

Help the Hurting

This Thanksgiving, I challenge you to be the face of Jesus to someone who needs Him.

Thanksgiving Day is one of my favorite times of the year. Although I am grateful for all God's blessings, there is just something special about Americans gathering around the dinner table to give thanks to God for family and freedom.

How will you spend Thanksgiving? Perhaps your relatives have made plans to travel from miles away to feast on turkey, stuffing and pumpkin pie at your house. Or maybe you will take a drive up the coast to admire the autumn leaves and reunite with friends.

Can I challenge you to do something different this year? Take a moment and think about the thousands of people who don't have the luxury of going on cozy getaways or eating until their stomachs are full. Most of them have fallen on hard times and need basic essentials to make it. But as pastors, Randy and I have learned they'd rather have hope than food.

Take Levi for example. He came to Without Walls International Church a few years ago all the way from Michigan, having hitchhiked and walked much of the way with his wife and two small children. Levi was laid off from a factory job he had for 19 years and soon found himself begging strangers to give him money to buy food.

Levi and his family stayed in their home for as long as they could—until authorities forced them to move out because there was no running water or heat during the blistering winter months. He packed up his family, loaded them on a bus and

headed south.

The couple ran out of money just before they arrived in Florida, but they managed to make it all the way to Tampa. "All I knew was that we needed to get to Tampa. I had never been [there], but I just had this feeling," Levi explained. He said he and his wife did everything they could do to get there.

Levi didn't know it was the Holy Spirit pushing him right into our laps. Today, he and his family have settled down nicely in Tampa. He has a home and a good job, and he even came to know Jesus. He serves faithfully in our church, and he is a walking testimony of the goodness of God.

"But it wasn't always easy," Levi said, as he recalled turning to us for help in the beginning. "We were desperate and hungry and searching for anybody who cared enough to give us a hand up."

Our Table in the Wilderness Thanksgiving outreach program translated into a much-needed dose of hope for Levi and his family.

What will you do this year to help a person like him?

This is so much bigger than feeding the hungry, although that's a huge part of it. Christians have a chance to help restore the broken. You can provide hope and dignity to those who need it most. Above all, you can share the greatest gift—the gospel of Jesus Christ!

I challenge you to be the face of Jesus to someone who, like Levi, might not know Him. Be the vessel God uses to restore hope to those who think they have nothing to be thankful for.

Boldly walk out Matthew 25:35, 40: “‘For I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in.” ... And the King will answer and say to them, “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me”‘” (NKJV).

Get plugged into your community. Find a shelter in need of volunteers. As we say in our church, “The need is the call.” Find someone who needs you, and you’ll find the place where you’ve been called to serve.

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