

Value 3 - Cultivating Love for Others - Your Neighbor

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[0:00] Go ahead and open in your Bibles just so you're prepped.! Two places. Matthew 22 and Philippians 2. Just those two passages.

! To see that we have a clear mission, clear values.

And so over the last, golly, probably 30 years, I have been in the process with different youth groups or camp ministries or our work on the DR of formulating what's our mission and values. And if I do say so myself, I've done a pretty good job of writing things that really reflected who we were in the past as an organization, what our core values were.

But the things I came up with were biblical. They were Bible-based. But they weren't like what John and Tim and I formulated for Tri-State.

[1:14] And I'll tell you the difference. Those mission and value statements I wrote in the past, while they were biblical, they were topics that came out of my head. This is our mission for a youth group, for instance.

Or this is our mission for a leadership program Kara and I ran in Colorado. And these are our core values. We want to be people who read the Bible. We want to be a group that prays. We want to be these things.

But as we were looking at what does God say to the church, there's a fundamental difference between writing mission and values for an organization versus God's church.

And the fundamental difference is that God tells us what the mission and values are for his church. He dictates to us. And I'll tell you, as good as I think I am at writing mission and value statements, which sounds like watching paint dry.

Some of us actually enjoy that. But as good as I think I am, as I've looked at what I believe God has given us for Tri-State, that is his will. There is a beauty in a balance between our mission statement, which I'll quote to you in a second, and these five values that we've adopted, the way that they interrelate, because God is building his church.

[2:33] Jesus said to the disciples, I will build my church. And we are participants in that. But the mission and values we have adopted truly are based.

The mission is from Ephesians 4, 1 through 16. And our values are the five things that Jesus really emphasized in his ministry as he was walking through Judea in the first century with his disciples. We isolated five commands that really spoke to us as a church and should speak to us as individual believers. So at Tri-State, we exist to glorify God.

That's where it all begins. We want to bring glory to God. And that's what God created us for, is to glorify him. We exist to glorify God. If I can do this from memory, I get stalled when I'm doing it in front of people.

This is why I tell people when I'm performing a wedding, never memorize your vows. Because you think you know them, and then your brain locks up. We exist to glorify God, walking closely with him.

[3:36] Because we're in partnership with him. We exist to glorify God, walking closely with him, striving together, that's all of us, to become more like Jesus every day. The big challenge for me as I've been giving these messages is to bring with that mission statement, the why.

Why would we do that? Who cares that we exist to glorify God? What difference does it make if I walk closely with him? And why would I strive with these people to be more like Jesus every day? What's the point? And what I want to start with this morning is to remind us of the gospel. The good news. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

He dealt with our sins at the cross. But that wasn't the end of the work. That was the beginning. Because as we accept what Jesus did for us, as we recognize him dealing with sin in our life, the things that keep us from relating vertically to God and horizontally to the people around us, the broken ways we try to solve the problems of our lives, Jesus dealt with that on the cross, gave us the Holy Spirit, and now works with us to show us how to live.

God designed this world with a plan. And as we relate to God, He's showing us how we can live, how we solve the problems of life.

[5:14] We have the Holy Spirit. We have the Word. We have each other. We have prayer as the means that God has given to show us how to live. And if we really get a hold of that, it changes the whole tone of that mission statement.

We get to glorify God. It's an honor. We exist. That in itself is a miracle. To glorify God, of course we want to glorify Him because He does all things well.

We walk closely with Him. Why? Because we're an apprenticeship to Jesus, and He's teaching us how to live. And we want to become more like Him. Why?

Because the closer we are to Jesus, the more like Him we are, the better equipped we are to handle the challenges of life. God has given us this beautiful gift in the gospel.

And as we adopt this mission statement, we're learning to live out His plan for our lives. And amazing things happen. Beautiful things happen. Now we look at our values.

[6:22] We're following Jesus. We're cultivating love for God. We're cultivating love for others. We're making disciples. We're seeking unity. All of these tie together.

