

Week 2 – Making Room for People

How was your week? Busy?

For many of us ---

Slide 1: It is a period in life when you are responsible for your well-being and the well-being of many others.

And this single sentence creates tension! I read that the number one reason moms stress out is not their kids; it is their husbands.

In this series, we are exploring stories from the life of someone who consistently managed to fit all the rocks in the jar because they were good at first putting the big rocks in. Who am I talking about?

Surprise, surprise: Jesus

Slide 2:

In John 10:10, Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

When He refers to "they," He's talking about you and me. Jesus taught us how to live a rich, full life and showed us

through his actions. This series focuses on what He did and how He lived rather than just talking about what He said. Our next big rock is this: Jesus' life was all about people.

People matter to Jesus, and you matter to Jesus. The next rock is people.

The two most powerful and meaningful experiences in life are achievement and connection. Most of what vies for our attention and directs our innermost desires is based on achieving or connecting. Achievement involves our successes, such as advancing in our careers, making significant sales, completing projects, winning contests, pursuing career growth, reaching financial milestones, and achieving our goals.

The old saying goes, "Nobody on their deathbed looks back on their life and wishes they'd spent more time at the office." People who prioritize connecting with others, even if not highly focused on achievement, often find life fulfilling. If I make room for achieving without making room for connecting, I will not find completeness. But if I make room for connecting, even if I never achieve much, I still have a great shot at a fulfilling life.

And indeed, as a church, we need to make room for people. A healthy church has new families every week. Last week, two new families attended our Discover Local new member class. A healthy church sees several people weekly looking for a new church home, wanting connection and a more profound, meaningful experience in life. People want to connect with other people.

We were created for relationships. In the beginning, God said it was not good for us to be alone (Genesis 2:18).

Slide Three:

¹⁸The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”

God created relationships so that we can learn, grow, and experience the connection He wants to have with us. Humans are meant to connect and not be alone. The desire to relate to others, belong to a group, and be accepted by a community is a universal longing. Deep down inside, in our DNA, we are made for relationships. These realities are not accidental but are part of how God hard-wired us.

Now listen to this. We were designed with enough independence to function and maintain ourselves but

not to think we don't need anyone around us. And Jesus not only knew this; he lived it and demonstrated it to us. The ultimate gesture of His Lordship was to be with us—being fully God and fully man, without sin. This is what Paul said:

Slide 4:

Philippians 2

⁵ You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

**⁶ Though he was God,^[a]
he did not think of equality with God
as something to cling to.**

**⁷ Instead, he gave up his divine privileges^[b];
he took the humble position of a slave^[c]
and was born as a human being.**

When he appeared in human form,^[d]

**⁸ he humbled himself in obedience to God
and died a criminal's death on a cross.**

Jesus loved asking questions. His questions constantly challenged the usual way of thinking and the norms of society. He wanted people to look at things from a different angle and see things in a new light. He always

pointed people to the Father and asked what it meant to make room for people.

For example, in Luke 10:26, he asks the lawyer, "What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?" He is getting the lawyer to think about what he understands about the law and go beyond the law to the heart of the law: love God and love people.

So, let's look at it.

Slide 5-9:

Luke 10

The Most Important Commandment

25 One day an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus by asking him this question: "Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?"

26 Jesus replied, "What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?"

27 The man answered, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.' And, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

28 “Right!” Jesus told him. “Do this and you will live!”

Parable of the Good Samaritan

29 The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

30 Jesus replied with a story: “A Jewish man was traveling from Jerusalem down to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road.

31 “By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. 32 A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side.

33 “Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. 34 Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. 35 The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, ‘Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I’ll pay you the next time I’m here.’

36 “Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?” Jesus asked.

37 The man replied, “The one who showed him mercy.”

Then Jesus said, “Yes, now go and do the same.”

I always thought the point of this story was the importance of humbly serving others. It is true, but there is more to the story.

The more I think about this story, the more I am convinced that Jesus wasn't just answering and illustrating the question – he wanted to reorder his heart. Jesus wants to reorder your heart, rearrange the rocks, and set aside the small things for the big things to grow.

What matters most to Jesus? HIS FATHER and people.

Another way to say it? **Slide 10: God is crazy about you.**

Here are a couple of key points coming from this passage:

Slide 11:

1. Love doesn't have any limits.

The Good Samaritan story is about showing love and compassion to everyone, no matter where they come from. I appreciate how Jesus cuts straight to the heart here. The religious leaders, especially the Pharisees, were prominent in following the Mosaic Law to the letter. This person was educated in both the law and oral law writings. He was well-versed in the religion of pious sameness.

They believed sticking strictly to the law was vital to staying holy and pleasing God. This meant following dietary laws, observing Sabbath rules, and adhering to rituals for purity. To ensure they followed the Mosaic Law perfectly, the Pharisees devised some extra rules and interpretations called the "Oral Torah—oral law." These were meant to act like a protective fence around the written law, making breaking any of its rules practically impossible. They had detailed instructions for keeping the Sabbath, figuring out what counted as work, and staying ritually pure.

These actions burden the people. The religious big shots kept piling on more and more rules, making life challenging for regular folks. Jesus called them out, saying, "They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put

them on other people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. (*Matthew 23:4*).”

Do you want to know what gets Jesus going? Be a religious hypocrite.

A scripture that comes to mind, Let's hear from

Slide 12: I John 3: 16

"We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters."

Let's start by comparing those who kept going and the person who stopped. Let's see what they did versus what he did.

Slide 13:

31 “By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. 32 A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side.

