

Question: Some people claim AIDS is God's judgment on gays and other immoral people. If this is so, aren't efforts to help those with AIDS going against God?

There is no more reason to see AIDS as punishment on one group any more than cancer or other diseases represent judgment against people. All disease is a consequence of our fallen, sinful world, a consequence faced by the innocent and the guilty (Luke 13:1-5). Innocent children throughout the world are suffering from AIDS, yet Jesus said of them: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3 NIV). He did not say like little children become but as they are already. Apparently Jesus viewed children as innocent even though they suffer the consequences of our sinful world.

Leprosy of the first century was comparable to our modern AIDS. The law at that time demanded that lepers stay separate from the general population to prevent spread of the disease. As a person approached, the leper was supposed to cry out, "Unclean, unclean." However, this warning did not stop Jesus from ministering to and healing lepers.

One time the disciples saw a man who had been blind since his birth; and they asked Jesus: "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life." Then Jesus healed the man's eyes so he could see (John 9). Jesus was not as concerned about the cause of the man's blindness as he was about ministering to him so that God could be glorified in his life.

Just as Jesus reached out to lepers to minister forgiveness and healing in their lives, so Christians ought to lead the world in reaching out to AIDS victims. To lovingly minister to hurting people does not mean one endorses any sin they may have committed or that he is working against God in some way. In opposition to the prejudice, ignorance and hatred demonstrated by many in our world, Christians should view people with diseases like AIDS as an opportunity to demonstrate the love of God. While worldly organizations may react in

fear, churches should accept AIDS patients. If the victims have sinned, Christians can minister to their spirits as well as their bodies; and they can guide them to repentance, to forgiveness in the grace of God and to a new life.

Since the first cases of AIDS were discovered among gays and apparently first spread through their sexual activity, many Christians have been hesitant to become involved in helping with this great problem. Other Christians have reacted in ways as ungodly and uncaring as anyone in the world. There have always been hypocrites who profess to follow Jesus; however, those with the spirit of Jesus will seek to do as He did with the lepers and other sinful and diseased people of the first century. As “the body of Christ” in this world, God’s church must do as Jesus did.

[Send questions or comments to University Church of Christ, 801 N. 12th, Murray, KY 42071 or phone 270-753-1881. This article is reproduced on the web: www.nchrist.org] 2012/12/07