

Everyone Needs Help

Romans 8: 12-17 and 26-28

¹² My dear friends, we must not live to satisfy our desires. ¹³ If you do, you will die. But you will live, if by the help of God's Spirit you say "No" to your desires. ¹⁴ Only those people who are led by God's Spirit are his children. ¹⁵ God's Spirit doesn't make us slaves who are afraid of him. Instead, we become his children and call him our Father. ¹⁶ God's Spirit makes us sure that we are his children. ¹⁷ His Spirit lets us know that together with Christ we will be given what God has promised. We will also share in the glory of Christ, because we have suffered with him. ²⁶ In certain ways we are weak, but the Spirit is here to help us. For example, when we don't know what to pray for, the Spirit prays for us in ways that cannot be put into words. ²⁷ All of our thoughts are known to God. He can understand what is in the mind of the Spirit, as the Spirit prays for God's people. ²⁸ We know that God is always at work for the good of everyone who loves him. They are the ones God has chosen for his purpose.

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Pastor John

There was a woman at work when she received a phone call that her daughter was very sick with a fever. She left work and stopped by the pharmacy to get some medication for her daughter. She returned to her car to find that she had locked the keys inside the car when she went into the pharmacy and was now unable to get into her car to drive home.



She didn't know what to do and started to panic, so she called home and told the baby sitter what had happened and that she did not know what to do. The baby sitter told her to find a coat hanger and see if that would open the door.

The woman looked around and found an old rusty coat hanger that had been thrown down on the ground, possibly by someone else who also had locked their keys in their car. Then she looked at the hanger and said, "I don't know how to use this." So, she bowed her head and asked God to send her some help. In so doing, she obeyed the command to never stop praying. Do you think God would reward her for that?

Within five minutes a motorcycle roared up and pulled into the parking space next to her car. A rough, dirty-looking biker got off and saw her situation. He asked if he could help her. The woman thought, "*This is what you sent to help me, God?*"



She finally told him yes, as she needed to hurry and get home to her sick daughter. He walked over to the car, and in less than one minute the car was opened. She hugged the man and through her tears she said, "Thank you so much! You are such a nice man."

The man replied; "No, I'm not, Lady. I just got out of prison for car theft." The woman hugged the man again and with sobbing tears cried out to God, "You even sent me a professional!"

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Let us pray.

Last week in church we talked about trusted mentors. Because life is a long, slow, steady learning and growing process, we all need people who will mentor us, who will pour into our lives, who will give of themselves to make us better people and more faithful disciples. Many of us are also mentors who will do these things for others who we cross paths with in life. This is a part of the way that God wired us to practice our faith - in community, together.

In our opening story today, a mother finds herself in a desperate situation, locked out of her car with a sick child at home. At the point of panic, she pleads to God for some help. God worked pretty fast to send aid. But I do not think that is what her reaction was, do you? You can imagine the mental tug of war that occurred as she sized up the rough, dirty-looking biker and recalled her daughter, sick at home, as she stood locked outside of her car. We have maybe all been in just such a situation. We threw up a last-ditch prayer for help and then questioned who it was that God sent our way to help. And maybe, just maybe, you have been on the other end of one of these scenarios. Maybe you have been the person who has walked through the door or into someone's bad situation and they wondered, "*Really, God, this is who you sent?*" This has often been an experience that I have had on mission trips.



The first mission trip I led was to Detroit, back in 2012. I had met a guy at a break-out session at the 2011 National Youth Conference. He happened to sit down next to me and as we made small talk before the session started, we discovered that he ran a United Methodist mission site in Detroit and I was a youth leader looking for a place to take youth that next summer. After a little planning and scheming with Bruce and Steve, 'Destination Detroit' was launched. A few months later we were on the ground. Monday morning we were given our initial assignment and we loaded up our supplies and headed off to our first job site. We walked up the front sidewalk and knocked on the door. We were excited for the very first day of work in this needy community. Nothing. Maybe knock a little louder. Nothing. Ring the doorbell a few times. Still nothing. Sharon, the lady from 'Rippling Hope', the group organizing the projects for the week was baffled. She said she had talked to the woman the day before and said we would be there first thing the next morning. So Sharon pulls out her cell phone and finds the right paperwork and calls the lady. She answered almost immediately. After a brief conversation, we were directed to come around to the side door. While this conversation was unfolding, one of the youth pointed out a security camera right there on the front porch where we were standing.



We went to the side door and the lady opened the door and welcomed us. Sharon asked why she did not answer the front door. The woman explained that, yes, she had seen us, through her security system, standing on the front porch as we knocked and rang the doorbell. Even though she knew a work team

was coming, she still would not come and open the door for us. To her, we were like that rough, dirty-looking biker that pulled up in the next parking space over. The woman had had people show up to do work but ended up ripping her off instead. She had hired workers, paid them for materials, and then they never returned. She had been robbed by someone posing as a delivery man. We began to understand why she was a little reluctant to open the door for this group of people standing on her front porch. Sometimes when God leads us into a situation, that person standing there is pretty wary of us and maybe is also pretty wary of God. We never know what someone has been through.