The decision to follow Jesus is simply responding to His call. Jesus stood on the Sea of Galilee after talking to Peter and said, Hey guys, specifically to Peter and John, Andrew, James and John, follow me.

And I will make you fishers of men. And they said, okay. They set aside their nets and they followed Him. And they changed, literally changed the direction of human history. Because they agreed to follow Jesus.

They entered into an apprenticeship with Him. Following in His footsteps, learning how to live. That's the first step. Every one of us has to make an initial step.

For me, it was late January 1980. I decided I'm going to follow Jesus. Each of you have to stand before God and think in your own mind, Have I made this decision?

[7:24] If not, why not? Think it through. What's being offered to you is life itself. So we decide to follow Jesus.

But then it's a day-by-day decision to continue to follow Jesus. To become more like Him. To learn at His feet, as His apprentice, what does it mean to be His follower?

And what follows that, and this is the beauty of the order of these commands, because this is exactly how it appears in the Gospels. The next step is to cultivate love for God.

Cultivate it like you cultivate a garden. But if you're following Jesus, if you're His apprentice, let me tell you what happens. You can't help but love Him. Because He's so good. He cares for you so deeply.

His love is so aggressive, is the only word I can think of, relentless toward you, that your natural response is to love Him back. And how does that love get expressed?

[8:24] Certainly to Him in worship, in gratitude, but also horizontally. We start to develop the same outlook on people that the Lord has toward us, and we start loving each other.

First in the church, we talked about that last week, and then it overflows out into the world, which we're going to talk about this week. And God's plan for us is to make disciples, to invite people, just like Jesus invited Peter, James, John, Andrew, and the rest.

And I was invited. Many of you were invited. We're inviting people to come along and meet this Jesus that we know. And we're making disciples, teaching them to obey what we've learned to

obey.

Not because it's this burden that God insists that we bear, to make Him happy. No, when we obey Him, life makes sense and it works. And we're introducing people into that relationship.

And then the last step is we seek unity together. Love, individually, is the highest declaration that I'm a follower of Jesus. Unity, for us as a body, is the highest corporate expression of our relationship with Jesus.

[9:39] We're going to unpack that in a few weeks. But all of this works together. And it's an upward spiral. As we climb, as we follow Jesus, we love God more.

We start to love our brothers and sisters in Christ more. We love the people in the world more. We're compelled to make disciples. We become more united, which compels us to follow Jesus more closely.

And on and on we go all through eternity. That's what we have to look forward to. That's our future. That's the gift that has been given to us.

And what I long for more than anything else is for each one of you to embrace that personally. That this is the life that I want.

Because I can tell you with confidence that God has placed in us, he's wired us each in a way to want good things. And then we mess it up with sin.

[10:36] But we try to be good people. We want to be good spouses. We want to be good parents. We want to flourish. We want our lives to thrive. You know what God's saying to you?

I know. I made you. I'm trying to show you how to do that. And this is how that happens. That makes sense? That's where we want to be.

And that's where we want to be as a church, is going in that direction. So this morning, we're going to look specifically at cultivating love for others. But this half is loving the people outside the church, loving our neighbors.

So you should have your Bibles turned to Matthew 22 already. I'm going to pray for us. And then we'll dive in. God, I pray that you would help us to recognize your love for us.

Help us to see it. God, help us to be just awestruck by how much you love us. Breathless. Because of the depth of your love for us.

[11:41] And God, as we receive your love, as we, as our eyes are open, we see more and more clearly all the different ways you express love to us. That we would, we just couldn't help ourselves, but tell other people about how we're loved.

And we want it, we want the people around us to know what that means to be loved in the same way. Lord, I pray you would open your word to us and that you would change our lives as a consequence. Lord, I pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen. So Matthew 22, we used this last week as well. If you remember, it's the end of the Passion Week. Jesus spent the day being harassed by various Jewish leaders who were trying to catch him. And this is the last question. They're trying to expose him as a charlatan. And they fail. And the last question is, what's the greatest commandment of the law?

