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The Sermon Notes are designed to assist clergy in preparing sermons on HIV/AIDS prevention and addressing the issue with compassion. Pastors and Bishops from the Statewide HIV/AIDS Church Outreach Advisory Board and LOOK UP & LIVE! were asked to submit their sermons on HIV/AIDS. An outline of their sermons with Biblical references, comments as well as HIV/AIDS references are provided to guide you in developing your sermons on issues related to HIV and AIDS. For your reference, some of the sermon notes are accompanied by full sermons.

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INTRODUCTION TO SERMONS

“While many of us are not forced to see or deal with the effects that HIV and AIDS is having on the African American community on a daily basis, we must realize it is likely that we all know someone who has suffered from or who is affected by the virus. The time has come for all of us to stand together and educate ourselves and our neighbors to prevent further loss of our family and friends to this devastating disease.”

Vanessa Baird
Assistant Chief, Office of AIDS
California Department of Health Services

There are several key messages you can incorporate into your sermons that will help your congregation understand how to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS in their community.

The California Department of Health Services, Office of AIDS encourages clergy to submit additional sermon notes on HIV/AIDS to be considered for inclusion in updates to this *Guidebook*. If you are interested in writing a sermon, please complete the enclosed registration form, include your sermon and mail it to: BaumanCurry & Co.; P.O.Box 481296; Los Angeles, CA 90048.

Key messages to incorporate into your sermons

- **Preach abstinence, teach prevention.** HIV is a preventable disease that cannot be spread through casual contact. Abstinence is the only 100% effective way to prevent the sexual transmission of HIV. Share prevention messages that are age appropriate and culturally sensitive.
- **There is no known medical cure or vaccine for HIV.** Education and awareness are the strongest weapons in reversing the devastating toll HIV and AIDS is taking on the African American community.
- **Practice tolerance.** Welcome people living with AIDS into the church. Work to overcome stigmas associated with HIV/AIDS.

- **Practice compassion.** Embrace those who are disenfranchised and at risk for HIV – including drug users, addicts, the homeless, and people who may be different in their sexual orientation.
- **Promote self-esteem and self-love** to help prevent self-destructive behaviors that put people in risky situations for contracting HIV.
- **Provide assistance to people with drug problems.** Drug abuse, particularly injection drug use, and incarceration are disproportionately high among African Americans, and are directly linked to higher HIV infection rates in the African American community.
- **Inform people about new treatments.** New medications allow many people living with HIV to stay healthy longer. This is one reason why it is so important for people at risk to not put off getting tested for HIV.
- **Promote HIV testing.** Free anonymous and confidential HIV counseling and testing is available in most communities. Tests for HIV are extremely accurate, trustworthy and completely private.
- **Provide basic and spiritual support** to people living with AIDS.
- **Pray for compassion and a cure.**

THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF HIV/AIDS

By Reverend Norman Johnson, Sr.
First New Christian Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church
Los Angeles, CA

Biblical References: "Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind"
(John 9:1-5)

SCRIPTURES:

1.) And As Jesus passed by, he saw a man who was blind from birth. 2.) And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? 3.) Jesus answered Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. 4.) I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. 5.) As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

Purpose:

To move persons toward affirming the church's ministry to people with HIV/AIDS.

Introduction:

The growing HIV/AIDS crisis has evoked a dilemma for the black church at three levels: theological, ethical, and anthropological. At stake is our understanding of the ministry of the church and its historic healing emphasis. The crisis is not new. According to the Gospel of John, Jesus meets a similar crisis in the story of the man born blind. The story itself reflects the tension present between the emergent Christian community and the more established Jewish community over the question of Jesus. Christians in John's community claimed Jesus to be "sent by God" to bring light, truth, true bread, and living water to a world of darkness and sin. Jesus is the revelation of the divine will and this divine will expresses itself as "love." The tension is a "religious one" and while the larger contest is who belongs and who does not belong (v.35) the real issue is "blindness" (v. 39-40). The HIV/AIDS crisis, particularly among African Americans has produced a tension, a "religious tension" which challenges the theology, ethics and understanding of humanity of the black church. The question is do we really see? The tension emerged when HIV/AIDS was associated with male homosexuality and was referred to as "God's judgement on homosexuality." Since then, we know that HIV/AIDS is not limited to a particular group, but affects all groups. The black church started with the wrong question. We started with a cause and effect ethical

position that too narrowly defined the issue. In the story of the "blind man" Jesus refuses to begin with a narrow ethical position, that is trying to explain why the man is blind. Instead he begins with the theological issue "What kind of God is revealed through our actions:

I. The Theological Dimension

a. The blind man's condition possesses the potential for revelation – the revelation of God (v. 3).

b. Religious convention can blind us to the actual work of God (v. 16).

The Pharisees accuse Jesus of being a man "not of God" because he disturbs religious convention.

c. The God-talk of the Pharisees led them to assume that "God does not listen to sinners..."

Conclusion A:

The man had one kind of blindness. The religious leaders had another. The religious leaders talked about a punitive God who operates within well-known limits. Jesus spoke of a God who reveals himself in words of healing.

II. The Ethical Dimension

a. Punishment of children for their parents sin is spoken in Exodus 20.5; 34.7; Psalms 109.13-15; cf. Ezekiel 18 (v.2) healing of Jesus.

b. Jesus' actions were a violation of sabbath laws (v. 14).

c. According to the view of the religious community (read "leaders") the man was condemned to be an outsider (v. 35).

