

LIVING
IT OUT



**DAILY
BIBLE
STUDY**



CEDARCREEKCHURCH

Love Like Jesus - Where's Norm?

September 7, 2020

During the weekend message, Chris Baney, pastor of the Findlay campus, asked us, "What do you do when everything is changing and uncertain around you?" His answer: **"You love others like Jesus, even if they don't love you."**

That was exactly what I decided to do when my job was shut down, and I was stuck at home. I used my gifts of sewing and cooking to serve others, and I started driving a friend to the store and to do some errands. It started off really well, and I felt good about being able to help. However, over time, it became a bit inconvenient, and I forgot the bottom line: ***If you want to love like Jesus, you have to serve like Jesus.***

Serving is not always easy, or convenient, or even pleasant! I have found myself being impatient and unpleasant when my already full schedule is disrupted by the phone ringing with yet another request! Shawn Bellner shared that **"loving like Jesus gives us the CAPACITY to serve even when it's inconvenient."**

Luke 10:30-31

³⁰ ... "A Jewish man was traveling from Jerusalem down to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road. ³¹ By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by."

Why did the priest move on without helping? Maybe it was inconvenient, or he just couldn't be bothered. Perhaps, he had a schedule to keep. Jesus, on the other hand, was a master at eliminating hurry, and he can teach us to do the same.

Hand yourself over to Jesus, and he will teach you to enjoy being used as God's hands and feet in every situation. Your "to-do" list will always be there, but the chance to make a difference in the life of another is an opportunity that shouldn't be missed. When you serve others for the right reason and with a pure heart, it is truly a blessing to both the giver and the receiver.

If you feel hurried, impatient, or annoyed when you're serving, check your heart. Serving with the wrong motives usually leads to you needing to apologize. Apologies are rarely fun! (This is the voice of experience sharing.)

Questions:

Question for Reflection: Am I too busy to see serving opportunities around me? Is it time to ruthlessly eliminate hurry from my life?

Next Steps:

Ask God to show you service opportunities in your home, workplace, and community. Check out opportunities to serve at cedarcreek.tv/outreach or cedarcreek.tv/serve.

Prayer:

Father, thank you for all that you have done, are doing, and will do for me in my life. Open the eyes of my heart to see where you are at work around me and nudge me to join you there. We were created to be helpful to each other and to give you all the glory. Place in my mind and heart a desire to serve you by serving those around me, and move my hands and feet for your glory. In Jesus' name, amen.

Lose Your Comfort - Where's Norm?

September 8, 2020

A lot of us choose to serve when it's convenient or comfortable. However, Josh Whitlow taught us that *“loving like Jesus gives us the courage to serve outside our comfort zones.”* Joining the LivingItOut team made perfect sense for me because I'm a writer. I prefer to connect with people through written words. It's fun, easy for me, and safe. God wired my and gifted me to serve in this way. God has also given me opportunities to serve outside of our comfort zone.

Most of us know what makes us uncomfortable, and we try to avoid those situations. Personally, I don't always do well in crowds or engaging with people I don't know. I've learned over the years that people need people. To help serve that need, and step outside of the box I put myself in, I try to be more intentional with everyday conversations. I went from avoiding eye contact with strangers in the grocery store to being OK with conversing. Usually, they do most of the talking because they need someone to listen.

Luke 10:32

“A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side.”

We all fall victim to excuses when our conduct becomes inhuman.

Now, my intent is to engage with more people outside of my comfort zones. The nervousness still comes, and it invites excuses. But if I ignore the want to disengage, courage soon follows. As I grow in my faith, the courage to step up and step out continues to grow as well. Leading a Group didn't fit my personality before, but now I can't imagine *not* leading one.

Questions:

Where do you need to ask God for courage? Do you serve in uncomfortable situations? Are you ready to serve outside of the church community?

Next Steps:

Ask your NextSteps Pastor about opportunities to serve. Join a [DreamTeam](#) or fill a need by becoming a [Group](#) leader. Stop making excuses and start making more connections in your daily life.