This is verse 36 of Matthew 22. What's the greatest question of the law? No, they're not asking to get the answer. It's a trick question. They're trying to catch him.

[12:44] But Jesus is uncatchable. Teacher, which is the great commandment of the law? And Jesus said to him, you shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart and with all of your soul and with all your mind.

This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend the whole law and the prophets.

Now in Luke chapter 10, we're not going to turn there, but in Luke chapter 10, there's another conversation Jesus has with a different person who has the same question.

This other person is also trying to catch Jesus because that's what people apparently like to do. But Jesus said the same thing. The greatest commandments are love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbor as yourself.

And this person said to Jesus, okay, but who's my neighbor? You guys know this story. Who's my neighbor? And so Jesus, as he often did, said, well, let me tell you a story.

[13:50] And so he tells a story of a man who's walking from Jerusalem to Jericho. It's through the hills of Judea. You're walking in a south easterly direction toward the Jordan River.

And because it goes through ravines and it's pretty rocky, it's a great place for bandits to hang out and attack people. Even in modern Israeli history, that road is very, very dangerous because it's a great place for ambushes to be set up.

And so this man is making his way from Jerusalem to Jericho. We don't know why, but he's attacked by bandits. They steal everything that he has. They beat him almost to death and leave him by the side of the road, helpless.

And as he's laying there bleeding, probably moaning or unconscious, along comes a Levite. Now, Levites were a tribe of the nation of Israel.

There were 12 tribes. The Levite tribe, early in Israelite history, had made a stand for God and God's reward to the Levites for their staunch support of Moses way back in the day and standing for what was right and true.

[15:02] God said, your inheritance is me. The rest of the 11 tribes, they inherited land, but the Levites inherited God.

They were the ones who served in the temple. They were the ones who helped to judge the people of Israel. You know, when I was a younger man, I used to read that and thought, what a ripoff.

The other 11 tribes get all this stuff and they just get God? Well, I've grown up a bit and I've realized the highest gift God can give is himself. So, this Levite is walking down the road.

He's a representative of God and he sees the man and he walks to the other side of the road to get away from that guy.

Okay? You're a representative of God and you walk away. And he goes on to Jericho. A little while later, along comes a priest.

[16:02] Now, you all know what a priest is. The priest stands as the one who's the mediator between the people and God. He's a holy person. His whole life is dedicated to serving God.

And, side note, a priest would know that the second highest command is love your neighbor as yourself. And he's walking and he sees the man.

Does he run over to help? No. He goes around. He avoids him. Maybe he looks the other way. And he avoids the man and goes his way.

A man dedicated his life to serving God and yet he avoids this brutally beaten man on the side of the road.

And then last comes a Samaritan. They need a little bit of history here. Samaria was the northern ten tribes. Early in the king era of Israel.

[17:03] So you had Moses, then you had judges, and then a king, first King Saul, then King David, United Kingdom, then Solomon was David's son, wealthiest time for Israel's history.

And then Solomon had his son, Rehoboam, who was not the sharpest tool in the shed. And Rehoboam split the kingdom. And it took a little while, but it wasn't long before what emerged was a southern Israel, which was true to following God or truer, and that the northern tribes, which became Samaria, totally rejected God altogether.

And as they split, both groups fell under God's judgment, but Samaria's judgment was much harsher. They eventually were exiled. They were distributed all over the world.

It's interesting. Even though they were spread all over the world, they maintained their identity.

That's a different story. But the Samaritans bred with whoever was there.

Jews were supposed to only marry Jews, but the Samaritans lost that. The Samaritans lost that.

They were half-breeds. They were treated with disrespect.

[18:24] Racism was alive and well between pure-bred Jews and the half-breeds to the north in Samaria. So, you've got a Samaritan man who's disrespected by the Jewish people walking down this road in Israel.

He's not in Samaria to the north. From Jerusalem to Jericho is inside Jewish territory. So, just by being there he's in danger.

