

The Contagious Power of Giving Love

Love is a powerful force. It has the ability to transform people's lives, penetrate even the hardest of hearts and breathe new life into almost any situation. In so many ways, loving and serving others is what makes life worth living.

Jesus says in Luke 6:38, "Give and you shall receive." This isn't just a financial promise; it is so much more. It's about becoming givers of our time, our talents, our prayers and our resources. It's about giving our lives. And as we give ourselves away, we not only receive all of these things in return, but we'll also experience an incredible joy.

This isn't just true at Christmastime, when even the secular world focuses on giving to others. The truth is, we who follow Jesus can share in this joy all the time. Some of the happiest people I know are those who live to serve others. When we wake up everyday with the intention of helping someone else, it not only impacts others' lives, but it also brings an unexplainable fulfillment to our own.

Love Is Contagious

My heart for helping people can be traced directly back to my mom and dad, Joyce and Dave Meyer. For as long as I can remember, they've looked for ways to help those in need. I've watched them cry with compassion for the homeless, hungry and mistreated ... *and then do something about it.*

Over the years, as the Lord worked in my heart and taught me about His love, He used my mom and dad to illustrate what love really looks like. I remember as a young boy my parents bringing all of us children to the nursing home each week to visit the elderly. We continually saw their genuine love and concern, and it's something we'll never forget. They not only

brought God's comfort and joy to others, but their lifestyle of generosity and service also filled *our* lives with joy and happiness. Their example made me want to follow in their footsteps.

Today, it's that same heart for people—that passion to reach others with the love of Jesus Christ—that motivates everything we do through Hand of Hope, the missions arm of Joyce Meyer Ministries. This includes one program that is close to my heart: Each week, our teams visit more than 800 people in nursing homes and senior-care centers.

You see, love is a never-ending cycle—it doesn't stop with you and me. When we serve others with a pure heart, we become “bright lights” and make others want what we have.

You may not always see an immediate reaction or change in someone, but be patient and never give up! God's love is contagious, and it has the ability to transform almost any situation.

God Is in the Small Stuff

It's easy for people to look at a large organization and see the difference it makes. However, I believe a lot of people wonder, *What can I do? I'm just one person!*

The truth is that each of us has opportunities every single day to impact a life. As we open our eyes to the needs around us and begin taking action, God will continue to open doors and show us additional ways to help people. And when it comes to serving others, I think it helps to be practical.

At Joyce Meyer Ministries, we have a simple philosophy: *Find a need and meet it*. If we believe we can relieve someone's pain for even a short period of time, then we try to help.

This means if a person is hungry, we feed them. If they need medical care, we treat them. If a disaster has stolen all they

own, we try to help them get back on their feet. And if someone is a victim of the horrors of human trafficking, we try to rescue them and help them begin a new life.

Our ministry hasn't always been a large organization. We began by doing what we could and helping those God placed in our path. Initially, we allocated 10 percent of our income to help the hurting through missions efforts. Today, that percentage has greatly increased, and the Lord is allowing us to impact tens of thousands around the world. But it all goes back to *doing what we can*.

You can do the same thing. I encourage you to find a need and meet it. Whether it's helping a family that's behind on their bills, giving someone a ride to work, volunteering at church, visiting an elderly neighbor or praying for someone who's going through a hard time, you can make a difference too. Some of the most amazing things can happen by simply cooking someone a meal or cutting their lawn!

It's all about the small stuff. We should never underestimate a simple act of love to help someone right where they are.

Multiply Your Efforts

In many ways, the phrase "Together we are better" has become my motto. Throughout my life and in my role with Hand of Hope, I have consistently seen how partnerships have allowed us to accomplish otherwise impossible feats.

First, we team up with other ministries and organizations that are dedicated to reaching a particular region. We learned a long time ago that we can't be experts at everything. So when we join forces, it allows us all to do exponentially more than we could on our own.

Our partnership with Kelimahefa and a group of churches in Madagascar is the perfect example. This past June we held a special event in Madagascar, providing food, basic necessities

and the gospel message to more than 30,000 children who are living on the streets. But without this partnership, none of it would have been remotely possible!

Second, we team up with people all around the world who send their financial support to help fund our ongoing outreaches. By ourselves, we couldn't do much at all. But something incredible happens when a lot of people send their \$5, \$10 or \$20. That adds up, and then together we are able to make a huge impact.

I encourage you to partner with your church and other organizations that are actively helping people in your community and beyond. The amount you give may not seem like much, but I can tell you from experience that the Lord takes what you give, blesses it, multiplies it and then uses it to transform people's lives.

The truth is, none of us can do it by ourselves—we need each other. And when we pool our resources and talents, God not only gets in the middle of our efforts, He also gets the credit for the outcome.