Conclusion B:

Jesus represents a liberation from religious traditions that are valued more than human life. His healing ministry accorded with his mission to be "the light of the world".

III. The Anthropological Dimension

a. Jesus focused on the concrete specific situation: the man's blindness.

b. The situation becomes an opportunity for healing by others.

Jesus is an instrument of divine agency! Jesus challenges his disciples to become an instrument of divine agency (v. 4).

c. When the man was made an outsider by the religious leaders, Jesus reached out to “include him” (vv. 35-41).

Conclusion C:

Jesus’ vision of humanity was aimed at inclusion not exclusion. As an instrument of divine agency, Jesus “must work the works of him that sent me while it is day...” The challenge is no less for us.

CONCLUSION:

The HIV/AIDS crisis is not a situation for the black church to sit in judgement. It is not a time for the religious politics of exclusion. HIV/AIDS is a leading cause of death for black men and women ages 25-44. In 1998 blacks accounted for 45 percent of new AIDS cases and 49 percent of total AIDS deaths. Black children comprise 62 percent of pediatric AIDS cases. The black church must do more than speak of a punitive God and narrow interpretation of traditions and embrace our potential for being agents of the divine will, a “light in the world.” We must work the works of him that sent us while it is day. The night does come.

SERMON NOTES WITH FULL SERMONS

Biblical Reference: "Life in the Spirit" (Roman 8:1)

Theme: INCLUSION

By Pastor J. Alfred Smith, Senior
Allen Temple Baptist Church
Oakland, CA

SCRIPTURE:

- 1 "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after flesh, but after the spirit."

THEMES:

1. All are welcome in the church: When so many in our society would reject and exclude, we Christians, like Christ our Lord and Savior, encourage and support the inclusion and participation of all God's children in the membership and ministry of the church.

2. God's inclusive love, mercy and grace: Scriptures continuously speak of a God who reaches out to those who are cast out for any reason and those who live at the margins of our community. We are disciples of the One who ate with those rejected by the religious establishment of the day. The Lord's objective is that the lives of those that were rejected be changed and restored in the spirit of Christ. The church is not a museum for saints. It is a hospital for sinners who are being saved by God's grace.

HIV/AIDS References:

- The church is an integral part of the African American lifestyle. Yet many feel alienated from the church because they might be shunned or identified as sinners because HIV is primarily contracted through illicit drug use and unprotected sexual activities. Christians have an opportunity and obligation to welcome everyone, including people living with HIV/AIDS, into the church community to gain the spiritual guidance and love they need to endure the battle ahead.

- HIV can touch everyone. It affects many people regardless of age, gender, or sexual orientation or lifestyle. African Americans account for 12 percent of the US population. However, in 1997, they accounted for 57 percent of new infections of HIV and nearly 50 percent of AIDS cases. Chances are, someone you know may already be living with HIV. Those with HIV need to be welcomed,

FULL SERMON**SERMON ON HIV/AIDS**

By Pastor J. Alfred Smith, Senior
Allen Temple Baptist Church
Oakland, CA

Written for World AIDS Day on December 1

Today, World AIDS Sunday, we at Allen Temple celebrate the HIV/AIDS ministry of this congregation. Through this ministry, many people have had compassionate companionship during their struggles with AIDS. Through us, men, women, teenagers and children with real, often urgent, needs are receiving support and services to sustain their lives. Also, through this ministry Allen Temple members are experiencing deeper meanings of Christian discipleship.

This reality is due to the vision of our Pastors, Dr. J. Alfred Smith, Sr. and Dr. J. Alfred Smith, Jr. The members of the HIV/AIDS Ministry thank them and thank God for His vision. It is our hope and prayer that every church will have an HIV/AIDS Ministry or some other kind of outreach to HIV/AIDS affected persons.

Mission Statement and Biblical Basis

The HIV/AIDS support ministry is a ministry of comfort through support, education and training for individuals, families and friends affected by HIV Disease.

Our ministry is composed of members who serve the Allen Temple Baptist Church congregation and the community at large. We organized with individual men and women of varying sexual identities, HIV infected and affected from a wide variety of backgrounds.

Biblically our ministry is based on the belief that “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Roman 8:1) Ours is a “INCLUSIVE CHURCH” where all are welcomed, where the gifts of all are recognized and received and where the rights of all are defended and promoted. When so many in our society would reject and exclude we Christians, like Christ our Lord and Savior, support the full inclusion and participation of all God’s children in the membership and ministry of the church.

As we approach the Christmas season and celebrate the birth of the Christ child, we remember that he was named “Emmanuel, God with Us”! (Matthew 1:28). And indeed God is with us even if one has HIV/AIDS. Israel, the Lord who created you says “Do not be afraid – I will save you. I have called you by name – you are mine. When you pass through deep waters, I will be with you, your troubles will not overwhelm you. When you pass through fire, you will not be burned; The hard trails that come will not hurt you... for I am the Lord your God... I will give up whole nations to save your life because you are precious to me and because I love you...Do not be afraid – I am with you...” (Isaiah 43:1-5)

Biblical References: “Good Samaritan”
(Luke 10:25-37)

Theme: HOPE, LOVE AND REDEMPTION

By Pastor Parnell M. Lovelace, Jr.
Center of Praise Ministries
Rancho Cordova, CA

SCRIPTURES:

• 25 “And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? 26 He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? 27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. 28 And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. 29 But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? 30 And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. 31 And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. 33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, 34 And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. 36 Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? 37 And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.”