He walks down the road and he sees this man who it's safe to assume the man who got jumped by the bandits is Jewish. They don't get along.

And yet, that man stops. He gives him water. He bandages his wounds. He takes the man and puts him on his donkey.

Carries him to an inn. Pays for the man's stay. And tells the proprietor of the inn do whatever it takes to take care of this man.

[19:26] I've got business I've got to take care of. But when I come back I will, I'll cover the bill he's taken care of. And then Jesus asks the question who is the man's neighbor?

Well, clearly the Samaritan. Obviously, right? That's the one. So, let's go back to the Levite and the priest. What were they thinking?

These are representatives of the one true God. They knew the commands. Love God, love your neighbor.

Jesus wasn't introducing something new. And yet they avoided that guy. Why? Well, there's several possibilities. Number one, both of them had jobs that required them to be ceremonially clean.

What that means was that they couldn't have any taint on them. And one of the ways that Levites and priests could be tainted was by touching a dead man. And if they touched a dead man, they were unclean and they had to make offerings.

[20:35] And there was a time, I can't remember how long, I think it was a couple weeks, where they were, they, it took time for them to be considered clean again. And so they may have looked at that guy beaten half to death and thought, oh, he's dead anyway.

But they didn't check. I don't want to be made unclean. And so they went around it. That's one, that's one explanation. The second possibility is just simply fear.

They're a dangerous, a dangerous road. The bandits aren't racist. They'll beat up anybody. They don't care. If you look prosperous, you're a target.

And so they didn't want to stop because it would put them at risk. And so they just hustled their sorry behinds right past that guy. Sorry, dude. Too bad it's you.

Better you than me. And off they went. So maybe they didn't want to be made unclean. Maybe they were, maybe they were afraid. Third possibility.

[21:37] And this is where it starts to feel more 20th century, 21st century. Maybe they just had an urgent schedule. They knew their calendar was full. They had stuff to do in Jericho or Jerusalem.

Jesus didn't say which way they were walking. And they had to get there. Time's a-wasting, buddy. I feel for you. I feel bad, but I'm in God's work. And God's on a schedule.

So I hope somebody helps you. I'll pray for you. And off they went because they were, the urgency of their life interfered with their ability to help a person in need.

The last possibility is that they counted the cost. And they realized, this is going to, this is going to cost me some money.

This guy's going to need help. He's got nothing. He's naked. And I, I, I just don't spend the money. I'm not going to do it. Hopefully somebody will come along.

[22:37] Same scenario. Be warm and be filled. And off they went on about their business. And they left that man. But the Samaritan displayed entirely different behavior.

The key thing is he showed compassion. And I want to take a minute and camp on that word compassion because it's a very, it's a hot button word for Jesus.

There was a scene where there's a, there's a Saturday, Sabbath. Jesus and the disciples are walking through a field and they're gleaning. Gleaning was a process where they were, they could get, they could take whatever they could carry out of a field.

It's actually part of the law is that, is that farmers were told, don't be 100% efficient in harvesting your fields. Leave some for the poor and the strangers.

That's there for them to take for their own use. And so, Jesus and the disciples were taking advantage of that. But it was the Sabbath. And so there were Pharisees on the edge of the field.

[23:48] This never, never ceases to blow my mind. There is a group of Pharisees who are watching. Now, if somebody's gleaning, you know, one of two things are true.

They're poor or they're from out of town. And the logical next assumption is they need help. But do the Pharisees offer that? Nope. They're just watching and then they're shaking their fingers. Your guys are, are working on the Sabbath. How dare they? And Jesus became angry and quoted from the Old Testament that God desires compassion rather than sacrifice. And then, almost immediately, they're in the synagogue and there's a guy with a withered hand and it's the Sabbath. And the guy comes up and Jesus heals him. He turns to them and says, is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath? And they wouldn't answer. And he got angry because the Pharisees lacked compassion.

