

Life Givers
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We are in a series called Forward in Faith where we are learning what it means to be a disciple – a follower of Christ. In this series we are using the word FORWARD as our outline. Follow – Obey – Reach – Worship – Abide – Resist – Disciple

So far, we've taught on what it means to follow Christ, the necessity of obeying Christ, and now I'm teaching on how to reach others for Christ. As Christians we are also called to share His life with others – but we to do that we must first share our lives with others.

My sermon today is entitled Life Givers. In 1 Thessalonians 2:8 Paul said:

We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.

Last week we saw that we all are ministers who have something to give. So – what can we give? How can we minister to those around us?

In our culture we must usually share our lives with someone before they are open to us sharing the Gospel with them. It is rare these days for people to come to the Lord apart from relationship with a person. The key is sharing our lives with them, then sharing the gospel.

But, in our families – we need to learn how to share life with each other. Also – in the life of the church – the key to unity, maturity and growth is us sharing our lives with each other. So - how do we share our lives with others?

What can we give to others? How can we give life? Today I am going to teach you four ways to determine how to impart life to others. We discern how to impart live to others by asking four questions.

These principles will equip all of us to be life givers – to minister the life of Christ to those around us – in church, in our families, in the world.

1- We give life to others by removing aloneness.

Aloneness was the first human crisis. It was not sin. Sin did not enter the world until Gen. 3 – but in Genesis 2:18 God said,

It is not good for man to be alone.

According to God – aloneness is not good.

If God says something is not good – it is not good. I know we've all been taught God is all you need – but God designed us to need Him and each other. No part of the body of Christ can say to another part – I don't need you. We need God AND others. God meets some needs through others.

So, our first priority in ministering to others is removing aloneness. The first question we ask is "What aloneness needs to be removed?" We tend to see people as fallen – sinful – but we need to also see them as alone. We must look beyond their faults – sins – and see their needs.

Our text today is the story of the Good Samaritan found in Luke 10:25-37

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the Law?" He replied. "How do you read it?" He answered: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

"You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead.

A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

"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."

We see several things the Good Samaritan did –

Saw a person in need	Took pity on him
Went to him	Bandaged his wounds
Poured on oil and wine	Took him to an inn
Gave money for someone to take care for him	

But it all started with seeing a need – feeling compassion – and being willing to cross the road. The message to us is – go and do likewise.

We are in a world full of lonely, hurting people. Unfortunately – religion can be insensitive and unhelpful to them and just pass them by. It's like the priest and the Levite passing by on the other side of the road. For whatever reason they did

not stop. To minister to aloneness we must first of all stop. We can't keep passing by.

Why do we not stop? Feelings of inadequacy – Not caring – Too much cost (time, \$, energy) Too busy

For whatever reasons there are hurting people we pass by. I know we cannot minister to everyone – but there will be some your heart goes out to – you will feel compassion for them. To help them we must stop and cross the road – enter their world.

So many times we tell people, “Just go to God” when God is saying, “But I sent you down that road to minister to them.” God ministers through people much of the time.

The priest may have prayed for the wounded man as he passed by. The Levite may have shouted Scripture at him – Be healed – God is all you need – Only believe. But true help came from one who took the time to stop. Not only did he stop and cross the road – he ministered to his needs. Needs are obvious when someone is physically wounded and bleeding – it's harder to see inner emotional wounds.

So – we must stop – look – and listen. Jesus did this with Zacchaeus – he was a man suffering from sinfulness and aloneness. Which did Jesus minister to first? Aloneness.

He said, “Zach – come on down – I want to hang out with you for awhile.” After he did Zacchaeus then dealt with his sinfulness. That's the Zacchaeus Principle – deal with aloneness first – then with sinfulness. Jesus stopped, looked and listened and it changed Zacchaeus' life forever.

We must look for signs of aloneness – rejection, loss, divorce, grief. We must listen for words of aloneness. “I can't go on – I can't do this anymore – I can't make it on my own.”

Then – we must simply be there for people. There is a time and a place for speaking truth – but sometimes we just need to be there for people. You may think aloneness is not a big problem today. Wrong. Even though we are the most connected people in history electronically, we are the least connected relationally.

This is not good. God said it is not good for us to be alone – so we need to figure out how to minister to aloneness. How can we communicate care to lonely people? Take the initiative - Be the one to cross the road. Call people. Reach out to others. Don't wait on them to reach out to you.

You can do this. You can minister life to lonely people. When you see aloneness – Stop, look and listen. Cross the road and then just be there for them.

The second thing the Good Samaritan did was to apply healing to his wounds. The second question we ask when ministering to people is:

2- What hurt needs healing?

I To impart life - Injuries must be healed through caring ministry

Not only are we surrounded by lonely people – we are in a world full of hurting people. They are not physically lying beside the road – but they are spiritually and emotionally wounded. We need our eyes opened to see them.

After we discover what aloneness needs to be removed – we can ask the Lord – what hurt needs healing? Jesus came to heal us spirit, soul and body. When Jesus started His ministry – He got up in church and read from Isaiah 61:1-2

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor...

There are some broken people whose families have been devastated for generations. How can we help? By ministering healing to their broken places. How do we do this? First we must understand brokenness.

The word broken means ‘to break in pieces, crush, hurt.’ Therefore, brokenhearted means someone has their feelings deeply wounded, usually by something someone they trust says or does. We need to minister to broken people like God does. What does He do? First – He removes aloneness. Psalm 34:18 says:

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

He removes aloneness – then He heals. Psalm 147:2 says:

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

When Jesus was on earth this is the way He ministered to people - He got close and then He healed them. He has passed that ministry on to us. To do that, we must learn to recognize pain. For the Good Samaritan – the wounds were obvious. He could see the bleeding. Emotional wounds are not always so obvious.