Prayer:

Lord, be my reminder that each day is another opportunity to live your purpose for me. Help me be more proactive in building relationships throughout my community. Grant me the courage to not settle for moments of convenience. Please continue to guide me when spreading your love and humble me when I feel others aren't receiving your truth. Amen.

This post was written by Jaron Camp, a regular contributor of the LivingItOut.

Can You Serve Like Jesus? - Where's Norm?

September 9, 2020

I spent 22 years as a police officer. Even though I was already 30 years old when I was hired, I quickly learned there was a lot about life I didn't know.

I had grown up in a solid middle-class neighborhood in the '50s and '60s. Disagreements were handled without shouting or throwing things. People took care of their families and worked things out for the most part. There were difficulties and some tragedies, but people went to work and church, and their kids were in school, scouts, and sports.

Before I became a police officer, I was a waitress and bartender. That's where I learned about what other folks considered most important. I was older than my new recruit colleagues and knew more about life than they did. But I wasn't well acquainted with the underside of life, where the focus is on *you and you alone*—doing and taking whatever suits you without a thought for what it will cost another.

After 11 years as a patrol officer, I became a sergeant, and soon after, a Jesus follower. My perspective changed as I encountered those whose life choices had led them down such different and difficult paths that they required police intervention to help them sort it out. Rather than view them with cynicism and a critical spirit, I began wanting to serve them in a better way. I began to view my job as a calling from God. My sole desire became serving others like Jesus did. That shift in my focus produced new compassion in me for those who needed my help.

People often ask me if going from a police sergeant to a pastor was a tough transition. I say, "No." My job as a pastor is very similar to the one I had as a police officer. I still get to help people consider the benefits of turning their lives around.

Andy Rectenwald, the Oregon Campus pastor, taught us that "**serving like Jesus produces compassion in you.**" He talked about our friend Candy, whose compassion for her neighbors led her to create a ministry for them. Candy is passionate about showing her neighbors the love of Jesus by providing them with food. Her eyes light up when she speaks of those she has served with a

meal and had conversations. Candy's passion produces compassion in others for her ministry and a desire to help her fulfill the mission that God has given her.

The question, "Who is your neighbor?" is one we must ask, answer, and act upon. Candy has done just that! Be like Candy!

Luke 10:33 (emphasis added)

*"Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt **compassion** for him."*

James 2:14-16 (emphasis added)

*What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, and you say, "Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well"—but then you don't give that person any food or clothing. **What good does that do?***

If you want to love like Jesus, serve like Jesus!

Questions:

Do you let compassion lead your service, or are you doing it out of a sense of obligation rather than a desire to please God? What in this world makes you angry with a holy discontent that you can address and help change?

Next Steps:

If you want to serve like Jesus, you have to feel compassion like Jesus. Find a cause you are passionate about this week, learn how you can make a difference, pray about it, then jump in!

Prayer:

Father God, I beg that you break my heart for what breaks yours! Help me see people, especially those who don't look or act like me, as your precious and beloved children. Show me how to reach out to them in compassion with your love. Draw them and me to yourself as we love and serve you as brothers and sisters in the body of Christ. Amen.

This post was written by Lauri White, a regular contributor of the LivingItOut.

What's In it for me? - Where's Norm?

September 10, 2020

Why do you do the things you do?

Why do you brush your teeth? Why do you work? Why do you go to church? Why are you reading this devotional?

Here's the point: It is healthy to understand what truly motivates us.

I might be a little strange, but for me to understand somebody, I like to understand the motives for their actions, goals, ambitions, and words. You might be thinking: "That dude has trust issues!!!" And you might be right. However, I do the same self-assessment on myself. For me to dive in, I like to understand someone's core purpose and motivation.

I want to help some friends move this weekend. Great! Why? Do I owe them because they helped me? Will I need their help in the future? Or, do I just genuinely love them and want to see them blessed?

The point is, I do a little soul searching to make sure my heart is pure and doesn't have self-serving intent. Why do I do the things I do? What motivates me? I like to challenge myself and make sure I'm motivated by love—God-honoring love. I like to help because I love to share the hope that Jesus gave me. My faith is what motivates me. I was given the greatest gift—eternal salvation. To hoard that is a huge tragedy from my perspective, and just an excuse to be lazy.