[24:53] Jesus repeatedly, one of the things we see about him is that he exercised compassion. So what is compassion? Let's take a look. According to Merriam-Webster's dictionary, compassion is sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate.

alleviate it. Isn't that very helpful? Let me put it in different words. It's feeling other people's pain. Literally feeling their pain.

Not just intellectually, but really having a corresponding echo in yourself. God actually designed us to echo each other.

Did you know the humans are the greatest mimics in all the animal kingdom that God created? That's how we communicate. And emotion is one of the ways. If you don't resonate with someone else's pain, there's something wrong with you.

Seriously. You've either numbed yourself or there's some piece, there's brokenness. We were designed to resonate with other people's pain.

[26:02] That's actually empathy. Not sympathy. I was getting confused. The next step makes it compassion. So you resonate with the other person's pain, but then you're compelled to take action, to do something.

That's what Jesus wants us to do. That's what Jesus did. Isn't it? While we were dead in trespasses and sins, Christ came.

God demonstrates his own love for us in this. While we're still sinners, Christ came and died. That's compassion. It's recognizing a need and stepping into it.

And Christian compassion is regardless of personal cost, which is what the Samaritan displayed.

So we have a bias toward action and we put the needs of other people in front of our own.

Turn over to Philippians 2. All right, Philippians 2. Therefore, if there's any encouragement in Christ, if there's any consolation of love, if there's any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and, there's our word, compassion, let's stop right there.

[27:15] What Paul is, this is all rhetorical. In other words, Paul is saying, you do have encouragement in Christ. You do have the consolation of his love.

You do have fellowship with the Holy Spirit. You do have God's affection and you have received and benefited from his compassion. If these things are true, make my joy complete by being of the same mind.

So in other words, do that. Have those same, those same in your mind and together as a body. Make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in Spirit, intent on one purpose.

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind, regard one another as more important than yourselves. Boy, that's a tough pillow, especially if you're an American.

We pride ourselves on our pride. but we need to really consider that other people, we need to have that attitude that this blessing that I have, I think you're more deserving of it.

[28:22] Let me share. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind, regard one another as more important than yourselves. Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

Have this attitude in yourselves, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped. In other words, Jesus gave up heaven for you, for me.

That should be our attitude as we serve one another. He existed in the form of God to, but, lost my place. Although he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be

grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a bond servant.

So he went from the highest to the lowest, and being made in the likeness of men, being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross.

That's our standard. That's the standard by which we serve one another. That's how we care for each other. We have to cultivate love for others, for our neighbor, and have a bias toward action.

[29:43] Let me tell you a story. It's a great picture of a bias toward action. So, Kayla used to work at a coffee shop when we lived in Seattle.

She got off work about midnight. So I go in right before close, hang out with the staff and talk to them and then give Kayla a ride home. We're coming down the street, and it's like 1230 at night. We're going down this hill, and there's four or five cars parked, and there's people standing outside their cars, and we realize they're looking at a man who's laying on his face in the street.

Sound familiar? And so, we pulled over, and I watched people, and nobody's moving. They're all standing by their car watching this guy. So Kayla and I jumped out of the car, ran over.

This is kind of a funny story. Poor guy. He was absolutely drunk. It was a really steep hill, and his head got ahead of his feet, and he face-planted into the street and knocked himself out.

[30:46] Now, I'm sure what was going through everybody's mind was the same thing that was going through my mind. What if this guy's dead? I don't even know what to do. I don't want to do CPR.

That would be gross. But, but Kayla and I got out, he came to, got him in the car, he didn't want to go to the hospital, he took him home. But that's a bias toward action.

Why did all those other people look? I don't know. They stopped. But they didn't act. What was interesting is when Kayla and I acted, then people came around.

Which, side note, be that first person because I guarantee you you won't be the last. Other people will come and will be a part of what's happening. But we have to have a bias toward action to move toward people.

So here's what I want, what I want to wrap up with this morning is to look at what does it mean for us in the 21st century in Dubuque, Iowa to be a good neighbor, to be the good Samaritan.

