

Four Ways To Be A Blessing

Introduction. In an old Peanuts cartoon, Lucy demanded that her brother, Linus, change television channels. "What makes you think you can walk right in here and take over?" asks Linus. "These five fingers," says Lucy. "Individually they're nothing but when I curl them together like this into a single fist they form a weapon that is terrible to behold." With a look of resignation, Linus asks, "Which channel do you want?" In the final frame, Linus turns away, looks at his fingers and says, "Why can't you guys get organized like that?"

There are two ways of being united. One is through fear, force, and intimidation. The other is through faith, hope, and love. The former is carnal, the latter is spiritual. The former is based on bullying, the latter on mutual cooperation. The former causes problems, the latter produces peace. These two approaches are contrasted in 1 Peter 3:8-9.

Our relationship in Christ is not one in which we return evil for evil, nor do we render reviling for reviling. Instead of wishing evil on another brother, we seek to be a blessing to one another. "Blessing" means "to speak well of, to praise, to celebrate, to invoke God's gracious power on another."

Being a blessing to one another is God's way of us getting along, of being an instrument of peace instead of a wedge of division (Matthew 5:9). Treating a person with kindness rather than vengeance is the way to move his heart. With this in mind, this lesson will investigate four practical ways we can be a blessing to others.

I. Treat People Better Than They Treat You

- A. The statements of Jesus are uncompromising in Luke 6:27-31. As Matthew reports the equivalent saying, people in the past have loved their neighbor and hated their enemy (Matthew 5:43).
 1. "Love you neighbor" is taken directly from Leviticus 19:18, which Jesus quotes in a fuller form at 19:19 and 22:39.
 2. "Hate your enemy" is not a quotation from the Old Testament, but it is an inference which was easily drawn from the clear Old Testament distinction between the attitude required towards fellow-Israelites and towards foreigners (Deuteronomy 23:3-6; cp. Psalm 139:21-22).
- B. Jesus tells us it is easy to love people who love us (Matthew 5:45-47). But we are called to a higher standard. It is not enough to refrain from hostile acts. We treat people nice who are not very nice to us. To people living in an occupied territory such words must have sounded odd. Must not the Romans be opposed and hated? To people of strong nationalistic leanings, Jesus' teaching was downright immoral.

II. Walk The Second Mile

- A. "Compel thee to go" in Matthew 5:41 is a specific term for the Roman soldier's practice of "commandeering" civilian labor in an occupied country (cp. Matthew 27:32; Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26).
 - 1. "Compel" is of Persian origin. Post offices were then unknown. In order for the royal commands to be safely delivered in different parts of the empire, Cyrus stationed horsemen at intervals on all the great public highways. One of those delivered the message to another, and information was thus rapidly and safely communicated.
 - 2. These heralds were permitted to compel any person, or to press any horse, boat, ship, or other vehicle that they might need, for the quick transmission of the king's commandments.
- B. Impressment, like a lawsuit, evoked outrage; but the attitude of Jesus' disciples under such circumstances must not be spiteful or vengeful but helpful. This kind of person says, "I will do more than you ask, than is required, than is expected, than is necessary. I will bless you by going above and beyond my mere duty." It is heartwarming to recount how the Macedonians and the Philippians gave beyond their means and Paul's expectations (2 Corinthians 8:1-5; Philippians 4:15-16).

III. Help People Who Cannot Help You

- A. Benevolence is a mark of a Christian (Galatians 6:10; 1 Timothy 6:17-18). The Lord told us it was more blessed to give than receive (Acts 20:35). Paul enjoyed the blessings from others because he knew it was a blessing for them to give (Philippians 4:17-18). God's prophets did not just proclaim his message, but were compassionate to those who had little (1 Kings 17:8-16; 2 Kings 6:1-7).
- B. You are a blessing to others when you do good without the expectation of a return favor. Some people invite people for dinner, then wait for them to reciprocate. Or buy a gift, anticipating to receive a gift. The spirit of being a blessing to others is doing good just for the sake of doing good. I have heard countless times over the years brethren here helping others by taking them places, taking them dinner, giving them unexpected gifts, etc. You are truly a blessing to others!

IV. Do Right When You Want To Do Wrong

- A. This is the eternal challenge of the flesh versus the spirit. The temptation to forcibly right a wrong is extremely strong. Perhaps this is why the Bible forbids revenge so many times (Proverbs 20:22; 24:29; Romans 12:17, 19; 1 Corinthians 6:7; 1 Thessalonians 5:15).

B. When you feel the urge, act against the norm! When you are prone to disagree, be patient (1 Thessalonians 5:14). When you feel like picking a fight, pray (Matthew 26:41). When you are tempted to be sarcastic, be sympathetic (Romans 12:15). When you feel the urge to criticize, express compassion (Hebrews 5:2). When you want to curse, bless (1 Corinthians 4:12).

Conclusion. Being a blessing to one another is the purpose of our calling. And it allows us to live in harmony with others. It produces inner peace and personal satisfaction. But most of all, we enjoy the approval of God. When we are a blessing to others, we will receive a blessing. Therefore, resolve today to be a blessing to everyone you meet.