



**Micah Sunday Bible Study Guide
2008**

EDITIONS PEACE AND HOPE

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Intro

This Micah Sunday sermon guide asks us to be touched by what we 'see' and to 'move' to do mercy. Based on the biblical parable of the Good Samaritan, this guide offers background information, reflections on the biblical context and suggestions for applying lessons learnt to our present day context.

The guide is divided into three parts and offers a detailed general bible study outline, but also reflections and activity suggestions for a youth meeting and a children's class. Together with the Micah Sunday prayer guide 08, this bible study guide offers a wonderful opportunity for adult, youth and children to learn, reflect and act on global poverty issues.

If you would like to learn more and deepen your understanding of what the bible says about poverty, please check out the Micah Challenge website at

<http://www.micahchallenge.org/english/think/aim1/>



SERMON FOR THE SERVICE

Moving to do

MERCY

When the EYES SEE

OPENING OR CLOSING YOUR EYES

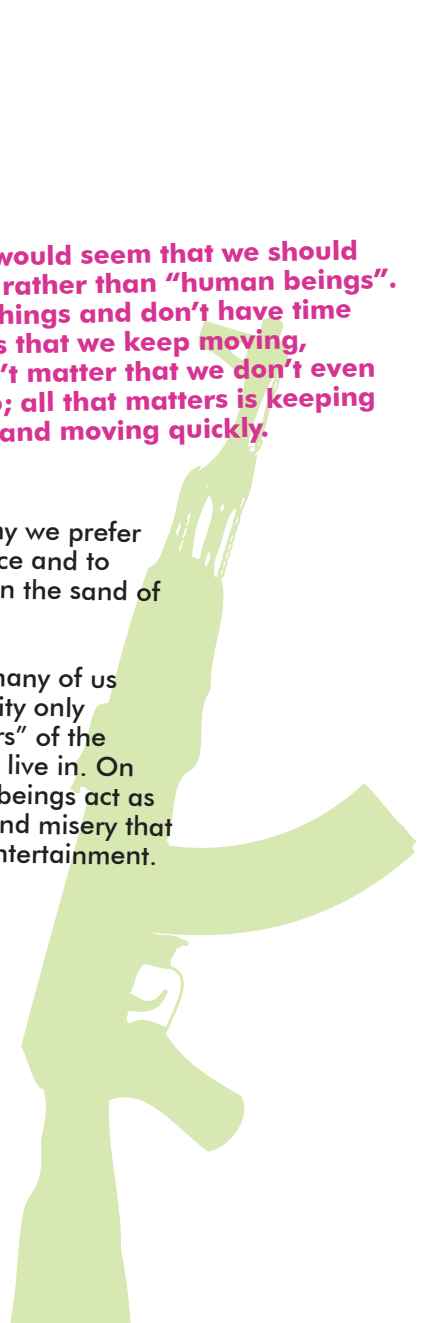
By the way that we live, it would seem that we should be called "human doings" rather than "human beings". We spend our lives *doing things* and don't have time to waste; all that matters is that we keep moving, moving, moving... It doesn't matter that we don't even know where we want to go; all that matters is keeping ourselves euphoric, active and moving quickly.

The combination of this race of a life, and the tedium and loss of thirst for what is good, takes us towards two dangerous extremes: either closing our eyes to avoid seeing what we don't want to see, or the dark tendency of opening them and not being moved by what we see; enjoying as entertainment things which are painful and disgraceful.

We close our eyes, trying to protect ourselves from reality, to protect our heart at any price. Reality is

rather ugly. That's why we prefer to shield our ignorance and to build our own calm on the sand of indifference.

On the other hand, many of us open our eyes to reality only to become "consumers" of the unfortunate world we live in. On this level, we human beings act as clients of the horror and misery that the media offers as entertainment.





EYES THAT SEE

So what then do we do, surrounded by the world and its unending anguish? Should we open or close our eyes to the news of wars, poverty, climate change or food crisis that flood our daily lives? Jesus offers us an interesting alternative. He invites us to SEE.

So what then do we do, surrounded by the world and its unending anguish? Should we open or close our eyes to the news of wars, poverty, climate change or food crisis that flood our daily lives? Jesus offers us an interesting alternative. He invites us to **SEE**.

Through a story told to an expert in the law at the beginning of the first century, Jesus will open new ways for us to relate to what we see.

