

The Care of Souls

A New Life of Spirit Led Ministry to Others

The people we pass every day on the streets will outlast the Grand Canyon and are of infinitely more worth than any governmental structure. How are we to handle them, especially when they come to us for ministry? Some are obviously stamped “Fragile, Handle with Care.” Others have their secret life hidden further from sight. We can easily be like bulls in a china shop, if we don’t take care with souls.

"So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." Matthew 7:12 ESV

Let “the Rule” Rule

Try as we might we will never be able to improve on this saying of the Lord. His Golden Rule could easily guide all of our efforts to minister to others. Just put yourself in their place and imagine how you would like to be treated. Imagine what you would be feeling; how you might be acting out; how you would be hoping that someone out there could sympathize and understand. Imagine how much an undeserved gesture of kindness or gentleness would mean to you. Would you want tender comfort? Or the truth kindly, but honestly spoken? Would you be grateful for anyone who could sense your pain? Or lift your spirits?



Without a doubt the Golden Rule should rule! But being the kind of folks that we are, we need clarification points to pin to our conscience so that we will recognize the moment when it is upon us. We are so secretly good at flipping the rule: expecting others to treat us as we want them to! Jesus never gave us permission to go at life that way. I have to treat them as I would want to be treated, but they are free to treat me however they like—I still have to treat them by the Rule. So, let’s resolve right at the beginning that we are going to live by the Lord’s Rule even if others don’t! Now for some points of further clarification.

Caring for Souls

Caring for souls primarily means taking care of their hearts. You can feed a hungry homeless person a great meal, but if you treat them with disrespect, they will walk out emptier than when they came in. Similarly, you can minister to a hurting believer through prayers that have you both in tears, but if you tell others their secret, they will wish they never knew you. Here’s a truth you can take to the bank: If the person needing ministry knew how to take care of their own heart, they wouldn’t need you to minister to them. That’s why we have to take such care with them. Their heart is what the Lord is after. Their heart is where He wants to dwell. Their heart is the key to all the other issues in their life.



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Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life. Proverbs 4:23 NKJV

To care for others at the level of taking care of their hearts, means that we will have to attend to the needs of our own heart in the process. Jesus said that we should love others as we love ourselves. This carries a subtle inference that the proper love of self is necessary for the proper love of others: We will love them as (to the extent that) we love ourselves. If accepting, forgiving and loving yourself as God loves you is hard for you, don't you imagine that hardness against yourself will get in the way of accepting, forgiving and loving others? Indeed it does! There is real help for this: please see [Love Thyself!](#) at our website for healing, [Healing Streams](#).

In the meantime, focus on this: the way that Jesus loves us is what we want to pass on to others. His love is what it's all about. This means that we will have to get very good (as we go along) at receiving His mercy and love, so that we will keep having a good supply of it to share with others. As you go over the following three areas, try to recall the ways that the Lord has gone before you, preparing you to care for others by showing you His comfort, confidence and courtesy.

A. Giving Comfort

One of the easiest things to do for others and certainly one of the most meaningful is to give comfort. As long as you keep in mind that giving comfort is not fixing them or fixing their situation, you will do well and you will be able to do it without getting stressed up. The problem comes when we just can't bear to see them suffering either so much or for so long. That's when we may succumb to the temptation to rescue them, putting the too-heavy burden of their life on our frail shoulders. Always remember that there is only One Person who is fully qualified to do that. Look to see the part you can do (with His grace helping you) and leave the really heavy lifting to Jesus.

Job's friends are a classic example of people who started out giving comfort, but later gave in to the temptation to fix the problem which they mistakenly took to be Job himself. As long as they sat with him in silence sharing his pain, they did well. Moreover, there was nothing back-breaking about the assignment. It comes naturally to us to "weep with those who weep." They blew it, however, when they lost patience both with Job (who was becoming a pill) and with the Lord (who wasn't acting fast enough to resolve things). If all you can think to do is commiserate with and befriend the hurting person, that is all you need to do. Beyond this, it often helps to remember how the Lord brought genuine comfort to you in a similar situation and see if that shows you some further part you can play.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 ESV

B. Guarding Confidence

It is safe to say that no one will have any confidence in us if we cannot keep a confidence that they share with us. Don't think just in terms of secrets that may be shared in confessional

moments. These certainly must be guarded with the utmost concern for their privacy. However, there are many things of an intimate nature that may come to our attention when ministering to others: the way they look or how they behave; the way their house looks; their family relationships or financial situation. Whatever comfort the Lord may give them through us will be stripped away if we don't guard these privileged glimpses into their lives.