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On other mission trips, we have been the unexpected and the surprising. As individuals living here in this community, we can be this as well. We can be someone unexpected or surprising in how we love on and care for another in need of help. Our love and actions can be so extraordinary that they are difficult to understand for the person receiving our extravagant love. It is something they have never experienced in their lives. They cannot understand why someone would do this for them. And when we explain that we are there to help because it is Jesus' love in us leading us to love them, for some, this is even more confusing. They have never had someone love them in spite of themselves. A radical love is sometimes hard to wrap your head around.

Last week there were some sticky notes in the pews. On your way in this morning, you were asked to take a sticky note if you were not here last Sunday. Anyone in need of a sticky note that was not here last Sunday? If you were not here last week, using this sticky note, I invite you to write the names of three people you personally know that you could invite into this community of faith, into this place of belonging, into this place of love and care. Think of those in your world here in Winner who do not have a community of faith to call home. It could be a spouse, it could be a brother, it could be a neighbor, it could be a co-worker or classmate. I will give you a moment to write three names down on the sticky note you have in your hands... Thank you.



Now, in a moment, I am going to ask you all to close your eyes and to bow your heads. Then I will ask some questions and offer some prayers. For all gathered here today, please close your eyes and bow your heads.

Let us pray. Lord God, I ask you for the courage for all of us to pray daily over those names on our sticky notes. I ask that the Holy Spirit will speak into our hearts to bring us the words to say, to show us the right approach, to help us do whatever is needed to bring these folks to church, into a relationship with you.

For those who were here last week, please raise your hand if you have been praying daily for those names on your sticky notes. Lord God, I lift up those with raised hands raised here today. I give you thanks for their faithfulness in

praying for those who need to come to know you. I ask for continued prayers and for encouragement in those prayers. And Father, for those who just filled out sticky notes this morning and for those who maybe have not been praying every day for these named lost sheep, I pray for your Spirit to remind us daily to lift these persons up in prayer, to seek the Spirit's guidance for how to reach out, for how to extend an invitation into your love. May we each be faithful this week in our prayers for those who need to come to know you. All this in your name. Amen.

For those of you who wrote on a sticky note today, I ask that you take it home and place it on the mirror in the bathroom, on the fridge, on the rear view mirror in your car – wherever you will see it each day and be reminded to pray for those three names.

As you go forth from this place today, I invite you to begin considering how you could ask the people you are praying for to come with you to church on Easter Sunday. As we watch this video on evangelism, I am going to give each of you a few cards like this one on the screen to use as a tool to invite these folks to come with you to church. The cards can be a way to begin the conversation, to start the invitation. Please turn your attention to the screens. [Play video.]





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In our day to day life, it can be difficult to know how to engage another. It can be hard to know where to even begin to make a difference in someone else's life. Sometimes we must seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In today's text, we are reminded of the Spirit's active role in our prayer life. In verse 26, we are reminded of the Spirit's help in our prayer life. Verse 26 reads, *"In certain ways we are weak, but the Spirit is here to help us. For example, when we don't know what to pray for, the Spirit prays for us in ways that cannot be put into words."*

These words assure us that we are never alone, that the Spirit is always there to help us, to pray for us, in this specific case. But the Spirit also intercedes in our lives in other ways. Jesus promised that the Spirit would give us the words to say at times as well. In John 14, Jesus told the disciples, *"I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you."* This promise is true for each of us as well. This week, as we pray over how to reach out to the people we have named on our sticky notes, those whom we have been lifting in prayer, may we trust into the power of the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us, to remind us of the words of Jesus, so that we can offer them the hope that we each profess. We will delve deeper into the ways that the Holy Spirit helps us next week as we continue in this series.

We are each called to live into the mission statement that is on the back wall of the Sanctuary and that is on the cover of our bulletin. It reads, "Bring people to



Bring People to
Christ –
Help People to
Grow Deep in
Christ

Christ – Help People Grow Deep in Christ". As we go forth this week, may we all work on the first half of this statement.

We need to do step one before people can do step two.

There are many people in our world who are desperate for Jesus. Perhaps one or two are on your sticky note. As we go forth into the world this week, may we seek to invite others to know the hope we have. Let us pray.

GPS – Grow, Pray, Serve

- 1) When did God surprise you with who He sent to help you in a time of need? When have you been that surprising arrival?
- 2) How has the Holy Spirit intervened in your life to reassure you that you are indeed a child of God? How did this affect your faith?
- 3) This week, pray for the words and the opportunities to invite those on your sticky note to join us on Easter Sunday.