[31:52] And first of all, I want to, I want to address that by, by addressing what I call the elephant in the room. we need to honestly assess ourselves.

This isn't for me to assess you or you to assess me. This is a look in the mirror before God. Am I willing to do that? Am I willing to help somebody that I see that's in need?

And be honest. Be honest with yourself. Be honest before God. And if you're not, make that, make that a focal point of prayer.

To ask God to change your heart for you to recognize the sacrifice that was made for you and for him to change your heart to be willing to make that sacrifice for others, to be compassionate.

That's why when we wrote these values, the word, the verb in this value is cultivating love for others. It's stirring it up. It's nourishing it.

[32:56] It's helping it to bear fruit. And for some of us, that's a hard thing. We may think I don't have the capacity or the means. All I'm asking you at this point is to think, am I willing?

Am I willing to be somebody who is a good neighbor like the Good Samaritan was? Now let's look at ourselves through the lens of the Levite and the priest in the story of the Good Samaritan.

the first thing that might keep us out of the way is wanting to look after our own personal purity. I'm going to stop there for a second because I didn't put a point in here that I needed.

I'm going to back up. Am I willing to be available? The next thing that I encourage you to do is start asking God to open your eyes, to make you aware of what's going on around you.

Put your antennas up and be scanning the room around you wherever you are. Look for people's emotional state. Look for people in need. Sometimes it's obvious like the guy that Kayla and I saw that was prone on the side of the street.

[34:11] That's pretty obvious. Doesn't take a rocket science to figure that one out. But sometimes it's somebody who's down or somebody who's up and you're just curious why because people like to share their joys as well. But we need to be aware of the people around us.

And it's not just necessarily need. It's really just being aware of who's in our immediate vicinity, whether we know them or not, and just be willing to engage.

And I'll tell you, you don't have to go out of your way to do that. Do it at the grocery store. Do it at work. Do it at your kid's school. Wherever you happen to be, just be aware and pray and ask God to give you divine appointments.

I'm going to give you another example. This season that we were in Seattle, Kara and I went there specifically with the goal of acting like missionaries. And so, we were really being proactive about looking for opportunity.

So, we're on the bus one day and the bus is packed with people. I'm standing up. And by the way, I was asked a question I found very offensive. At this time, this was 10 years ago. So, I was a young guy.

[35:19] I don't think I was even 50 yet. And this young woman who's sitting there looks at me and says, would you like my seat? No. How dare you ask me that question?

How old do I look? I didn't ask my kids that. And I kept that all inside of me bottled up. But, I noticed that she was reading a book on marriage by Tim Keller.

So, I just asked her, tell me about that book. Well, and so she, we started talking about Tim Keller's view on marriage and sitting next to her was a Muslim woman who wanted to hear more about the Christian perspective on marriage.

And next to her was a Romanian woman who was older, who had her own perspective on marriage. And then Kara was there and pretty soon we've got this dialogue, didn't last very long, in the back of the bus, going through Seattle because I just asked a question.

What's that book you're reading? What do you think? That's part of being a good neighbor. It's just being aware and stepping out in courage and talking to people.

[36:30] What are things I can tell you? You may look at me and think, well, John, that's easy for you. You're an extrovert. Tell you my dirty little secret. I am not an extrovert. I learned how to approach people by overcoming an enormous amount of fear.

I thought, for sure, these people are going to think I'm weird. They're going to think I'm goofy. They're going to think whatever they're going to think. and I projected on other people all this judgmental, condemning feeling toward me if I initiated.

And you know what I discovered? It simply isn't true. It's not. People are great. And the once in a blue moon you get somebody who's rude, you just walk away.

It is what it is. And you figure, they must have a problem and we can probably pray for them. But my experience has been if you take initiative, people want to talk. People want to be seen.

Do it. You might make a new friend. You might discover an opportunity to care for somebody or for them to care for you. You just never know. But we have got to be willing to be compassionate and then we have to take initiative.