Luke 10:34-35

³⁴ "Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, 'Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I'll pay you the next time I'm here.'"

My friends, the greatest battle I wage is the urge to think: "What's In It For Me?" I need to fight the temptation to be self-serving and live outside my lazy, comfort zone. The Samaritan in this passage is a great reminder of that. I don't believe he was motivated by WIIFM. He had compassion and sympathy and genuinely wanted to help another human.

There is so much need in this world. It's time to step outside our comfort zone and allow God's love to motivate us in everything we do.

Questions:

What motivates you?

How can you start to live outside your comfort zone?

Where is there room for improvement?

How can you improve your spiritual mindset when it comes to helping others?

Next Steps:

Start by getting to the core. What truly motivates you to do the things you do? Next, pray about ways God can use you. Be open and willing to serve others before you serve yourself.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, it is not always easy to serve others before we serve ourselves. Shine a light into the areas where we can improve. Help us to see our true intent and allow us to grow in the areas that need the most attention. May we continue to see the fruits of our labor and the reward in serving with a pure heart. We have been saved. Give us strength to use this gift to serve others. Amen.

Take Care of My Sheep - Where's Norm?

September 11, 2020

Some people are extroverts, some introverts, and some are a combination of both. But regardless of where we fall in this spectrum, we all crave some degree of community. We all want to be seen, heard, and understood. We want to be seen as valuable human beings who deserve respect. We want our needs to be seen as just as important as everyone else's. But many times, it is those with the biggest needs that often get overlooked most frequently.

Today, we will continue with the story of the good Samaritan, but we need to start with it's origin:

Jesus encountered a Jewish lawyer who wanted to test him. The lawyer asked, "Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?" ([Luke 10:25](#)). Jesus asked what the law of Moses says, to which the man replied, "'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.' And, 'Love your neighbor as yourself'" ([Luke 10:27](#)). But, "the man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" ([Luke 10:29](#)).

Jesus replied to the Jewish lawyer's question by telling the story of the good Samaritan ([Luke 10:30-37](#)).

Dr. Calvin Sweeney, lead pastor of The Tabernacle, taught us during the weekend message that "**serving like Jesus produces connection with your neighbor.**" And that connection can bridge our differences. He proposed that the question Jesus was asked by the Jewish lawyer, "Who is my neighbor?" may not be as good of a question as, "*To whom should I be a neighbor?*"

Luke 10:36-37

³⁶ "Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?" Jesus asked. ³⁷ The man replied, "The one who showed him mercy." Then Jesus said, "Yes, now go and do the same."

As we learned earlier in the week, serving like Jesus may mean serving outside of our comfort zones. It may mean reaching out to someone you barely know. And it may mean not knowing whether things will go exactly as you hoped and planned. Regardless, remember that when people receive a gift of service, they experience Jesus' love. And Jesus loved and served others even when they rejected him. If you want to love like Jesus, you need to serve like Jesus.

John 21:16

Jesus repeated the question: “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

“Yes, Lord” Peter said, “you know I love you.”

“Then take care of my sheep,” Jesus said.

When Jesus returned to the apostles after his resurrection, he asked Simon Peter if he loved him. When Peter said “yes,” Jesus followed it by asking Simon to take care of his followers. If we say we love Jesus but don’t serve others, we are missing the point. Loving Jesus in the way he wants us to means we can’t help but serve other people. We aren’t able to contain all of the love that we receive from and give to Jesus—we just have to share it.

Love Jesus. And take care of his sheep.

Questions:

God, whom would you have me serve like Jesus today?

Is there a time when you were on the receiving end of someone serving like Jesus? Did you build a connection with this person? Explain.

Next Steps:

Identify someone who you can serve. Consider how it may build your connection with this person. Make a plan to follow through with your service. Maybe even invite some others to join you.

Prayer:

Dear God, please show me who you want me to serve. Let my ears and eyes be open to whom you are guiding me toward. Give me the boldness and the courage to follow through. I know that when I serve like you, I show your love, and this can build connections between me and others. I pray that you guide my words and my actions. Help me to be a good neighbor. Amen.

This post was written by Ashlee Grosjean, a regular contributor of the LivingItOut.