Go the Extra Mile

Loving people often requires effort and a lot of hard work. It involves coming up with solutions and getting creative. Over the years, we've worked in some of the most difficult places around the world, often needing to think outside the box and step out of our comfort zone. But we've learned that "going the extra mile" can produce tremendous good.

For example, in the summer of 2007, we teamed up with several other organizations and an army of volunteers to pull off a multifaceted outreach called "Hope Cambodia: 30 Days of Hope." You may remember that more than 2 million people were brutally murdered in Cambodia during the genocide in the 1970s, leaving the country devastated. God put it on our hearts to do what we could to help these precious people move forward. But it

wasn't going to be easy.

We set up festivals, leadership conferences and multiple medical clinics. We also shared Christ with prisoners and dedicated our new orphanages and community centers for children at risk.

From the start of our time there, the enemy opposed us. Before and during the outreach, it was one thing after another—and the weather simply added to the challenges (we were there during the rainy season).

Then, on the final day of the outreach, my mom was scheduled to speak in the Chenla Theater in the heart of Phnom Penh. Suddenly, the authorities arrived and cut power to the building and locked the gates to the courtyard outside—no one could enter or leave the premises.

Before I knew it, my mom and dad, full of determination, were climbing over the gate to get inside the courtyard! My mom then preached one of her greatest messages to thousands in the streets using a bullhorn in the black of night.

Challenging times like that night have taught us to be bold, get a little radical and never give up. In fact, some of the projects posing the greatest challenges and risks are the ones I'm the most glad I pursued.

For instance, we've translated several of my mom's books into a total of 111 languages and distributed them worldwide. However, in some nations—especially those closed to the gospel—this can be a difficult task.

I'll never forget a photo one of our team members took a few years back. It was an image of a donkey slowly walking up the side of a mountain with an enormous bag of Joyce's books on its back. For me, that photo says it all. It says we're willing to do whatever it takes to reach people with the life-saving message of Jesus Christ.

Love requires us to occasionally take bold steps of obedience and do things we normally wouldn't. This applies to large-scale outreaches as well as our everyday relationships. "Going the extra mile" might mean picking up the phone and calling someone we'd prefer not to, or making an effort to help a person in need when it's completely inconvenient.

It may also require you to get involved in ways you hadn't planned. Maybe the Lord will ask you to host a study group or play an integral role in a church outreach. There have been numerous times when God has asked me to be a part of something new or different—something I would have never thought to do on my own—that ended up blessing my life and so many others'.

Remember, each of us, regardless of age or situation, has a unique sphere of influence and set of friendships. There are people we can reach in a way no one else can! And the greatest thing we can do is to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit and take action.

I encourage you to be bold. Get creative and step out of your comfort zone. I've experienced countless times when I thought, *God, are You sure?* But down the road, I realized He simply was setting me up to be used in a greater way than I ever imagined.

Share Christ and Love People

Our mission at Joyce Meyer Ministries is simple—we aim to "share Christ and love people." In so many ways, these two things are inseparable.

Through the years, I've seen virtually every approach to reaching people with the gospel—from mass crusades and church services to leadership seminars and all types of humanitarian efforts. Each one can bring a degree of success. But whether it's in North America, Asia or Africa, people are ultimately reached because they believe you love and care about them.

I'll never forget a report I received from one of our outreaches in India that is partially focused on ministering to people with leprosy. In this region, lepers are complete outcasts, shunned by the community. The only interaction they have with the "outside world" is when someone throws a piece of food to them. Our teams regularly meet and pray for them and also help alleviate their physical suffering. One common issue is the incredibly painful sores they develop on the bottoms of their feet.

One day, a member of our team began to take off the bandages from one man's foot and carefully wash the infected areas. Overwhelmed at such an act of love, the man asked, "Why are you touching my feet?"

He replied, "Because there's a God in heaven who wants to touch your heart."

You see, we want every person we encounter to give his or her heart to Christ. But getting them to that point may take a lot of love in action. So many people are in such physical or emotional pain that they can't even process the "message" until their needs have been met.

First Corinthians 13:4 says, "Love suffers long." One of the greatest things we can ever do is "suffer long" with someone, sticking with them through their hurts and pain. Because, in the end, loving and caring for others is the greatest message we will ever preach.

I encourage you to make love your priority and actively look for ways to make a difference in someone else's life. What better time to start than this Christmas season! Be bold. Get creative. And don't be afraid to let it take you places you haven't been before.

When you give yourself away—your time, your talents and everything else God has given you—it has a way of coming back to you in the most incredible way.

David L. Meyer is CEO of Hand of Hope, the missions arm of Joyce Meyer Ministries. He oversees the ministry's international and field offices, manages its foreign radio and television broadcasts, and coordinates humanitarian aid and international festivals. His travels for Christ have taken him to more than 150 nations.

Watch how Hand of Hope is changing lives around the world through partnering with other ministries at