[37:40] We have to be scanning our environment to know what's going on around us and to step into those opportunities because they are literally everywhere. A week and a half ago, right before I went to Colorado, I was over at Charlotte's to study.

And I started talking to this couple. He's Baptist. She's Catholic. And what started as a I was helping them find free parking downtown turned into an hour and a half conversation.

At the end of which, I got to reinforce to this woman the gospel message that her son has been giving her because he got saved through a campus ministry at Loras this year.

How cool is that? I didn't get any studying done, but that's okay. But you just have to be engaging. And what was the need?

The guy had to feed quarters to a meter and I knew her parking's free. And I just shared that with him. Do those types of things. So, be willing. Have your antennas on up. Be looking.

[38:45] Now that's where we come back to think about the Levite and the priest. I don't want to be viewed as unclean. I don't want to be made unclean if this guy's dead.

How often do we think that? I don't want to be seen with this guy. He's drunk. I don't want to be seen with this person. They're smelly. I don't want to be seen with this person. They have purple

hair.

Or snake bites. I talked to a girl last week who had snake bites or there are rods under your lip with fangs hanging down. I don't know how she talked. It was really distracting because I'm watching. How do you do that? But we're afraid of being judged. Don't worry about your personal purity. Step in and engage with those people.

Don't be afraid. Remember that was the second possible motive for those guys going around of being mugged? Don't be afraid. God has your back. He gives us these divine appointments.

[39:45] That's why they're called divine appointments. Step into them. Trust God. Remember what Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. Not my will, but yours be done. Make that your prayer as you embrace fear and go forward to care for people.

Create margin in your life. This is key. I'm going to end with this. You need to create margin in your life. What do I mean by that? One of the things that I learned was I was legitimately too busy to engage with people.

that I didn't have enough money because I was spending up to the limit of my income every two weeks or whatever it was.

So what we learned, Kara and I learned, is that we need to create margin. We created space in our calendar. We created space in our budget. So now I've got money.

I've got time. So for example, with that couple in Charlotte's, I can spare an hour and a half to share the gospel with somebody and to talk with them and establish a friendship.

[40:53] If someone's got a need, I can afford to give them need, to meet their need. I'm able to do that. I want to encourage you to create margin in your life. Look where you can set aside some money, set aside some time, and then ask God, hey God, these are your resources.

Show me how to use them. Help me give them away. You won't have to look very long. But we need to have that mindset that we're setting aside money so that we can care for people, set aside time.

The other thing is, we do this in community. You're not on your own. With those in San Antonio, I picked up a couple that were down in their luck, that were in their early 20s, and I wanted to invite them to our house and our small group, which was meeting that night, said, absolutely not.

Are you in your mind? And they reinforced what Kara said of this is, there is a limit to care and inviting this couple you don't know into your home is not the best option.

How about if we all pool our resources and we get them a hotel room? And so that's what our small group did. As a community, we serve this young couple. And everybody got involved in helping them out.

[42:10] That's how we serve together. Finally, be in prayer. Asking God to give you opportunity to speak through you, to help you know what to do that's appropriate.

And what's not appropriate? You've got limits. God knows that. But be willing to step in. That is loving your neighbor.

And when we do that, people want to know more. 1 Peter 3.15, sanctify Christ as Lord of your hearts, always being prepared to make a defense for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.

You take that initiative to be the good Samaritan, and you're going to be asked, why? That's the other way you prep. Have an answer. Because what Jesus did for me, I'm doing this for you.

Can I tell you about him? Let's pray. God, it's amazing to me that we get to be your hands and feet to the hurting people around us.

[43:14] That we get to share your love. We get to share what it means to have a personal relationship with you. And we get to invite people to follow you as we follow you.

Lord, I pray for us as a body, that first, that we would love each other well, and then from there, that we would learn to love the people, our neighbors around us in Dubuque well. That there would be a distinctive Jesus flavor to the way that we go into the world.

The smell of life, that perfume that permeates every place we go because we're bringing you with us. Help us to be people who cultivate love of others and then live it out.

I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.