

How Helping Others Helps You

You were not created for yourself. Jesus did not come to simply make you feel better. Living as part of God's kingdom here and now means we start living with the values and attitudes of heaven, and that means an outward focus. It just plain works; helping someone else is the fastest way to emotional transformation. Helping others helps you.

Karl Menninger, the famous psychiatrist and founder of the Menninger Clinic, was once asked what someone should do if they felt a nervous breakdown coming on. Those listening suspected he might suggest the person seek care by a psychiatrist or other health professional. Instead, Dr. Menninger gave this advice; "Lock up your house, go across the railroad tracks, and find someone in need and do something for him."

Certainly there are very real times when care by a professional is absolutely necessary. But Dr. Menninger's point is true; there comes a time when focusing inward becomes seriously destructive. A life dedicated to self-service is always miserable. Focusing outward, finding those people who you can help by somehow making their lives better, will lift your spirits as little else can.

After my husband's death, one of the elements I found most important in moving forward was coming to the understanding that God still had something for me to do. There are people who need what He has given me to share. As long as that remains true, I can live with courage, purpose and hope.

I hear from people every day who feel discouraged, unhappy, depressed. They feel as though the whole world is against them and that nothing ever goes their way. Perhaps you wrestle with feeling that way too.

Do you want to change that picture? Find someone to help; that

will make more of a difference in your physical, emotional and spiritual well-being than almost anything else.

Here are a few things to think about in helping yourself by helping others.

Whom Can You Help?

How do you know whom you're supposed to help? Here are a few questions to think about.

- **Who is nearby right now?**

How can you lift the load of your spouse? How can you encourage your children? Who are the coworkers, neighbors, church acquaintances, colleagues, friends and so forth with whom you interact on a regular basis? Who among them is struggling? How can you make their life better in some way?

Instead of looking for those around you to make your life easier, look for how you can do it for them. Ask God to help you be more aware of people around you who you can lift up in some way. Intentionally pay attention and notice who is having a tough time. Then determine to do something about it—and quietly follow through. .

- **Whose pain do you feel?**

Your own struggles may have made you more sensitive to others who are struggling in a similar way. Perhaps your past or your life experiences have made you aware of those who are facing the same problems you have. Perhaps there's a group of people, or one certain person, who you just can't get out of your mind. That's a huge clue about what God may be asking you to do.

There are countless problems needing to be solved, innumerable people suffering in some way, no end of causes large or small where you can invest your energy. Find that one person or 10

people who get “under your skin” and find a way to make things better for them.

▪ **Where are you most gifted?**

You have special gifts or resources of some kind. God does not ask you to give what you don't have. But you have something! He gives gifts to equip you to bless others. Don't waste His gifts on yourself only.

This is the theological and biblical principle behind spiritual gifts anyway. If you have a home, someone doesn't; can you be hospitable to those who have no way to invite you back? If you have a bank account, you have more money than most people in the world; how can you leverage it for the benefit of others? If you know how to read, can hug a child, have two good arms and legs, understand science or math or the Bible, have a little time to listen or have experienced God do something for you, that's a clue to what you may be able to give to someone who doesn't have what you have.

So if you're stuck in a negative swirl of navel-gazing, stop. It's not all about you! Turn your focus outward. Find someone who needs something you have, and help them. Today!

And your emotions will be transformed quicker than you expect. Helping others helps you.

Your Turn: How has turning inward become a problem for your well-being? Who can you find to help today? Leave a comment below. {eoa}

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