



LOVING OUTSIDE YOUR COMFORT ZONE

Young at heart high school chaplain, former Baptist pastor and long-term Global Interaction supporter, Gerry Riviere, reminds us that 'uncomfortable' was not anywhere near a deal-breaker for Jesus.

Jesus had a crystal clear understanding of His ministry and purpose while on earth... and being comfortable, making others comfortable, wasn't it. Jesus' ministry on earth wasn't one of laws, but one of love. His ministry wasn't one of 'keeping the peace', but one of being and sharing true peace. Jesus loved in a way that sometimes made others uncomfortable.

2000 years ago, Jesus stood in the synagogue in Nazareth and opened the scroll of Isaiah to read these words, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me for He has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor.' And so began his ministry to all people – but especially to those marginalised and rejected by others.

I think of the incident described in Luke 7:36-50 in which a woman who had experienced much rejection and isolation from her community, courageously enters the home of a Pharisee in the hope that Jesus would accept her sacrificial offering. This is a fascinating story on many levels. The Pharisees saw a sinful woman not worthy of their association.

However, Jesus saw a desperate and damaged person, made in the image of God and loved by Him, hoping against hope that Jesus would treat her differently to every other male she knew.

And He did. Not only did Jesus allow her to bring her offering, but He did not flinch as she dried His feet with her hair. Nor did He shift in His seat uncomfortably when she began kissing His feet. Can you imagine the atmosphere at that moment in the Pharisee Simon's home? Imagine the tut tutting and looks of disgust. This was scandalous and it was happening in the home of someone who prided himself on his 'righteousness'.

Yet, imagine too the healing that was taking place in this woman's life. Jesus was making himself of no reputation so as to welcome a broken person and invite them to experience God's loving acceptance and forgiveness. This woman was experiencing the 'Good News' and it was the best experience she had ever had.

Every city and town has damaged and broken people. It is increasingly unlikely that they will wander into our churches.

So if they are to receive the Good News, it will be because we take steps to meet them where they are, sharing Jesus and demonstrating His love even when it takes us out of our comfort zone. In some churches, groups bake biscuits and cakes to give to young women trapped in the massage parlour industry, in other churches people visit and support asylum seekers who are traumatised and frightened by their experiences and others offer friendship and meals to those marginalised in their community.

We cannot do everything, but we can all choose to be and share the Good News of Jesus with those in our community it's easier to ignore. Who are the overlooked and marginalised people in your neighbourhood? Explore ways that you (and some like-minded friends) can be Good News to them.

Jesus loved in a way that made others uncomfortable, He broke rules and allowed people to touch Him that the Pharisees believed shouldn't have even been speaking to Him. He calls us to follow His example of radical love even when it means stepping out of our comfort zones.