

Looking the other way is not an option

A man was travelling along a road which was known as a danger spot for brigands and muggers. He was vulnerable because he was on his own. He must have had good reason to be alone, but it was a gamble and sadly he was attacked. Was it his fault that he was attacked? No. the victim was not the cause of the attack. We must put the blame where it is due. The attackers were to blame. Get that straight. There are always people who prey on other people. Sometimes they attack physically like these muggers but sometimes they attack more subtly. They might cheat people out of what is rightfully theirs, Or they might continually treat someone as a slave and deprive them of their friends and family. Sometimes it is a sexual attack. Sadly there are often people who prey on others who are weaker than they are. In Jesus' story there was a gang who ambushed the man and they left him for dead. They did not care what happened to him.

But wait. Here comes someone to help. He is a religious man who is hurrying along, also on his own, on a dangerous road. Maybe he is hurrying to get to the Temple to do his duties there. Will he help the man? Well no. he looked the other way and scuttled past. Maybe he was scared he would be attacked as well. Maybe he didn't have the time to stop. Maybe he just didn't care enough. Maybe, let's give him the benefit of the doubt, he didn't know how to help. Here is another person coming along the road. But he doesn't stop to help either.

Here is a third man. I doubt if he will help because he is from another country. Why should he care about the man on the ground if the others don't? But he does. He stops to help the man. He takes what he has to hand and he bandages the man and gets him to a place of safety. He cared. He rescued the man from the road. Not only did he know what to do but he did it. Let's face it if he had not helped the man, that man would have died. It's a very dry and dusty road with very little shelter. Without help the man would certainly have died.

It is up to all of us to know what to do when we recognise that someone is being abused. We should know what to do and what to say and who to tell.

Churches are places of safety where people who are vulnerable can feel safe. Many of us are older or have physical weakness. But we at Emmanuel want to ensure that our church is as safe as it can be. One reason for highlighting safeguarding today is that when I was doing my recent updated training in safeguarding, I was asked to think of a project that would make our church an even safer place to be. I felt that one way to do this was to make it clear to everyone here what the thing to do is if you are aware of someone who is being abused or if you know someone who is an abuser. I suggested that we had a safeguarding Sunday. I am aware that for one or two people here today this may be hard. There may be memories of past hurts. Maybe you were abused many years ago. Maybe you have been violated recently or are even in a bad relationship currently. My aim is to make it quite clear to everyone; abuse must stop! So

the first step is to talk to Penny or Rita, myself or Pauline and we are available at the end of the service or any time you are ready to talk to us if you yourself have been abused or if you know anyone who is being abused. It must be stopped. We have zero tolerance towards known abusers.

You might see yourself as one of the characters in the story. You might identify strongly with the man who was attacked. You may be a victim. It is not your fault, whatever your attacker might have said. Don't bottle it up on your own.

You it is possible that you are or that you have been an attacker. If so now is the time to do something. Get help. Get counselling but you must STOP. Every person is special and precious. No-one has any right to harm another person.

In the past you may have behaved like the 2 men who walked on by. Perhaps you turned a blind eye to the behaviour you had noticed; the shouting, the unexplained bruises, the way your

friend was not allowed to meet up with you. But from now on you have no excuse. You know what is the loving thing to do and the only way to break the tyranny that your friend or family member is living under. Looking the other way is not an option.

It is hard to be like the good Samaritan. It takes time and it takes you out of your comfort zone. You may be putting yourself at risk. But the loving thing to do is to do something. If you are unsure what to do just tell Penny. We might be like the inn keeper and take care of survivors of abuse after the event, but we probably won't get paid for it and it will be done in private. I hope all of us can do that when the need arises, because Jesus gave us this story to illustrate how we should love everyone, whoever they are, and care for those who have suffered. Just do it.

Prayer.

Home Group Questions Luke 10:25-37

The Good Samaritan

1. Who do you identify with most in this story?
2. Can you think of any good reasons to 'pass on by' when you see something that looks like abuse?
3. What does this story tell us about the nature of God; Father Son and Holy Spirit?
4. What promises of God or stories from the bible could be helpful to pass on to people recovering from past trauma?
5. Healing is not just about the physical, (repair of broken bones). Other kinds of damage can have far greater impact on a persons' life. How do you cope when someone says negative things to you, or tries to make you do something you don't want to do?
6. Spend extra time praying about the impact of abuse in Britain today.