

# Serving Compassionately

## *Our Family Values:*

John 13:12-17, Matthew 25:34-40

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Wesley J. Gabel

Bethany Church

Did you know there is an epidemic of depression in our nation? Crippling episodes of depression have increased to the point that one in four Americans are expected to suffer major depression at some point. Today, some 15 percent of all American adults are on anti-depressant medication. Their use by youth is greatly increasing as well.

Although we all suffer sadness (and given the circumstances of life, we should), although we all suffer low motivation at times (and facing disappointments who wouldn't?), although we all periodically experience the blues, clinical depression is much more intense, persistent and debilitating. Some clinical depression is exclusively biochemical, but the roots for most are much wider... and so is the cure. Although antidepressants often give initial relief, I've heard concerns from patients and family members about their unintended effects. Dr. Joel Scandrett stopped taking antidepressants two years ago after reporting the following:

*I found myself becoming cavalier and impatient, insensitive and spiritually complacent. The antidepressants kept me feeling good even when I should not have.* (Christianity Today, March 2009, "My Life with Antidepressants," p.26)

Popping pills may induce a euphoria that provides help for the moment, but Jesus Christ provides a profound and lasting lift for those affected by depression. Truly, he is the way, the truth and the life.

As I have read the testimonies of both those treating depression and those receiving treatment and healing, I thought of the scene in John 13. During or just before Jesus' last supper,

he took a basin and a towel, knelt down and washed the feet of his disciples. It was a moving and humbling experience for the men eating there. In the posture of a slave, Jesus removed the dirt from their feet. It was too much for Peter. He resisted. Jesus told Peter that if he didn't let Jesus wash his feet, he would have no part of Jesus. In other words, he would be rejecting Jesus' love and fellowship.

This is a critical principle. When we reject humble acts of service from people, we reject love and companionship that connects us with Christ. Jesus comes to us in healing love through the words and actions of people. He does miracles through people. He meets needs through people. He endorses our value through people. He confirms our abilities through people. He builds our understanding of love through people. To reject the service of people, because we feel sheepish or embarrassed or unworthy, is to reject Jesus' love and friendship.

In depression, individuals withdraw from others. They reject the love and companionship of others. They break life-giving connections that both reveal their value and remind them of it. A critical step to healing is receiving foot-washing type help. The depressed need the help of someone who humbly and patiently removes the soot from life's difficult terrain.

Removing that soot is not always an intellectual exercise. Often, a profound emotional and spiritual lift comes from acts that are not intellectual at all. Frequently, a meal, a greeting card, raking a lawn or partnering in some task touches a soul and removes the toxic dirt of degradation and discouragement.

John opened the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of John saying that Jesus was about to leave the world and was now showing his disciples the full extent of his love. To be truly healthy, you must receive a foot-washing from Jesus Christ through his followers. You must receive such profound and simple love. Only then, will you begin to grasp the extent of Christ's love for you. Only then,

will you be equipped to love people in the very special ways God designed for you. Only then, will you be empowered to truly reveal Christ's love for others. When you receive without payback, without reciprocating, you are humbled. You feel a debt to love others, and when you feel that debt, you are now grasping reality. You are so loved, valued and cared for. You can't possibly reciprocate. You can only share that love.

Jesus said to his disciples:

***You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.*** (John 13:13-17, NIV)

Jesus noted how his disciples called him Teacher and Lord. He acknowledged that the title was appropriate. He saw his service, not only as a gift of love, but also as a model to be followed. Returning to the special relationship he had with his disciples, Jesus emphasized that no servant is greater than his master and no messenger more privileged than the sender. He was telling them that their acts of foot-washing accomplish the will of their master and reveal the love of the one sending them.

Most weekday mornings I work out between five and six at the Mayo Clinic's Healthy Living Center. I have a favorite set of elliptical machines where I can use any of them, watch its individualized TV screen, and then look up and see six big screen TVs all tuned to different channels. I pick moment to moment whether I want to view Sportscenter, local weather, or several news channels at any given time. I'm in TV heaven exercising my finger as well as my legs and heart. When I arrived last Wednesday shortly after 5 a.m., all those machines were taken. I moved to a different section where there was no big screens showing me what was

available. When advertisements or boring segments filled my little screen, my eyes wandered until they saw a t-shirt worn by a woman running on a treadmill. Captured on the back were these words: *Go... Serve! Be... Love!* I think God led me to see that t-shirt Wednesday because that is exactly what Jesus was teaching his disciples. We are to go serve and be the love of God to people.

The leadership of the Bethany family has defined ten core activities, actions that will define our life together as followers of Jesus. One is *experiencing salvation*, two is *believing the Bible*, three is *praying*, four is *worshiping God*, five is *growing with one another*, six is *witnessing to the world*, seven is *servicing compassionately*.

*We value serving others at their point of need, following the example of our Lord Jesus.*

In receiving service at our point of need, we welcome the love of God. In serving others at their point of need, we embody the love of God. If we fail to do that, we are not the body of Christ. Instead, we reject the Spirit of Christ as pawns of the spirits who oppose the will of God.

Receiving and sharing the love of God in service is so vital to your mental and spiritual health, that Jesus equates it with the authentic and spiritual acceptance of him as Savior and Lord. Whatever you confess with your mouth, you have not believed in your heart the good news of Jesus until you have received and shared his love. Consequently, you do not know Jesus as Savior and Lord unless you receive service at your point need and serve others at their point of need. That is why Jesus said in Matthew 25 that the king would divide the people of the nations, not by what they say about God or the king, but by what they do with those in need.

Have you let the Lord touch you at your point of need? Is your life invested in others at their point of need? If not, you've yet to meet Jesus.