THEME:

1. Hope, Love and Redemption: Beyond the common interpretation of one individual showing compassion for another, there lies a deeper message – a powerful expression of the Father’s love and redemption for all who would seek Him.

The story reflects on what happened to mankind in the original fall in Garden of Eden. The thief – Satan – wanted to strip us of our relationship and communion with the Father. He proceeded to wound the human race and impose affliction to remind us of our

fallen state. And just as the thieves in the parable left the traveler half dead, the fall left Adam and Eve half dead – they died spiritually, but were physically still alive.

Today, many men and women within our African American family find themselves also stripped of life, health and family members due to the devastation of HIV. The church must serve as the catalyst that embraces a vision that seeks to provide hope regardless of how ravaging the affliction. We have been empowered by the Holy Spirit and called to proclaim the redemptive message of Jesus Christ around the world.

HIV/AIDS References:

- A 1998 report released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that more African American and Latino gay men were diagnosed with AIDS than Caucasian gay men. By contrast, this same group represented 31 percent in 1989. This does not include the alarming increase of newly diagnosed cases among women of color.

- Sickness is healed by love. We must display that love to those living with HIV or AIDS. Sitting side-by-side with those carrying HIV can help demystify the dangers of the virus. It can help congregations realize that those infected are not different in other ways and pose no threat, as the disease cannot be spread through casual contact such as talking, dining together, hugging, etc.

FULL SERMON

HOPE

By Pastor Parnell M. Lovelace, Jr.
Center of Praise Ministries
Rancho Cordova, CA

Luke 10:25-37

This familiar parable found in Luke 10:25-37 is a message of one individual showing compassion for another. However, beyond this common interpretation, there lies a deeper message – a powerful expression of the Father’s love and redemption for all who would seek Him.

The story begins with a lawyer challenging Jesus with this question: “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” (vs. 25). This question is the foundation of everything in the parable that follows.

Jesus responded to the man by posing another question: “What does the law state?” (vs. 26).

The lawyer answered, “Love the Lord your God with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and love your neighbor as yourself” (vs. 27). Christ then told the man that if he did this, he would live.

However, the lawyer wanted to justify himself; so he asked Jesus exactly who his “neighbor” might be.

Jesus countered with a story, further illustrating His point: “A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.” (vs. 30).

This statement reflects what happened to mankind in the original fall in the Garden of Eden. The thief – Satan – wanted to strip us of our relationship and communion with the Father. He proceeded to wound the human race and impose affliction to remind us of our fallen state. And just as the thieves in the parable left the traveler half dead, the fall left Adam and Eve half dead – they died spiritually, but were physically still alive.

Today, many men and women within our African American family find themselves also stripped of life, health and family members due to the devastation of the HIV virus. In a recent report released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, it was found that more African American and Latino gay men were diagnosed with the disease than Caucasian gay men in 1998. By contrast, this same group represented 31 percent in 1989. This is not including the alarming increase of newly diagnosed cases among women of color. The church must serve as the catalyst that embraces a vision that seeks to provide hope regardless of how ravaging the affliction.

Jesus continued the parable, saying that a priest and a Levite came upon the fallen man, but passed by after looking at him (vs. 31, 32). The priest here represents the written law, and the Levite symbolizes the ceremonial law. Neither one could help the fallen individual, as the law was never designed to redeem man, but only to show him that he is a sinner who needs a redeemer and savior (see Galatians 3:19; Romans 3:19-20; and Romans 5:20). The law is powerless to help at man’s most crucial point of need.

The story continues: “A certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion on him and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him” (vs. 33, 34).

Without doubt, Jesus Christ is our Good Samaritan. He didn’t walk past us in our fallen state. He reached down and bound the wounds inflicted upon us. Then He applied the oil – symbolic of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the redemptive process. He also applied the wine – a symbol of the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is still the Baptizer with the Holy Spirit! When we were born again, the power of the Spirit not only came to affirm our salvation, but also to empower each and every believer for the work of the kingdom (see Acts 1:8).

In the parable we observe the good Samaritan placing the man on his animal. The animal is a type and shadow of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, our Comforter and support. Christ also placed us in His Church (represented in the parable by the inn), where He left us in the Spirit’s care.

It should also be noted that in the parable, the good Samaritan told the innkeeper that he would be returning (vs. 35). This foreshadows the second coming of our Lord and Savior. Jesus is coming again – hallelujah!

At the conclusion of His story, Jesus asked the lawyer, “which of these three do you think was the neighbor to him that fell among the thieves?” (vs. 36).

The lawyer responded, “The one who showed mercy”. Jesus then instructed the man to go and do the same (vs. 37). As believers we are first called to love God with all of our heart, soul, strength and mind. And in loving Him, we are then empowered to care for and love others whom Satan has sought to destroy. We have been empowered by the Holy Spirit and called to proclaim the redemptive message of Jesus Christ around the world – to every town, city and nation!

Regardless of how far an individual has fallen, we serve a Savior who continues to reach to the lost ones along life’s corridors of affliction and hopelessness. He still pours oil and wine and affirms the call of the Church to care for those He places within its care, until He returns.

Be assured that the Father’s desire is for us to fulfill our destiny through the power of the Holy Spirit and to reach out to others just as He has reached toward us.