The lawyer- whose position consisted in instructing the people

of God about the teachings in the Holy Book- had searched Jesus out to ask him a theological question in order to confirm whether he was truly the young man from Nazareth.

The question that he asks Jesus is one that any believer would be assumed to have quite clear: "what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

For the Jews, "eternal life" had to do with fullness in all dimensions of existence: spiritual, physical, environmental, in relationships, etc. Therefore, it cannot begin

only after death, and there we find the crucial importance of Jesus' response.

The Lord doesn't respond directly, but motivates the teacher to draw his own conclusions by asking him two questions. From a deep, clear and absolute reflection based in the law, the teacher responds:

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all of your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind; and love your neighbor as yourself."

This impressive response from the expert in the law was not enough for Jesus; he says to him: *“You have answered rightly; do this and you will live.”* The Lord is not pleased with mere deep theological reflections; they are of no value unless they are linked to dedication and action on all levels.


The text tells us how the lawyer tries to *“justify himself”* when finding himself questioned deeply by Jesus. It would look bad if the lawyer were to ask who he is, or even worse: who God is. He is, after all, an expert in the law; so he asks Jesus *“and who is my neighbor?”*

Jesus then begins to tell him the meaningful parable of the Good Samaritan, which we read in the Gospel of Luke. This simple and penetrating story is created by our Lord to teach us the golden lesson of how to be free from the worst blindness that we can have: *the inability to see and to allow ourselves to be touched by what we see.*

The parable tells the story of a man who was cruelly attacked and left half-dead on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho. Although it was rather short, the path was full of evil doers, so people generally didn't risk walking that way alone. Only some very distressing situation would have made that man take such a great risk. Perhaps it was that very situation that led him to go up to Jerusalem in search of God's favor in the first place, and led him into such a grave situation on his return.

What makes some people who *“see”* the man in this perverse scene pass on by, while another person who *“sees”* is moved to do mercy?

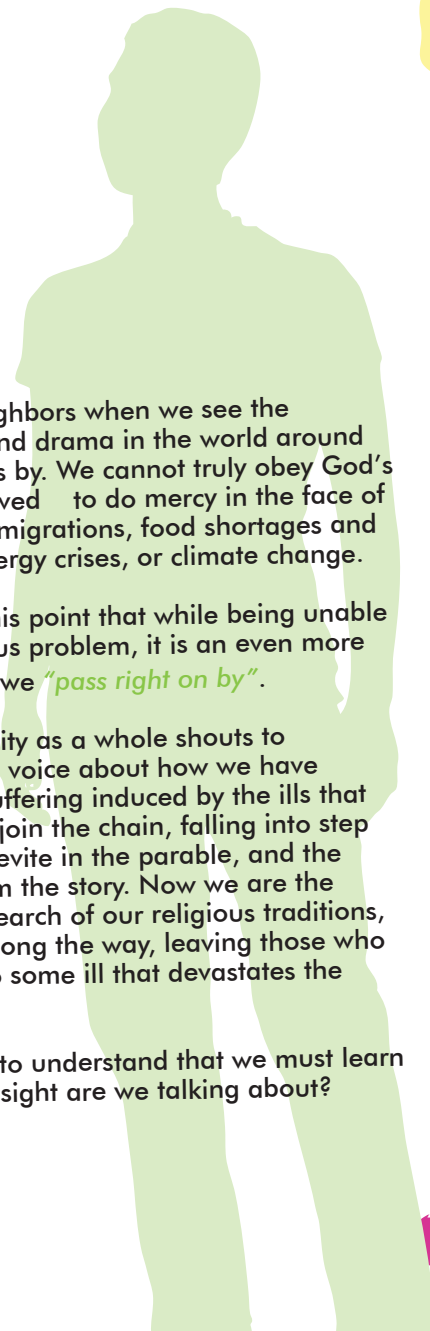
It's not by chance that Jesus includes these three people in the telling of this story: a Priest, a Levite and a Samaritan. The Priest and the Levite are people who *“see”* and keep walking. Ironically, both the Priest and Levite are considered leaders in Israel's history, people who reveal truth, with broad visions; Samaritans, on the other hand, were considered blind and ignorant of the true essence of spirituality.



Therefore, in all of its pedagogical value, Jesus turns the world upside-down in this parable: those who can see are blind, and those who are blind can see. The point is that there is no worse blindness than that of people who do not want to see. And based on this story we could say: there is no worse blindness than that of the person who sees, but pretends that he/she does not see. This is moral blindness, and Jesus points it out because he intends to focus on the root of the problem in his conversation with the expert in the law.

