

Living the Zero Victim Mentality: Show Mercy

Note: This is the third in a three-part series. For part one, [click here](#). For part two, [click here](#).

The Golden Rule lesson concerning Zero Victim Mentality focuses on how an individual relates to others. Jesus' teaching about the Good Samaritan focuses on the prioritization of others. People with a Zero Victim Mentality seek to put others ahead of themselves.

"Jesus answered, 'A man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing and wounded him and departed, leaving him half dead. By chance a priest came down that way. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to that place, looked at him and passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine. Then he set him on his own donkey and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day when he departed, he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said to him, "Take care of him. I will repay you whatever else you spend when I return." Now which of these three do you think was a neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?' He said, 'The one who showed mercy on him.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'" (Luke 10:30-37).

This story tells of a man identified as "a despised Samaritan" who showed compassion to a victim of injustice.

Upon finding the man, a victim of injustice, the Samaritan made a decision—a decision motivated by compassion that went above and beyond minimal care for the man who had been robbed

and wounded. The Samaritan immediately dressed the victim's wounds, transported him to an inn, and paid for the cost of the victim's care. Furthermore, he established an unlimited line of credit with the innkeeper to cover any additional care needed.

Rather than focus on the victim, the story focuses on the Samaritan who demonstrated a Zero Victim Mentality. Clearly unconcerned about being imposed upon or with being taken advantage of, the Samaritan is the main character.

How many times do we see people in need and refuse to help them because we're afraid they'll take advantage of our precious time and resources? We often refuse to help others to prevent ourselves from becoming victims of inconvenience and loss of revenue. An individual with a Zero Victim Mentality shows mercy toward others without fear of personal loss. The Samaritan focused on alleviating the victimization of the true victim, without considering the prospect of his own ill treatment.

Zero Victim Lesson No. 5: God does help those who help themselves. From another one of Jesus' teachings, we see some truth to the old adage, "God helps those who help themselves." Jesus often portrayed a partnership model between God and people, as opposed to God doing everything for people. At times, individuals in Scripture participated in their miracles. Consider the man Jesus healed at the pool of Bethesda:

"Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, which in Hebrew is called Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great crowd of invalids, blind, lame, and paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water. After the stirring of the water, whoever stepped in first was healed of whatever disease he had. A certain man was there who had an illness for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying

there, and knew that he had been in that condition now a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to be healed?" The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred. But while I am coming, another steps down before me." Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." Immediately the man was healed, took up his bed, and walked. That day was the Sabbath. (John 5:2-9).

The sick man clearly possessed a mentality of defeat from which he desperately needed to be liberated. Four key factors contributed to the sick man's victim mentality:

1. Wrong environment and wrong relationships. The sick man resided in the company of sick people for 38 years. I don't want to seem insensitive to people experiencing health challenges, but this man lived in an environment for 38 years where sickness was normal. When everyone in a community suffers from the same negative condition, dysfunctional behavior becomes normalized, and functional behavior becomes abnormal. When individuals live in an environment where undesirable conditions such as poverty, broken families and crime are "normal," they tend to become accustomed to those environments and see themselves as victims of their surroundings.

2. Time delay. Over the years, the sick man had become programmed for delay. He never anticipated nor prepared for a specific moment when his condition would permanently change and he would be free from his infirmity. He became a victim of time by becoming complacent in his condition. The sick man became accustomed to waiting instead of taking control of his circumstances. Ongoing deferred hope can eventually become hopelessness.

3. Lack of desire. Jesus asked the sick man, "Would you like to get well?" The man never answered Jesus' question. We want him to say with confidence: "Yes! I want to be made well!" Yet he doesn't appear to have a firm desire to be healed. Victim

mentality encourages tolerance of undesired circumstances, which eventually breaks an individual's will to change. In some cases, victims actually prefer the comfort of the familiar, choosing to keep things the way they are as opposed to the discomfort of making things better.

4. Excuses. Though the sick man did not respond by answering, "Yes!" he did respond with three excuses that justified his condition: a) He didn't have anyone to help him; b) He needed to wait for the water to be stirred before jumping into the healing waters; and c) Someone else jumps into the water before him (the people believed that when the water began to stir, the first person to jump into the pool would be healed). A victim mentality perpetrates the idea that someone else—a parent, spouse, boss, church or the government—must do for you what you are unable to do for yourself. This man believed that someone getting into the pool ahead of him caused his condition, making him a "loser" to those competing against him. As a victim, their win meant his loss.

Anyone Can Go from Victim to Victorious

Jesus responded to the sick man with simple instruction of self-initiative: "Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk!" Despite all the reasons the sick man offered to justify his condition, Jesus challenged his victim mentality by telling him to take the initiative to save himself. A Zero Victim Mentality does not demand entitlements, blame others, or justify unacceptable conditions, but instead takes personal initiative to change those conditions by doing what must be done.

We must endeavor to live life from the inside out and not from the outside in. The uncontrollable world around us will never cease to create victims through life's circumstances.

Attempting to control the world will only prove to be frustrating and a waste of time. The only control we have is control of what happens within us—not what happens to us or around us.

Individuals who have mastered their thoughts and emotions stand the best chance of living the highest possible quality of life by developing a mentality that liberates them from defeat. When you develop a Zero Victim Mentality, you cannot lose in life, no matter what happens to you.

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James E. Ward founded *INSIGHT Church* in the North Chicago suburb of Skokie, Illinois, and presently serves as senior pastor. In his new book, *Zero Victim*, Ward shares a universal principle that has fueled his success in every area of life. He and his wife Sharon have been married for 15 years and have two wonderful children, Hannah and Jonathan. For more information visit [www.insightchurch.org](#).