Biblical Reference: "Undying Power of Love (A Reflection)"
(Revelations 1:18)

Theme: LOVE

By Reverend Yvette Flunder
City of Refuge
San Francisco, CA

SCRIPTURE:

- 18 "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

THEMES:

1. Undying love: The cross symbolizes Christianity because Jesus did die...but it is an empty cross because out of death comes life. Love lifted Jesus, Death is defeated by love. Sickness is healed by love. The living pulsing effervescent power of love is stronger than death, and is present with us here now in our hearts bearing witness to those whose memory could not be destroyed by hatred, prejudice and indifference.

2. Everlasting life: Believers don't have to fear death or the grave because Christ holds the keys to both. Jesus paid the price for all of our sins and bore all of our sicknesses and diseases. Salvation was God's answer to a world condemned to die. He spent quality time on the underbelly of high society with whores, lepers, eunuchs and working class people. He dignified the role of women. If He were here in the flesh, He would be on the AIDS ward, at the maximum-security prison or at the drug clinic. God's undying love and word is a blueprint that instructs us on how we should live and govern our bodies. It is only when we stray from God's word we experience spiritual death but because Jesus died on the cross for our sins, we have everlasting life. God alone has the power and authority to set us free from sin's control. When we place our life in Christ's hands, he restores us now and resurrects us later to an eternal, peaceful relationship with him.

HIV/AIDS Reference:

- Death is defeated by love and sickness is healed by love. We must display that love to those living with HIV or AIDS. Pray for and with those infected by the virus, talk to them and sit side-by-side with those carrying HIV at church. People need to know someone loves them in order to have a purpose. Having a purpose in life gives a person a reason to want to live. That's what love does.

FULL SERMON

The Undying Power of Love (A Reflection)

By Reverend Yvette Flunder
City of Refuge
San Francisco, CA

Revelations. 1:18

Have you ever been in a group of uninformed bug-scared people when something flew in or crawled in that no one recognized? Some green winged creature, some excessively large beetleish looking thing! What would be the response? "Kill it child, it might bite, step on it child, it might be poisonous...you don't know what that thing is. Kill it now and study it after it is dead."

Funny thing about bugs...you can kill them but there are always more coming...they don't die, they multiply! They don't get discouraged or depressed by their losses either. They are like the Energizer Bunny...they keep going, and going, and going...They seem to gain momentum when they are challenged. You kill one and there are plenty more where that one came from. You may put them out of business for a season, but don't celebrate. They'll be back stronger than ever. It seems that new life comes from death.

Our history is filled with stories of frightened uninformed people seeking to destroy what they do not understand. Different ideas and different people with different messages and different needs often upset our comfort. What we fear, we seek to destroy.

Someone right now is saying, "Stop the colored people, they might take over...they might change the status quo and make us lose our power and our comfortable way of life...stay away from those folks, and keep your children away from them; they are violent and lazy. Raise the rent so they can't live here, toughen up the laws and keep them in jail...destroy affirmative action before they catch up... don't give them access to equal opportunity and label them as underachievers...in fact destroy them anyway you can...take their power and study them after they're dead."

Funny thing about any marginalized people, though...you can destroy a few, but there are always more coming...they don't die, they multiply. They don't stay down no matter what is done to them; they have come through slavery, hangings, burnings and

holocausts, laws against them, religions against them, and governments against them... They seem to gain momentum when they are challenged. It seems that new life comes from death.

Some two thousand years ago a prophet-rabbi rose up in Israel who challenged the conceit of religion. He said things like, "Love them that hate you and do good to them that spitefully use you." He flew in the face of religious hypocrisy and classism that excluded those who were considered the low end of the totem pole. He spent quality time on the underbelly of high society with whores, lepers, eunuchs and working class people. He dignified the role of women. If He were here in the flesh, He would be on the AIDS ward, at the maximum-security prison or at the drug clinic. He was homeless and not well thought of in his hometown. His mama got pregnant under dubious circumstances when she was an unmarried teenager...and to the aggravation of the doctors and lawyers, He knew His stuff too, history, law, theology...He could go tit for tat with the best of them. He drew big crowds that loved what He said and they started questioning the status quo and the authority of their time. They would rather be with Him than the places they used to worship. The little people were not afraid anymore.

The High Priest gathered his power mongers and said, "Brethren, we have got to kill This Jesus, He is turning the world as we know it upside down...step on His true followers – those that teach non-judgemental all inclusive love...those that preach that the Kingdom of God is here now and accessible to all. Before we know it we won't be able to use religion to intimidate the people and maintain our power...kill Him child, kill Him and as many of his folks as you can, before that stuff gets around. They tell me it spreads like wild fire. We don't know how He got to know so much, or how He became so influential, but kill Him and we'll study all that after He is dead."

Funny thing happened when they killed Jesus. He got off the cross and in our hearts...and brought love, peace and joy. No matter what heinous acts are done in His name, His real love keeps coming through, and coming through, and coming through. His followers have been bruised often in His name. His essence, His spirit, His teaching, His love is present where people are doing justice loving mercy and walking humbly before God. Even death could not keep Him dead.

The cross symbolizes Christianity because Jesus did die...but it is an empty cross because out of death comes life. Love lifted Jesus, and Love lifted me. Death is defeated by love. Sickness is healed by love. Jesus embodied...an active love – teaching us by example what it means to celebrate diversity. An unrepentant love – that makes no apology for embracing anyone and everyone. A covering love – which groans until everyone in the family of God, is healed and whole. The living pulsing effervescent power of love is stronger than death, and is present with us here now in our hearts bearing witness to those whose memory could not be destroyed by hatred, prejudice and indifference. And with Christ's love in us we keep going...and going...and going.