However, we can recognize pain through its expressions: Sometimes there are obvious indications like grief or crying. Sometimes the expressions are less obvious - Anger, resentment, bitterness, unforgiveness, fear, condemnation. These are all expressions of pain. We need to look beyond the rage and see the pain. Then - take people's wounds and brokenness seriously.

Deb and I used to go to a doctor who did not take you seriously when you shared

a problem with him. He dismissed your feelings – downplayed symptoms. If you shared problems with him, he would say things like – “That’s no big deal – what if you had cancer?” It was frustrating for this doctor not to take us seriously.

The church does that to hurting people sometimes. We don’t really listen, we dismiss their feelings, we downplay their pain or say, “You think that’s bad – listen to this.” The Bible clearly teaches against this kind of response to hurting people. Jeremiah 8:10-11 says:

From the prophet even to the priest everyone deals falsely. For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, Saying, ‘Peace, peace!’ When there is no peace.

In this passage, ministers were rebuked by God because they dealt only with the symptoms and not with the deep spiritual hurts of the people. The NIV says

They dress the wound of My people as though it were not serious.

Yet - how many times have we said to hurting people, “Big deal, that’s not so bad, get over it.” Or “You think that’s bad – listen to what happened to me.” Or “Shouldn’t you be over that by now?” Or other insensitive comments.

We’ve all done that at times, but when we say those kinds of things to people, we are treating their pain slightly - superficially. We try to talk them out of their pain rather than healing their hurts.

The Good Samaritan could not have talked the wounded man out of his pain. We know that with physical pain. Yet we sometimes try to talk people out of their emotional pain - which can be more painful. One of the reasons there is not more healing in the church is because we try to talk people out of pain. We must take their pain seriously. It’s only then we do that that we can apply healing to their wounds.

When the Good Samaritan stopped to help the man who had been robbed: he had compassion, crossed the road and ministered to his wounds. What did the Good Samaritan apply to wounds? Oil, wine & bandages. Oil and wine were household remedies for wounds

- Wine has alcohol and was used for antiseptic - cleansing
- Oil was for soothing pain – speeding up the healing process

Biblically – they are both types of the Holy Spirit. God wants to minister healing through us in the power of His Spirit. What can we do to cleanse wounds? Cleansing comes through forgiveness.

What can we do to heal wounds? Healing hurts comes through comfort. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 says:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

What does it mean to comfort someone?

It does not mean to shut down their tears or pain. To comfort someone, we must allow them to have their feelings and to act on them appropriately, which may include tears.

Romans 12:15 tells us to *mourn with those who mourn*.

We are not called to fix them; we are called to mourn with them. This includes consoling, speaking words of comfort and encouragement.

People around us are hurting. We can minister healing to them with the love of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

We've seen that to care for people we must:

C Cross the road to remove aloneness

A Apply healing to wounds

We also need to --

R Respond to felt needs

3- What needs can be met?

F To impart life - felt needs must be met before the real spiritual need can be addressed

The Good Samaritan met the practical needs of the injured man. The need for medical treatment, transportation, lodging and money. Notice that these needs were met with no strings attached. There is no indication that the wounded person ever became a believer. This was simply a case of good deeds motivated by love. This kind of love expresses real faith to others. Galatians 5:6 says:

The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

The point is we can tell people we are Christians all day long. We can read our Bibles and pray and argue doctrine – but that means nothing to unbelievers. Few people have been argued into the kingdom of God. We witness through our lives first, our words second. But meeting people's needs gives us the opportunity to meet their true need for Jesus.

We've sent several teams to minister in Honduras. The people we ministered to need Jesus – but they are trying to survive. Food and shelter needs have to be met before they want to hear about Jesus. We must meet people's felt needs before we can reach their real spiritual need. Ministry to felt needs gives the opportunity to minister to their real need – Jesus. So – look for times people are open to ministry.

Times of sorrow

Illness	financial difficulty
loss of a loved one	problems with children
divorce	loss of a job
broken relationship	emotional or mental confusion or stress

Times of Joy

getting married	having a baby
birthdays	times of promotion or advancement

God chooses to meet some of these needs through other people. And to do that we must:

- C Cross the road to remove aloneness
 - A Apply healing to wounds
 - R Respond to felt needs
- And when we do these three things – it gives us the opportunity to:
- E Experience the truth of God’s word

The 4th question is “What truth needs to be experienced?”

Ultimately – what people need is for us to speak God’s truth to them. For us to do that – we must know truth and then speak truth in love. Our love opens the door to speak truth.

Where do we find truth? We know Jesus is the perfect expression of truth.

In John 14:6 Jesus said, *“I am the way and the truth and the life.”*

We know that the Holy Spirit is called *the Spirit of truth* in John 16:13.

And the word of God is truth.

John 17:17 says: *Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth.*

So we see that truth is Christ-centered, Spirit-led and Bible based.

When people are alone, hurt, or in need – they need a word from God that is relevant to their situation. They need a sent word. What’s a sent word? Psalm 107:20 says:

He sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.

A sent word is a rhema word from God - a spirit-led word for that specific person in that specific situation at that specific time. How does God send His word to someone in need? He can speak audibly, He can speak any way He chooses, but most of the time God sends His word through another person like you.

That’s why you must memorize Scriptures so that the Holy Spirit can immediately call to remembrance what He wants to say through you. And when you have the word of God living in you, Jesus interceding for you and the Holy Spirit empowering you – you can give life to people by crossing the road to remove their

aloneness – applying healing to their wounds – responding to their felt needs – and leading them to experience the word of God and the saving grace of Jesus Christ!

God wants to use you to impart His life to those who need Him.