People who are suffering pain or lack are already humbled and vulnerable if they have sought others out for help. In a very real sense they are standing before us with their "naked need" exposed. Nakedness in scripture represents that which would give us shame if openly displayed. Think of Adam and Eve instinctively reaching for those fig leaves. Paul wrote that just as we treat our "unpresentable parts" with greater modesty, so in the Body of Christ we are meant to clothe the weaker members with greater honor, taking care to guard their dignity. Furthermore, it seems that the Lord took a very dim view of Noah's son who exposed his father's "nakedness"—even though Noah had behaved in a disreputable way. When in doubt, keep quiet about it.

Never repeat what you are told and you will come to no harm; whether to friend or foe, do not talk about it, unless it would be sinful not to, do not reveal it; you would be heard out, then mistrusted, and in due course you would be hated. Have you heard something? Let it die with you. Courage! It will not burst you!

Ecclesiasticus 19:7-10 TJB (the Apocrypha)

C. Genuine Courtesy

The rules of etiquette and the traditional courtesies originated as ways for showing respect to others. They still work. Key among these is the willingness to take the time to look people in the eyes, to listen carefully to what they are saying and to share empathetically with their plight. This goes a long way towards helping them. Not only does it enable you to assess their situation more accurately (so that you can give better care), but it immediately gives them the comfort of being treated with dignity, as someone who is worth your time. The care of souls and an assembly line approach to solving human problems are completely incompatible! If you put people on the clock they always know it, and feel diminished. It is a breach of common courtesy.

No one exhibited the divine grace that lies within genuine courtesy better than [St. Francis of Assisi](#). Be sure to read about him when you have time and if you don't have time, make time. He was called "the mirror of perfection" in his day—the medieval world marveled at the ways Jesus shined out through his every word or deed. He made it a point of personal honor never to meet anyone who was poorer than himself. This kept his brother monks busy finding better things for him to wear because he was forever exchanging his garments with every beggar he met. Let that image penetrate you: The heart of courtesy is to treat other souls as if they matter more to you than your own immediate comfort.

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Philipians 2:1-4 ESV



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More to Explore

[The Art of Listening](#) Hearing what people say is one thing. Really listening is something else entirely. What turns listening into an art form is learning how to juggle listening to others and listening for the Lord at the same time. Listen well enough to others and you will more easily hear from the Lord. These simple rules and visual images will help put you on track, but only practice makes perfect.

[Inner Healing and Deliverance](#) Basic Discipleship enables us to prune the bad fruit off of our spiritual tree by calling on Jesus in any moment of need. Inner Healing and Deliverance are needed to pull out our deeply buried “root” issues. We all have them. They are unresolved stuff still stuck in us that produce bumper crops of bad attitudes and actions. “Where’s there’s fruit, there’s a root.” The great thing is that once you deal with the root, a lot a bad fruit goes away.

Free Downloads

[pdf Doing Ministry in the Spirit \(eBook\)](#)

Scriptures on Caring

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.
Ephesians 4:32 ESV

Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness that God requires. James 1:19-20
ESV

Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. 1 Peter 3:8 ESV

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For over a decade Steve Evans and [Healing Streams](#) have been helping people recover inner peace and freedom through the free eCourse for healing, [Matters of the Heart](#). Through Forerunners4Him he has been showing how we can be saved for heaven and teaching the way to live a Spirit-filled life on earth. Go now to receive a completely free primer, [Getting to Heaven](#) and/or an introduction to [Living in the Spirit](#) at our website.



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