SERMON NOTES WITH HIV/AIDS REFERENCE

Biblical References: "A Man With Leprosy" (Mark 1:40-41)

Theme: COMPASSION AND HOPE

By Bishop Kenneth C. Ulmer, D.min, Ph.D.
Faithful Central Bible Church,
Inglewood, CA

Christ: Aid For The AIDS Crisis

SCRIPTURES

- Mark 1:40-41 "And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, 'If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.' And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand and touched him and said unto him, 'I will; Be thou clean.'"

1. AIDS is the leprosy of our time. In the year that King Uzziah died of leprosy, God got Isaiah's attention. In Phillipians 2:5, Paul exhorts us to let [the same] mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

- The word for "mind" is a word that means "attitude." Paul is saying let the attitude that Christ had be the attitude that you have.

- I suggest that if we understand Jesus' attitude about leprosy, the AIDS of His day, we will know how we ought to respond to it. Let the position and posture of Jesus be your position and posture as you deal with the issue of AIDS.

2. The account of the incident in the book of Matthew says the man was "full of leprosy," which means he was in the final stages of the disease. He was dying, and praise the Lord, Jesus did not waste time satisfying his curiosity or passing judgement. The man needed help and Jesus did not waste time going over his history trying to find out how he got the disease, who he got it from where he was when he got it. He saw to the man's need.

3. The issue is not how a person got AIDS. The issue is how shall I minister to him now that I know that he has it. What the church often does is what folks did back in those days. They shut the door, shut people out, ostracize people and push them away.

4. Mark 1:40 says the man came to Jesus and Jesus accepted him the way he was.

- When Jesus spoke to that man, he broke the law because the law said you were to have no contact with lepers.

- The challenge for so many people with AIDS is not getting to Jesus. It's getting past church folk who are in the way of them getting to Jesus, for instance:

- Those who set themselves up as high and mighty and holy and act like they've never made a mistake, or fallen, or been in trouble, or hurt or been discouraged or alone.

- Those who don't remember how far God has brought them.

- Those who make assumptions about the character and conduct of a person with AIDS and pass judgment and sentence on them.

5. The church should be a place where people whose lives have been touched by AIDS can come, find compassion, hear the Word of God and receive prayer.

- A church cannot get up in its ivory tower and play holy games.

- We should be laying hands on someone and make them feel loved and accepted enough to allow us to lay hands on them.

- Some people don't have more people praying for them than they do because they don't want to be rejected when they tell somebody why they need prayer. God forbid that this would be the experience of anyone in this church.

HIV/AIDS References:

- One of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of HIV is to know how it is transmitted. HIV is a virus that is passed via bodily fluids – either through unprotected sex between two people or needle sharing by injection drug users. Therefore discussion of sexual health, sexuality, abstinence, drug prevention and intervention and related topics should be encouraged.

- HIV can touch everyone. It affects many people regardless of age, gender or sexual orientation or lifestyle. African Americans account for 13 percent of the US population infected. However, in 1997, they accounted for 57 percent of new infections of HIV and nearly 50 percent of AIDS cases. Chances are, someone you know may already be living with HIV. Those with HIV need to be welcomed, and having open discussions about the virus is critical to raising awareness and lowering infection rates.

Biblical Reference: Wisdom, strength and knowledge
(Proverbs 24:5)

Theme: KNOWLEDGE

By Pastor Duane Ganther
Harvest Christian Center
Los Angeles, CA

SCRIPTURE:

- 5 “A wise man is strong; yea a man of knowledge increaseth strength.”

THEME:

1. Awareness: “A wise man has great power, and a man of knowledge increases his ability base. It is said that knowledge is power. Research has shown that the HIV infection rates in other groups have decreased because of knowledge about HIV/AIDS. I lost a brother to this dreadful disease so I personally know how important it is for us as leaders to gain knowledge about HIV/AIDS and encourage our congregations to gather information and learn more about the disease.”

HIV/AIDS References:

- Having knowledge of one’s HIV status is critical. New treatments are available that can keep the virus in check, but can be most effective when the virus is detected in early stage of HIV infection. Knowledge is also important in preventing the virus from being spread unknowingly to others. Knowing one’s status can help stop the spread of AIDS.

- AIDS experts have determined that African Americans are getting tested later than other racial groups. Many find out they are infected as a result of an illness they were experiencing. More attention needs to be focused on getting tested. The objective is to decrease the HIV/AIDS infection rate through awareness and knowledge.

- AIDS treatments can delay the progression of HIV infection to AIDS, yet research by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that African Americans do not utilize AIDS treatments as much as other ethnic groups. The estimated number of African Americans with HIV who developed AIDS in the first half of 1997 dropped 7 percent. Yet for Caucasians and Latinos, AIDS incidence dropped 25 percent and 13 percent respectively over that same period. We need to be aware that if we are carrying the

virus, there is hope out there in the form of new treatments that can slow the onset of AIDS. For treatments to be most effective, diagnosis must be determined early.

- One of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of HIV is to know how it is transmitted. HIV is a virus that is passed via infected body fluids – blood, semen, vaginal secretions – primarily through unprotected sex between two people or needle sharing by injection drug users. Therefore discussion of sexual health, sexuality, abstinence, drug prevention and intervention and related topics should be encouraged.

