

10 Social Issues and Movements

Speaking Up for Those Who Can't

Steve, an eighth grader, stood talking with his friends as a quarrel broke out on the playground next to him.

A group of kindergarten students accidentally kicked their ball over the fence into a neighboring yard. A second grader retrieved the ball and took it to play with his second-grade friends. The younger children complained, but the teacher was bandaging the knee of another student, so he could not help them.

What do you think Steve should do about this situation?

What do you think will happen if Steve does what you suggest?

Two Williams Who Changed Their Country

We see injustices like the one described above every day. The British Empire in the 1800s was also full of injustice. The industrial revolution that swept England in the 1600s and 1700s brought many people into the cities from the countryside. Workers received low pay and worked long hours; poverty was widespread. Factories were unsafe and often employed young children in dangerous work. This was the setting in which Robert Raikes established the first Sunday school in 1780 to provide an education for children who worked during the week.

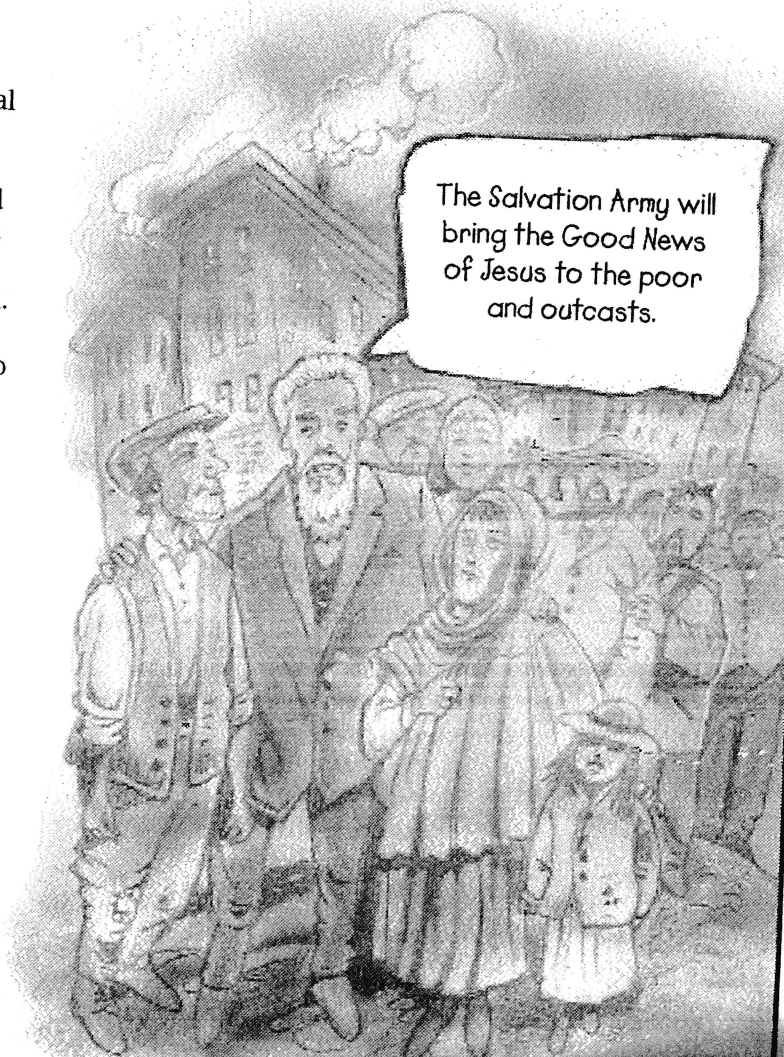
Injustice wasn't only in the cities. British shipping companies were active in the slave trade between Africa and the New World. In 1772, British courts said that slavery was illegal in England and Ireland, but slavery in British colonies such as America and the Caribbean Islands was permitted. Thus the trade of slaves by English companies continued.

In 1759, William Wilberforce was born to a wealthy family in Yorkshire, England. He was educated at the famous Cambridge University. Wilberforce became a member of Parliament (the English legislature) at age 21. Wilberforce saw slavery as one of the world's

great evils, and, as a Christian, he wanted to stop it.

Wilberforce and other Christians worked tirelessly to end slavery. Three days before Wilberforce's death in 1833, the law banning slavery everywhere in the British Empire passed in Parliament. Wilberforce inspired many Christians in the United States in their efforts to end slavery.

Unlike Wilberforce, William Booth was born into poverty in 1829. After joining the Methodist Church in 1844, Booth became involved in spreading the truth about Jesus. A pawnbroker by trade, he spent every free minute sharing Christ with individuals and preaching to the poor and outcast of English society. In 1865, Booth founded the Christian



Compassion Yesterday and Today

1. Compare the life and work of William Wilberforce and William Booth by answering the questions in the chart below. The first question has been answered for you.

	Wilberforce Slaves	Booth Poor people
Whom did he help?		
What kind of work did he do (what job did he have)?		
What did he accomplish?		
What was his background?		
What do you think made him want to help people (what motivated him)?		

Mission Society, which changed its name to the Salvation Army in 1878.

Booth was tireless in his efforts to reach out to those in poverty, both with assistance to meet their physical needs and with the message of Jesus Christ. He had little interest in formal study of God's Word, but Booth was consumed by a desire to see the lost come to repentance. Booth was also a man of great compassion for the poor, particularly children. The work of the Salvation Army continues today throughout the world.

In the spirit of Wilberforce and Booth, a variety of Christian organizations and movements have been established in the United States. Both the YMCA and the YWCA were begun with a Christian motivation.

Among those active in speaking for those who cannot speak for themselves are a variety of Christian "pro-life" organizations that speak out against abortion and euthanasia. These people uphold the value of human life as God created it and redeemed it in Christ Jesus.

2. What is one important difference between these two Williams? What is one important way that they are the same?

3. John said, "This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him" (1 John 4:9). What motivates God's people to demonstrate care and concern for others?

To Review and Remember

In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. *James 2:17*