He shows him in a powerful way that even if the Priest and Levite are morally blind in the parable, the lawyer is the blind man in real life. Luke's telling of the story captures this perfectly. This man's main problem is "wanting to justify himself". He wanted to justify himself behind apparent ignorance instead of recognizing his choice was to not do what is right.

Jesus reached the hidden corners through this parable. He makes it clear that the problem is not in not knowing who his neighbor is, rather in that he was not being an available neighbor. It is much more important to constantly ask ourselves, "to whom can I be a neighbor" than to find a neighbor with whom to carry out our religious obligations.



We are not being neighbors when we see the innumerable needs and drama in the world around us and choose to pass by. We cannot truly obey God's law if we can't be moved to do mercy in the face of hunger, wars, forced migrations, food shortages and rising food prices, energy crises, or climate change.

So we recognize at this point that while being unable to see that, is a serious problem, it is an even more serious problem that we "pass right on by".

The history of humanity as a whole shouts to us in a heart-rending voice about how we have misunderstood the suffering induced by the ills that affect our world. We join the chain, falling into step after the Priest and Levite in the parable, and the expert in the law from the story. Now we are the indifferent ones. In search of our religious traditions, we pass by people along the way, leaving those who have fallen victims to some ill that devastates the World.

We are again urged to understand that we must learn to see. What type of sight are we talking about?



MOVING TO DO MERCY

Jesus speaks of a type of sight that promotes mercy. This is the force that does not allow us to pass by the suffering. This mercy does not stop at sensitivity, it is a mercy laden with fruit.

The Hebrew word translated as mercy is **Hesed**; this means tenderness, solidarity, relationships of justice, faithfulness. It is a compassion that is expressed carefully. It is a tender carefulness, with an investment of the best of our resources: time, money, effort, ability to delegate... The Samaritan's words, "take care of him for me" summarize powerfully this type of "mercy sight": sharing not only the other person's pain, but also in their life. The other person is now part of me – no longer a stranger. Octavio Paz, a Mexican writer expresses it like this:

"To move beyond me, looking for myself among others; others who do not exist if I exist, others who give me full existence"

What must we do to be able to see like that? What is the key to not passing by without doing anything? One of the reasons that we pass by is because we do not understand the suffering of the world, we are unable to understand their world. And we do not manage to understand why we are unable to move beyond ourselves.

Something similar happens when we try to enter a world different to our own: we do not want to get infected with the suffering, pain and bitterness. The other world is completely different from what we know, and we tend to fear that difference. That fear causes us to prefer to close ourselves off in protection rather than open ourselves.

The Lord teaches us, however, to see, and to relate to what we see in such a way that we recognize the footprints of suffering and act in honesty in the face of that suffering.

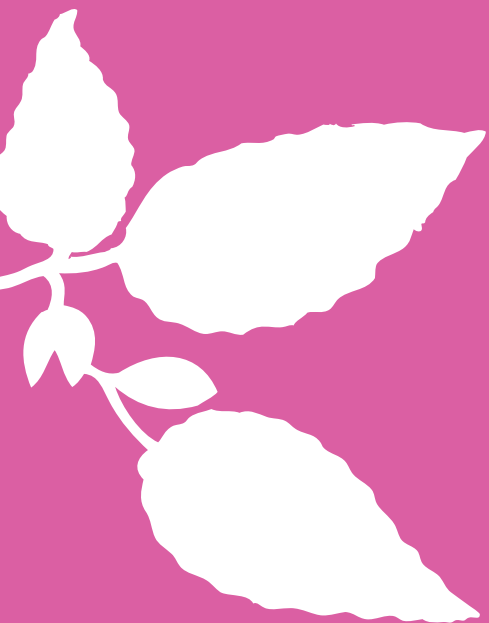
He confirms that inheriting eternal life consists in caring for our neighbors who we find living without hope, those who we have so often hurt more with our unfeeling indifference.

Jesus finishes the story with a question: ***"Which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among thieves?"*** The teacher of the law responded: ***"he who showed mercy on him."*** So Jesus responded: ***"Go and do likewise"***

In such perverse times as we face now, believers are called by the Lord to **use mercy** as the only way to live the gospel fully. It is impossible to fulfill God's law without living mercy through it in response to the terrible situations of death that we see throughout the world. As believers, we should refuse to be part of the dehumanizing masses that are constantly passing on by.