Biblical References: “Jesus heals a paralyzed man”
(Mark 2:3-5)

Theme: COMPASSION

By Reverend James Thomas
Living Word Community Church
Los Angeles, CA

SCRIPTURES:

• 3 “And they come unto Him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. 4 And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they broke it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. 5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick palsy, Son thy sins be forgiven thee.”

THEMES:

1. Each individual can make a difference: The paralyzed man’s need moved his friends to action, and they brought Him to Jesus. When you recognize someone’s need, do you act? Many people have physical and spiritual needs you can meet, either by yourself or with others who are concerned. Human need moved these four men; let it also move you to compassionate action.

2. Persistence: The four friends were persistent in getting the paralyzed man into see Jesus. Their perseverance, determination and faith moved them to overcome any barriers and look for ways to accomplish their objective.

HIV/AIDS References:

• Having a support network of friends and others is critical for those living with HIV and AIDS. A study reported in the March 2000 issue of *Health Psychology*, conducted by the Medical College of Wisconsin, found that HIV patients without support from friends and others were more depressed and less likely to adhere to complex medication regimens. Meanwhile, HIV/AIDS patients who did have such support were more motivated to take their treatments on a regular basis. People should not have to face AIDS alone. The encouragement and compassion of others can have a profound effect on one’s well-being and desire to fight the virus.

• Prayer for healing and understanding for those with HIV can have a profound effect. A study published in the October 1999 issue of *Archives of Internal Medicine* found that intercessory prayer (prayer by another person) had a beneficial effect for heart patients

at St. Luke’s Hospital in Kansas City, MO, even if the patients themselves were unaware they were being prayed for. The 466 secretly prayed – for patients did 11 percent better than 524 other heart patients. The message of such a study is clear and harmless: praying for those with HIV might help.

Biblical References: “Jesus heals a bleeding woman”
(Luke 8:43b-44, 48)

Theme: PERSEVERANCE & ENCOURAGEMENT

By Reverend James Thomas
Living Word Community Church
Los Angeles, CA

SCRIPTURES:

- 43b “And a woman having an issue of blood for twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, 44 Came behind Him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanchèd. 48 And He said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.”

THEMES:

1. Hope: Unless, you have experienced a life-threatening, long-term illness you will never completely understand the depression many experience. Wishing to die, to thoughts of suicide and finally hope, are all a part of the healing process. Her problem was a lack of peace brought on by her infirmity. Christ knew that a deeper healing needed to take place in addition to the miracle she had already received. After touching the Master’s garment, she was immediately healed of her infirmity, but only the gentle words of Jesus could heal her deeper problem – a broken spirit – and speak peace to her wounded soul. Diseases can destroy the body, but never the soul because Christ is the keeper of the soul. We all have issues, but Christ can make us whole.

2. Perseverance: The woman with the issue of blood is an example of what it means to have perseverance and faith. This woman had a long-term illness and was adamant about becoming healthier. Her relentless quest to be cured caused her to spend twelve years living to pay physicians who could not heal her condition, rather than living for God who is the healer of all diseases. Through her faith, she reached out to Jesus and she was cured. God’s miracles come in all forms from being cured to scientific breakthroughs and new medicines to fight the disease.

3. Faith: We can see a difference between the crowds that are curious about Jesus and the few who reach out to touch Him! Today many people are familiar with who Jesus is, but nothing in their lives has changed by knowing He is God’s son. It is only faith in Christ that releases God’s healing power.

HIV/AIDS References:

- The church plays a very important role in spiritual healing. When people become ill, they have a renewed and replenished spiritual conviction. Churches and congregations need to be available to help those looking to increase their faith.

- It is important to have faith and maintain hope; new medications are being developed for HIV that can be effective for keeping the virus under control.

- Everyone dies someday..those with HIV, as well as those without. People living with HIV are made more aware of that fact, but can still live productive lives.

Biblical References: "A time to weep"
(Joel 2:12-14a)

Theme: COMPASSION

By Bishop George McKinney
St. Stephens Church Of God In Christ
San Diego, CA

SCRIPTURES:

• 12 "Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: 13 And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil. 14 Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; even a meat offering and a drink offering unto the LORD your God?"

THEMES:

1. A model to follow: The scriptures talk about a merciful God in the face of imminent judgement. The Biblical model according to Joel suggests that in the face of an unsolvable dilemma, compassion accompanied by fasting and tears is an important part of the solution. While we champion the judgement of God, let us remember the pity and grace of God.

2. To soften your heart: The scriptures talk about returning to God for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love.

HIV/AIDS References:

- Studies have shown that the support of family and friends is important in helping people living with HIV or AIDS cope with the trauma of the disease.
- The church plays a very important role in spiritual healing. It is a place where one can immerse themselves in a community and feel like a part of something, and help use the strength of others.
- Prayer for healing and understanding for those with HIV can have a profound effect. A study published in the October 1999 issue of Archives of Internal Medicine found that intercessory prayer (prayer by another person) had a beneficial effect for heart patients at St. Luke's Hospital in Kansas City, MO, even if the patients themselves were unaware they were being prayed for. The 466 secretly prayed – for patients did 11 percent better than 524

other heart patients. The message of such a study is clear and harmless: praying for those with HIV might help.

- Because of advances in treatment, those with HIV are living longer now, and have more time to grapple with the disease emotionally. In these hard times, the support of the community is more critical than ever.

