



Who are the widows and orphans today?

Who are the marginalised groups today and how can we serve and help them as churches?

1) Bible references to the orphans and widows.

Psalm 68 God is v5 A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows,

Commands to care for the vulnerable and needy

Deuteronomy 14 v 28 & 29

Deuteronomy 16 v 9- 12

We are also warned by God, in relation to harming or ignoring vulnerable people.

Exodus 22 v 22 - 24 & Deuteronomy 27 v 19

To care for the vulnerable is a Christians response to knowing God, it's a truly Godly act.

James 1 v 27

James 2 v 14-17, James says, if there isn't a practical outpouring of compassion your faith is dead.

One of the most powerful and enlightening Chapters in [Isaiah](#), which addresses justice is [Ch 58](#)

2) Who are the widows and orphans today, the marginalised groups today?

Widows, Orphans, Aliens

Single Mums, Single Dads,

Single Women

Single Women

Same sex attracted, trying to live celibate lives = Vulnerable to isolation, temptation, feeling of being outside,

Elderly, Children, Unborn Matt 18 v6

Poverty

Learning disabilities, Physical & Sensory disabilities, Neurodiversity

Mental Health issues, Addictions

Those who have been abused and/or suffered trauma, Victims of modern-day slavery, Prostitutes

Social Isolation, Suicidal, The Homeless, Those in Prison

3) We might agree that these folks in general, are welcome in our churches, but the truth is, sometimes we might stack up reasons why we can't or don't want to engage or help them, like....

- Not my people
- Not got the skills
- No return for our efforts
- Fear of the unknown
- Favouritism – [James 2](#), warns us about that
- See the problem not the person.
- Lack of Faith – We see the problems and think God can't bring a cure, make a difference.

Here are some genuine things we need to consider when ministering to the vulnerable, marginalised.

[Not for everyone](#) – some people are too fragile, emotional; they can pray.

[Complex](#) – These issues we may address and not straight forward, advice needed, could get messy.

[Chaotic](#) – Chaos for some is the norm Christ can bring calm into the midst of that chaos.

[Mez Mc Connell, Church in Hard Places, Ch 6, Work of Evangelism](#); *"we are in a marathon. We don't buy people a bicycle and expect them to win the tour de France a month later. We will have to repeat ourselves time and again. The best place for all this to take place is in a local, persistent community of gospel lovers who live their lives personally and communally with the intention of teaching and persuading others of the truths of the bible."*

[Financial implications](#) – You may help some out of debt, pay for some rehab, health care, holiday, staff time.

[Safeguarding issues](#) – Do all we can to protect them, from themselves, others, and them from harming others.

[Responding appropriately to accusations](#) – disclosures, take seriously, follow through.

- 4) **Bottom line, this subject is all about Jesus and what He can do, it's about what He can do through us, it's about us praying to see the world through His eyes.**

Luke 7 - The widow at Nain, John the Baptists, Jesus with people
Jesus couldn't be any clearer than in **Matt 25 v 31-46**.

John Stott, Issues facing Christianity Today; *"It is because we have a high view of scripture and we read it carefully that we find that it does not separate out evangelism from social action and that the supreme example of this is the life and teaching of Jesus. He teaches us that we cannot separate love and justice: for what love desires justice demands."*

Think about our Church DNA.

- Welcoming – to all
- Accepting – Come as you are (Meet people where they are at. **John 4**; woman at the well).
- Pastoral – in how listen, speak, advise, people are fragile – we may not have the answers, that's ok.
- Leaders must set tone and example - Sit with the smelly, don't be distant from the messed up.
- Be ready and willing to adapt or change – If it helps people through the door, progresses folks' faith, if it furthers the gospel.

Consider our attitudes.

- Recognise that every soul is precious.
- Recognise there are barriers for people to come - Make it as easy as we can.
- Recognise there are challenges for folks in relation to change - Background, home environment.
- Show understanding and Patience – People are **sufferers and sinners** – *'bear with each other'*.
- Hope for change – Don't set too high a standard, don't set people up to fail.
- Prayerful – Pray passionately for the vulnerable, widows etc....
- Properly and carefully, think through issues - Know the mission field. Aim for Gospel opportunities.
- It may not be your thing, BUT, support those who might see the need. (Train, hold accountable, calibre + character of the workers)
- Committed – Folks who are sufferers, don't need another person to come and go – they have had hundreds of them, they need people who are in for the long haul.
- TIME = Love – Invest time, lives, homes, build long-term relationships. (To win trust, to win souls)

Things we can do

- Befriending – People to listen
- Pastoral groups – visiting, gardening, shopping, baby-sitting, walking.
- Bible study groups for specific people – Tackling sensitive, painful issues around the Word.
- Small acts of love make a HUGE difference – CFL, *Trauma informed care training*, evidence to say that *'Holding people in our thoughts helps'*, simple budgeting support, simple help with routines, texting, phone calls = to get us to a place where people might want to listen to us about Jesus.
- External ministries can help, even non-Christian

- 5) **If we have a concern for the marginalised groups of today and serve them as commanded, we will be blessed and shall see fruit from our labours. Psalm 41 v 1 1 Corinthians 9; v 19-23**

Peter Parkinson; "We are to take Christ to the world and the world to Christ"

So, will we cast out that net a little wider, and will we go a little deeper with the love of Jesus?