

# Did You Know - November 2010

## Outreach and Inclusion – Christ’s Examples

*“The YMCA of the Rockies puts Christian Principles into Practice through programs, staff and facilities in an environment that builds healthy spirit, mind and body for all.”*

The above excerpt from our mission statement is often misunderstood and is occasionally a source for debate. Those from a fundamental, conservative Christian view may argue that such a mission statement means that the YMCA of the Rockies should take a strong stand against certain types of groups, individuals and behaviors, even to the point of excluding some from our facilities. However, the YMCA of the Rockies strives to foster a climate of inclusiveness and a non-judgmental culture. It is through our interpretation of Christ’s teachings and living examples as recorded in New Testament scripture that cause us to believe that our charge is to love our neighbors, to lead by example and not to be legalistic or judgmental.

There are so many examples in scripture of Christ’s love and compassion for people of all backgrounds who were considered the sinners of their time:

The seventh chapter of Luke tells of a time when Jesus had dinner at the home of a Pharisee during which time they were joined by a “woman who had lead a sinful life in that town”. The story describes how the woman washed Jesus feet with her tears. The Pharisee showed disgust over Jesus’ willingness to engage with the woman, yet Jesus defended her as more loving than the host and more worthy of forgiveness.

This example is from the ninth chapter of Matthew: “While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Throughout the Gospels there are dozens of stories in which Jesus healed people with Leprosy, gave sight to those who had been blind, restored mobility to those who were crippled, gave the gift of speech to those who had been mute, excised demons from people and even breathed life back into those who had died. In most instances those persons were considered sinners, outcast and the lowest of their society. Yet Christ saw value in them, had mercy on them and showered God’s love upon them.

In the tenth chapter of Luke, Jesus describes to “an expert in the law” the story of The Good Samaritan. When he finished telling the story, Jesus asked the scribe: “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

Finally, Christ tells us in the sixth chapter of Luke how we should treat each other: "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' lend to 'sinners,' expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to

you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

These are the Christian Principles that the YMCA of the Rockies strives to embrace and demonstrate to all who we host as groups, families, individuals, campers and staff. It is our hope that by fostering a climate of inclusion, we demonstrate the gift of love that our God offers to each of us.

*Brought to you by the YMCA of the Rockies Outreach and Inclusion Team*