Biblical References: “Jesus urges the disciples to pray for workers” (Matthew 9:35-38)

Theme: COMFORT AND UNDERSTANDING

By Reverend Alfreda Lanoix
 Unity Fellowship Church
 Los Angeles, CA

SCRIPTURES:

- 35 “And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. 36 But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. 37 Then saith he unto his disciples, the harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; 38 Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest.”

THEME:

1. Involvement: Jesus needs workers who know how to deal with people’s problems. More people need to get involved in the struggle to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS. People need to become more compassionate while developing an attitude of comfort and a mindset to try to understand the disease.

HIV/AIDS References:

- Those with HIV/AIDS frequently face psychosocial issues – they are facing social isolation, periods of debilitating illness, reproductive decisions, as well as the stress that can accompany stringent treatments. Comfort and understanding from the community is important and will also help give something back to those who minister – a feeling of doing good and ministering to those in need.
- Walking hand-in-hand with those carrying HIV can help demystify the dangers of the virus. It can help congregations realize that those infected are not different in other ways and pose no threat, as the disease cannot be spread through casual contact such as talking, dining together, hugging, etc.

Biblical References: “Good Samaritan” (Luke 10:33-34)

Theme: HOPE AND COMPASSION

By Reverend Alfreda Lanoix
 Unity Fellowship Church
 Los Angeles, CA

SCRIPTURES:

- 33 “But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed came where he was and when he saw him, he had compassion on him. 34 And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.”

THEME:

1. Love and Compassion: Having compassion is going beyond your own prejudices, fears and understanding, it comes to see how it can help someone. For a person with HIV/AIDS – no greater act of Love is for us to accept, not judge, not talk about, as a brother in need of love. Showing compassion is going beyond your own understanding to touch someone where they are (getting in the boat with them).

What is a Samaritan? Webster defines the word best. “A Samaritan is a person who comes to the aid of another.” Thus we get the term “good Samaritan.” Loving our neighbors and being good Samaritans is what God expects of us as Christians. We must reach out in love to our fellow man. In love, not fear, we must take this parable and apply it to our lives. The church is an important part of the African American community and it is up to us to inform, educate and encourage other churches to embrace the good Samaritan parable and join us as we set out to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS.

HIV/AIDS References:

- It is medically impossible for anyone to contract HIV from an infected person by comfortingly expressing a form of compassion. Being a good Samaritan to a person infected by the virus can help that person stay healthy longer. It projects a sense of purpose that someone does care and that’s a wonderful feeling to have.
- Everyone will die one day. Those with HIV/AIDS are made aware of that fact more than others. People living with HIV/AIDS must maintain a positive outlook. Having hope can make a person feel better, which leads to becoming stronger which leads to a happy longer life.

Theme: AVOID BLAMING THE VICTIM

By Reverend Alfreda Lanoix

NOT Living in Victimhood

Once you discover you're HIV-positive, it's time to take a good look around and see what "neighborhood" you're living in. Is SHAME your next-door neighbor? Does GUILT live down the street? Is FEAR...just around the corner?

The gist of this sermon is to not allow the person to feel victimized by HIV/AIDS – to not live in the "neighborhood" of shame, guilt and fear. To help them realize that they are co-creators with the Creator and they are not condemned to live in a negative, unhealthy mental and emotional environment.

We are all here to transcend our early limitations, whatever they were. In other words, we've done the best we could with the understanding, awareness and knowledge we have. Although intellectually we might have known to choose one way, but emotionally we chose another – IT WAS OUR BEST at that time. Blaming others only gives away our power and blaming ourselves makes us totally powerless. In order for true change to happen, we must face truth and accept responsibility (not blame).

We are victims of victims. In other words, it's very important that we realize, again, that we've done our best. And not only have we done our best, our parents did the best they could EVEN IF THEY ABANDONED US AT BIRTH – that was the best they could do.

One point in this sermon that we're trying to make clear to the congregation is that the Soul is always whole and has nothing to do with the condition of the body.

It's moving time. Time for mental housecleaning. We must choose to release the past and forgive everyone, ourselves included. What we're trying to show you is that you have the power (remember: you and God are co-creators) and it's time to erase the old tapes of "worthlessness," "not pretty enough," "that HIV/AIDS is a punishment from God," "this is a test," and on and on. It is very important to know that this is only a disease not a condemnation of WHO YOU ARE.

Proverbs 23:7

"For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee."

If you demand perfection from people, you will demand perfection from yourself and you will be miserable all of your life.

This is to let them know that life will always show up at their door, no matter who they are, how much they meditate or pray. Things are going to happen, that's why it's called "life," ever-changing, ever-evolving.

Psalms 82:6

"I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most high."

Today – know that what you feel and what you think counts.

Your joy is your responsibility, the world didn't give it, the world can't take it away, count it all a blessing.

HIV/AIDS does not have to be a death sentence – now you can begin to live each day fully.

Theme: THE POWER OF THE PULPIT – SILENCE IS DEATH

By Reverend Alfreda Lanoix

FACE THE FEARS

1. AIDS doesn't discriminate (includes all races, genders, sexual orientations, age brackets and economic states). It would be foolish to think of it as a "gay white" disease. African American women between the ages of 22 and 44 were 62 percent of all new AIDS infections among women reported in 1998. These are our mothers, sisters, sweethearts, daughters, granddaughters.