Through the story about the Good Samaritan, Jesus suggests that we look beyond our selfishness by making ourselves neighbors, approaching the world around us, in all of its needs and afflictions. In that way we are finally proclaiming true eternal life that is nothing less than the plenitude of all things created.

AMEN.



YOUTH MEETING

I'll move Will you?

Reflections on a Good Samaritan

NOTE TO THE FACILITATOR:

Before beginning the class, read the Bible study on the "Good Samaritan" that appears in the guide as the "Sermon for the Service"



The page features two large, stylized silhouettes of people. On the left, a purple silhouette of a person's head and shoulders is visible. On the right, a yellow silhouette of a person's head and shoulders is visible. The background is white with some faint, abstract shapes.

1. INTRODUCTION ACTIVITY: MUSICAL CHAIRS

MATERIALS:

One chair less than the number of participants.

OBJECTIVE:

To encourage the youth to think about how competitiveness has become a very important value in society despite the fact that it excludes the majority of human beings from life.

DEVELOPMENT:

The players circle around the chairs, moving when the background music is playing. When the music stops, each player finds a chair to sit in. The person who is left standing and does not find a chair is out of the game. A chair is removed each time a person leaves the game, until only one person, the "winner", remains.

At the end of the game, all of the players sit in a circle and comment on the game.

- How did they feel as they were playing?
- What happened as players were eliminated?
- For those who remained longer in the game: were you thinking about the others who had been eliminated, or were you more concerned with getting a seat for yourself in each round?
- Did those of you who were out of the

game early feel jealousy towards those who were still in the game?

The facilitator can use these questions or others that encourage the participants to reflect on what it means for human beings to live in constant competitiveness.

2. ACTIVITY: THE HISTORY OF AN IMAGE

MATERIALS:

One picture per participant that portrays different issues (displaced people, famine, melting ice caps, deserts, poverty, gender violence, etc.).

OBJECTIVE:

To encourage the youth towards consciously examining their lives and vocation as they relate to service, sustainable development and social justice.

DEVELOPMENT:

The facilitator places various pictures on a table. The participants are asked to each choose one and create a story, building a "past" and a "future" around the "present" represented in their picture.

The stories are shared in small groups of no more than 5 people. Each person should also share what aspects of their lives and experiences became part of the new story. When the groups come back together, we will look at the following questions: How did

this activity go? What did we learn? What anti-values have brought us to our present situation? Upon what values can we build the future?

3. ACTIVITY: THE LIVING WORD

MATERIALS:

Print the story of the Good Samaritan in simple phrases and large letters; divided into 4 parts:

1. A man is attacked and left half dead
2. The Priest and Levite pass by without doing anything
3. The Samaritan passes by and cares for him
4. The Samaritan cares for the wounded man and leaves instructions for his care when he goes away

OBJECTIVE:

That the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10: 25-36) causes the young people to reflect on and understand what it means to "move to do mercy" in the face of the unjust situations that happen in the world.

DEVELOPMENT:

The participants are divided into 4 groups; each group receives a piece of the "Good Samaritan" story and is asked to act it out.

Next is an inductive reflection on the parable of the Good Samaritan. Consider the

following points in light of the text:

1. It's not enough to know the Law, the Word must be lived.
2. God asks us to live the Law by "love", there is no meaning in anything without Him.
3. **Love** has interconnected and converging dimensions. Our love for God, love for our neighbors and love for ourselves are indivisible.
4. The Teacher of the Law defends his inconsistency by saying that he doesn't understand **who his neighbor is**
5. Jesus doesn't end up answering the question "**who is my neighbor**", but asks a question: **who makes himself a neighbor**. This is the great paradox of love: not recognizing our neighbors, but **making neighbors** by drawing near to them.
6. Making ourselves neighbors implies an investment of our resources, involving ourselves with the wounded on the path, and with all the needs and ills in the world around us.

Finishing the story and your community interpretation, the participants are challenged to think about what their own feelings and attitudes have been in confronting the different scenes of death, destruction and pain that they have seen throughout their lives.



4. ACTIVITY: COOPERATIVE CHAIRS

MATERIALS:

One chair less than the number of participants.

OBJECTIVE:

To encourage the participants towards recognizing solidarity as a viable and rewarding alternative path to empty individualism.

