can't love others without recognizing their pain - suffering with them.

3. To listen and understand.

C. In the prison environment, becoming vulnerable to another person can be perceived as being weak because one has to tell the other something about who one is.

   1. Being perceived as weak can result in demands for goods and services.

D. How then, do we love others in the prison environment? How do we overcome the fear of being perceived as weak?

   1. None of us can really love someone else without God's help.

   2. God's love is agape love.

      a. Agape love is defined as wanting the very best for someone else and being willing to be used by God to get it for them.

      b. God will always give us the strength to love one another if we ask for it.

   3. Jesus has given us the Church to support us as we act to love one another.

   4. Hopefully, the loving environment of the Church will provide
a safe place in which to learn the kind of vulnerability necessary for real love.

a. To become vulnerable to someone else, we must risk trusting another person enough to share something of the pain and fear in which we live.

b. In an environment such as a prison, this can be dangerous. One must be very, very careful in selecting others in whom to confide. Begin with little things and then if the response is loving, go on to deeper feelings.

c. This commitment is a heavy one. It is difficult in the prison environment and can only be done in community.

d. It can be done, with God’s help and the help of other Christians in the compound.

E. What, then, about the fear?

1. As we grow in grace, in our friendship with God, the fear will recede and disappear. It is not something which we can do in our strength; it is something which God, in His grace, does for us.

2. John tells us this in his first letter, a letter in which he talks much about the nature of love. "There is no fear in love; perfect love drives out all fear. So then, love has not been made perfect in anyone who is afraid, because fear has to do with punishment." 1 John 4:18.

IV. CHRISTIAN ACTION IS NECESSARY FOR OUR SURVIVAL IN CHRIST.
A. It is vital to our own spiritual health and growth.

1. All vital power, if not used, grows weak, wastes away and dies.

2. All life must give as well as receive or it will die.
   a. Example: The Dead Sea.

3. We grow in our Christian life, our life in grace, as we share the love of Christ with others.

B. It is vital for the salvation and growth of others.

1. Evil reigns in the compound, and unless we become Christ-bearers, our brothers/our sisters there are lost.

2. If we do not win the compound for Christ, then the enemies of Christ will over-run us.

V. HOW DO WE DO THIS?

A. By loving one another. With his new commandment, Jesus also gave us the formula for Christian action. "If you have love for one another then everyone will know that you are my disciples." John 13:34.

1. Jesus is our model. To love is to affirm. It is to see others as they can be, not as they are. It is to trust Jesus, to be obedient to him.

2. We are not called to judge one another or to condemn one another. Jesus warns us against it: "Do not judge others, and God will not judge you. Do not condemn others, and
God will not condemn you; forgive others and God will forgive you. Give to others and God will give to you." Luke 6:37-38.

VI LOVE IS THE MOST DIFFICULT ACTION WE ARE COMMANDED TO DO:

How do we treat the other person in such a way as to always help him or her become a better person and grow in a personal relationship to God?

A. We use the head. What we hope to do must be carefully thought out before we begin to act. Luke 14:28-30

1. Christians "act" (in the love of Christ). They do not "react" (to people and situations).

B. We use the will. As Christians, after we have done our headwork, we then make a decision about the way we are going to act and are unwavering in our action...we stick to it in spite of obstacles and disappointments. We will to love. John 13:35.

C. We use the body. We must go! We must be there!

D. We use the knees. We must be willing to use our knees, to back our action up with agape. Two scriptures bear directly on this: John 15:5, "Without me you can do nothing." Phil. 4:13, "I can do all things in him who strengthens me." Only though our connectedness to God can we bring new life.

E. We use our love. We should do all things in love. I John 4:19:21. The love of Christ causes us to reach out to others.
VII. THERE IS A CHRISTIAN METHOD FOR EFFECTIVELY REACHING OUT TO OTHERS.

A. Make a friend. [Find someone who needs a friend. Find someone who thinks he/she doesn't need a friend].

B. Be a friend.

C. Introduce that friend to Christ.

VIII. WITNESS OF SPEAKER.

A. The speaker should be able to witness to a specific, long-term, planned, love campaign to change a relationship with another person from one anchored to the pole of hostility to one dancing toward the pole of hospitality, identifying God's acts of grace, the input and support of speaker's reunion group, the dependence upon their support and loyalty, the growth in trust in his or her relationship with this person whom he or she is loving into the Kingdom.

B. You may be the only Bible some residents in this institution will ever read. You may be the only example of Christ they will ever see.