Matthew 11:28

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

The church must be a place where all people can come for healing. ("I was glad when it was said unto me let us go into the house of the Lord.")

2. The African-American Church has to meet the issue head-on with compassion and truth.

I Corinthians 10:1 and 3

"Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;

And did all eat the same spiritual meat."

We must create "safe space" – knowledge is power. The church can no longer avoid the subject of HIV/AIDS because the church is where our people come to hear the truth. **Silence is death!** An entire generation is in grave danger of being eradicated.

Proverbs 22:6

"Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

Sex education is all about values. What better place to teach values than in the church. (We don't want our children to "learn" in the streets.) We have to teach empowerment – to allow them to realize that their bodies are the temple of the Lord. We must communicate with our children – give them the facts!! Often the parents don't have access to the facts so they look to the church for assistance.

3. What should the church teach?

Prevention education! Pastors should offer compassion, counsel, comfort – give hope and love, not judgement.

Our only true enemy is not HIV/AIDS, but fear – the fear that clings to our insides and saps our strength and will to live. We are SCARED TO DEATH!

JOY WILL COME IN THE MORNING.

It's very important that a person living with HIV/AIDS know how to find joy, even in the midst of their situation. We confuse "joy" with "happiness". Happiness depends on what's happening, such as something we save up for months to experience, like a trip to Disneyland, buying a new car, etc. Joy is living in the present moment. It's the longing to give up the path of struggle as a way of life.

We become authors of our own misfortune as we struggle from day to day, crisis to crisis, without knowing we have a choice. We always have a choice with HIV/AIDS – a choice to live or die.

The ability to find joy in life is a tremendous strength. ("The joy of the Lord is my strength.")

Ecclesiastes 8:15

"So I command the enjoyment of life, because nothing is better for a person under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany him in his or her work all the days of the life God has given him under the sun."

Romans 8:38, 39

"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Not even HIV/AIDS.

Theme: THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE!

By Reverend Alfreda Lanoix

The Good Samaritan

Luke 10:33

“But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed came where he was and when he saw him, he had compassion on him.” (Having compassion is going beyond your own prejudices, fears and understanding, compassion comes to see how it can help someone.) For a person with HIV/AIDS – no greater act of Love is for us to accept, not judge, not talk about, as a brother/sister in need of love.

Luke 10:34

“And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.”

Showing compassion is going beyond your own understanding to touch someone where they are (getting in the boat with them).

I John 4:8

“He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.”

“The beggar and I are one! The person with HIV/AIDS and I are one!”
Archbishop Carl Bean

We must love our neighbor as ourselves.

The question is “Who is my neighbour?? – 1,500 people being infected every day with HIV/AIDS in Africa.

Who is my neighbor?? – Not just my race of people, but “Love is for EVERYONE”.

Who is my neighbor?? – (You fill in the blank.)

“True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring.”
Martin Luther King, Jr.

John 21:17

“He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him feed my sheep.”

Take care of my people! We are all God's children.

Romans 13:10

“Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”

I John 4:20

“If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?”

His brother or sister living with HIV/AIDS.

I Peter 3:8

“Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.”

There is never a reason to be unkind.

I Corinthians 13:13

“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three, but the greatest of these is LOVE.”

Theme: SPIRITUAL RESPONSIBILITY

By Reverend Alfreda Lanoix

Awakening of Conscience

The question is “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

Even if some people “choose” their suffering as part of a larger spiritual experience, the experience for us is to be there for them.

There is no valid psychological or spiritual justification for turning our backs on human suffering.

Try to realize that what stands between you and a different world are matters of spiritual choice.

We must reawaken our capacity to hope, our willingness to forgive, and our commitment to love.

An awakening of conscience causes us to respond from within – to know we deserve the best – to become a passionate participant in life – to know authentic power is within, not anything outside of ourselves. In spiritually awakening, it’s not enough to know that “I got mine”. I must make sure that you get yours also. When spiritually awakened, we can’t stay silent about things that matter most. The choice not to “choose” is the choice to remain unconscious.

I AM MY BROTHER’S KEEPER.
IT’S MY SPIRITUAL RESPONSIBILITY!

John 15:13

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

Biblical References: “From There” (Deuteronomy 4:26-31)

Theme: HOPE

By Bishop Charles E. Blake
West Angeles Church of God in Christ
Los Angeles, CA

SCRIPTURES:

• 26 I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed. 27 And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the LORD shall lead you. 28 And there ye shall serve gods, the work of men’s hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell. 29 But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul. 30 When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the LORD thy God, and shall be obedient unto his voice; 31 (For the Lord thy God is a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he swore unto them.

THEME:

1. **There is hope:** God promises that if from there, a place of depression, sickness or financial debt, you call on Him with sincere devotion from the heart, He will be found. He will give you peace, He will help you through your time of illness and He will comfort you. Although the situation itself may not change immediately, God will give you the strength to endure.

HIV/AIDS References:

• Many people with HIV or AIDS have given up hope on all levels. According to some of the authors of the testimonies in this Guidebook, as soon as they asked God for His help – stopped fighting Him and let Him do His work – they discovered that the LORD helped them get through their difficult times and gave them hope to live instead of to die.

• It is important to have faith and maintain hope; new medications are being developed for HIV that can be effective for keeping the virus in check. New treatments can be most effective when the virus is detected in the early stage of HIV infection. Knowing one’s HIV status is important in preventing the virus from being spread unknowingly to others.