DEVELOPMENT:

This activity begins like the first one, but this time the participants should stay together. When the chairs are removed from the game, the players will have to think creatively to allow everyone a place to sit. At the end, the whole group should be sitting on one chair.

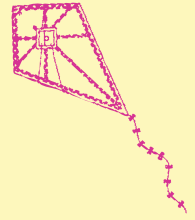
The following question will serve to encourage the final reflections:

- How did I feel in the first activity when I was excluded from the group, and how do I feel now after participating with the whole group right through to the end?

The facilitator will conclude, based on the groups answers, by affirming that moving to do mercy implies the same as what we saw in the last chair activity: decision, creativity, dynamism, and overall, putting oneself in other people's place.

If we are unable to conquer individualism in our daily lives, we certainly won't be able to conquer it at a public level. Only solidarity lived to the maximum can bring transformation to situations of death and injustice.

Jesus continues to call us today to follow Him with the abundance of the Good Samaritan: it's not enough to simply know what is happening or to know, in theory that Love is the "right answer". What counts for the Lord is that we are able and willing to **move to do mercy**, and to move to become neighbors of Life, to Live.

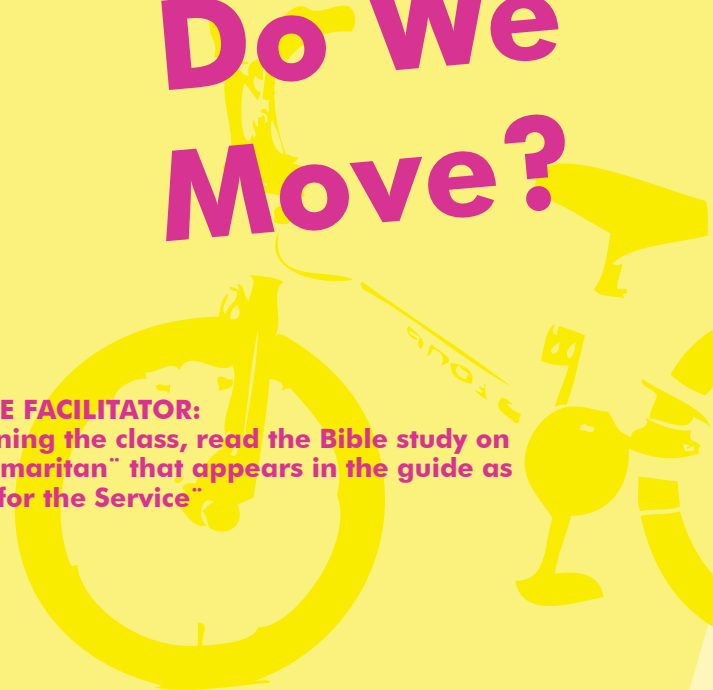


CHILDREN'S CLASS

Do We Move?



NOTE TO THE FACILITATOR:
Before beginning the class, read the Bible study on the "Good Samaritan" that appears in the guide as the "Sermon for the Service"



1. INTRODUCTION ACTIVITY: WE ARE ALL PEOPLE

MATERIALES:

Photos or clippings of pictures of children.

OBJECTIVE:

To encourage the children towards a group reflection on the thing that we have in common and that make us essentially the same despite our many differences: that we are human beings, created by the same God.

DEVELOPMENT:

The facilitator shows the pictures of children from different races and cultures, such as pictures of developmentally challenged children, and asks the following questions:

- Do you know children from other cities or countries?
- How do you treat them?

The facilitator leads a dialogue to help the children to discover that all people are different and equal at the same time; besides the color of our eyes, skin tone, different languages and ways of dressing, our physical traits and our uniqueness, what is ultimately important is that WE ARE ALL PEOPLE.

2. ACTIVITY: THE PIRATES

MATERIALS:

A large picture or puppet of a pirate.
The lyrics of a song or poem about the adventures of being a pirate.

OBJECTIVE:

That the children discover that there are very important **treasures** that we can all have and practice in the Christian life.

DEVELOPMENT:

On the basis that we are all equal and yet different, the facilitator invites the children to sing or recite a poem about searching for a treasure. Here is an example:

*I am a pirate
A ferocious pirate
The whole world runs away in fear and terror.
I'm searching for a treasure, a Spanish
treasure
Of offerings of gold, I am the ferocious pirate.
On my way to Macacaibo with the wind to
port
The skeleton sings in the mainsail.
Through the seven seas in my quick ship,
I gather treasures, I am the ferocious pirate.
I am the ferocious pirate's parrot,
I travel the seas with great fear and terror,
I get sea sick on the mainmast
Parrot only wants cocoa on firm land, please.*

After reading the poem, we'll ask the children a series of questions that focus in on the objective

- Have any of us ever dreamt of finding a treasure?
- What treasure would we like to find?
- Would we keep it all for ourselves or share it with someone else?

The facilitator can use these questions or any other questions that he/she thinks

appropriate to lead into a dialogue about the importance of the values on which we base our interactions with others.

Moving along in this activity, the facilitator will explain how Jesus taught by telling short stories about daily life that are called parables, and how these teachings can help us to live fully.

3. ACTIVITY: THE LIVING BIBLE

MATERIALS:

Print the story of the Good Samaritan in simple phrases and large letters; divided into 4 parts:

1. A man is attacked and left half dead
2. The Priest and Levite pass by without doing anything
3. The Samaritan passes by and cares for him
4. The Samaritan cares for the wounded man and leaves instructions for his care when he goes away

OBJECTIVE:

Based on reading the parable of the Good Samaritan, the children think about and understand that "moving to do mercy" is an important treasure that we can all live.

DEVELOPMENT:

The participants are divided into 4 groups; each group receives a piece of the "Good Samaritan" story to act out.

After the skits, a time of group reflection is structured by asking the participants the following questions:

What did you like best about the parable?
Which character would you have liked to act out?

Do you know anyone who has done something like that Good Samaritan?
Why should we love our neighbors like we love ourselves?

Who is our neighbor?

4. ACTIVITY: WORD PUZZLE

MATERIALS:

One copy for each participant of the Good Samaritan text, with words missing to fill in.

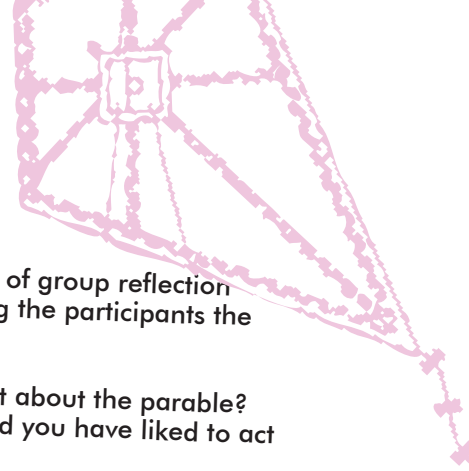
OBJECTIVE:

To strengthen the participant's attention, understanding and application of the biblical text that we have reflected on together.

DESARROLLO:

The facilitator shares with the participants that in order to better understand what the story of the Good Samaritan teaches us, we will fill in the blanks in the text and answer a few questions:

Innkeeper – dead – wounds – priest – Samaritan – wounded – compassion – animal Jericho – Levite



A certain man was traveling from Jerusalem to _____, and some thieves stripped him of his clothing, _____ him, and left him half _____. A _____ came down that same road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. A bit later a _____, came down the same road. When he got near the man, he looked, and passed by on the other side of the road. Later, a _____ passed near where the man was. When he saw him, he was moved with _____. So he went to him and bandaged his _____, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own _____, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out some money, gave them to the _____, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever I'll pay you back when I return if you spend more.' So which of these three do you think was neighbor to the man who was attacked by the thieves?"

- According to the parable, whose neighbor should we be?
- Who is it hardest to be a neighbor to?
- Can we be a neighbor to the world and its problems just like we can be a neighbor to people? How?

When all of the participants have finished, the facilitator speaks in general terms about the major problems in the world that have potential to directly or indirectly affect people's lives and dignity: pollution of the environment, water shortages, family and gender violence, unemployment, migrations, poverty, injustice, inequality,...

5. ACTIVITY: THE COLOR HOPE

MATERIALS:

A blank sheet for each participant
Colored pencils, paints or crayons
Magazines and newspapers
Scissors.
Glue.

OBJECTIVE:

That the participants develop a personal and collective commitment to **move to do mercy** in the face of different situations in their personal and communal lives.

DEVELOPMENT:

The facilitator offers the participants a final space to express themselves freely in drawings, and artwork that answers the following question:

What am I going to do to be a neighbor?