This part of the story discusses how the priest and Levite didn't help the injured man, while the Samaritan did. In Jewish society, a priest was a religious leader

responsible for performing sacrifices and rituals and maintaining the temple. They were considered highly pious and were expected to follow the laws and teachings of the laws—known as the Torah. *Follow the Torah, and you will live; not follow the Torah, and you will die.*

The priest could have helped the injured man but ignored the situation by crossing to the other side of the road. This might have been due to concerns about ritual purity, fear of robbers, or suspicion of a trap. The temple assistant, the Levite, had a similar response. Jesus says that knowing the right thing to do is not enough; you must live it out. Then Jesus explains what the Samaritan did for the man.

Slide 14

“Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him.” Verse 33.

Jesus then stresses to the religious leader who his neighbor is—a despised Samaritan man having compassion for someone in trouble. Imagine you’re in a tough spot, like broken down on the side of the road, and some people you expect to help you—say, a community

leader or someone of importance—walk by and ignore you. Then, someone you'd least expect, maybe someone from a different background or even a group you don't get along with, stops and goes out of their way to help you. This person not only helps you but takes care of everything you need.

In Jesus' story, the Samaritan was that “unexpected helper.” Back then, Samaritans and Jews didn't get along at all. By making a Samaritan “the good neighbor” who showed compassion and kindness, Jesus taught that true love and kindness go beyond our usual boundaries and biases. He said that our actions, not our status or background, define who we are and how we should treat others.

Slide 15: Compassion and being a good neighbor should have no limits—helping anyone in need is what matters.

Our second point:

Slide 16:

2. Compassion in Action

Slide 17:

34 Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them.

Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. 35 The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, ‘Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I’ll pay you the next time I’m here.’

We need more than beliefs about kindness and mercy; we must put these beliefs into practice. The Samaritan’s actions—tending to wounds, providing transportation, and ensuring further care—demonstrate that genuine compassion involves demonstrating tangible, selfless acts.

"The Choice: Embrace the Possible" by Dr. Edith Eva Eger showcases compassion in action from a non-religious leader. Dr. Eger, a Holocaust survivor and clinical psychologist, shares her transformative journey of forgiveness and mercy.

When Dr. Eger was just sixteen, her family was sent to Auschwitz. She went through terrible experiences, including losing her parents and enduring severe physical and emotional trauma. Despite all this, she managed to hold onto her humanity and compassion. There's a moment in the book when she must dance for Dr. Josef Mengele, the infamous Nazi officer known as

the "Angel of Death." Instead of resisting fear and hatred, she used her love for dance to survive and find hope.

Dr. Eger came to the United States after the war and became a psychologist. She helps people heal from trauma in a caring way. In her book, she tells a moving story about a Vietnam veteran with severe PTSD. Instead of just treating his symptoms, Dr. Eger understood his pain and helped him work through and heal his psychological wounds.

When Jesus asks who acted as a neighbor to the injured man, the lawyer answers, "The one who showed mercy."

Let's read it:

Slide 18:

36 "Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?" Jesus asked.

37 The man replied, "The one who showed him mercy."

Then Jesus said, "Yes, now go and do the same."

This leads to our third point:

Slide 19:

3. Redefining Neighborliness

The message from Jesus to "go and do likewise" transforms the definition of a good neighbor. It calls for showing kindness and mercy to anyone in need, regardless of background or past. Do you know you have God helping you in this? He prompts you. He sends you. He allows you to be a good neighbor.

Jesus said, 'Now go and do the same.' I understand your concerns about your time, priorities, and the inconvenience of helping others. I also appreciate the level of indifference and the tension it brings you as you think about having to help someone. They might disagree with you politically, their lifestyle might be different, and some might not like you. It could be a co-worker, neighbor, or a homeless person wasting your day asking for a handout.

The Samaritan offered time and attention, provided for the need, sacrificed his money, and partnered with someone. Two is better than one. You cover a lot more ground when we do it together.

Here is the truth: Don't be a bystander.

Application

So here we go –

When we talk about making room for people today, we're not just talking about people in general, though people are critical. We believe everybody matters to God. And we're also not just talking about family and friends today, though family and friends are vital, too. We're talking about making room for people who are not a lot like us.

So, I need to ask a question. **Slide 20:** “Are you a bystander, or are you a do likewise?”

Every day, we can engage where God has already been. We often think we bring God, but God brings us into His world, His space, asking us to get uncomfortable.

I want you to see something here ... read how the religious person responded to Jesus after Jesus said,

Slide 21:

36 “Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?” Jesus asked.

37 The man replied, “The one who showed him mercy.”

Then Jesus said, “Yes, now go and do the same.”

The man would not say Samaritan. This one statement reveals the heart.

Jesus made the man uncomfortable. Wow!

Yes. Some people make us uncomfortable. Some people irritate us. And some people have hurt us deeply. We often forget the Jewish people hated the Samaritan people. They were enemies. It was mutual. Yet, Jesus uses the story to create a response in the religious leader's heart to decide what kind of man he should be—a man like the Samaritan who sees a need despite the background, race, ideology, whatever. Or be a bystander and ignore the fact that all people matter to God.

One more thing: The Samaritan was deeply invested in people.

Jesus uses the word *splagna*. The word compassion in the original Greek language of the New Testament comes from the word *splagna*.

Slide 22:

33 “Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him

"Splagna" literally means 'guts.' Remember the term onomatopoeia from English class - a word that sounds like its meaning? "Splagna" sounds like your guts, right? Have you ever felt something so deeply it hit you in the gut? Maybe you heard some tragic news, or someone hurt you deeply, like something happened to a child or loved one, and you could feel it deep down inside, right?

The Samaritan felt it in his gut. This is why we, as a church, use the words "move and love" in our mission statement. We move people to love like Jesus.

We want to feel the message of Jesus Christ in our gut.

Conclusion

Last week, while my friend Bethany and I were binge-watching a show and the boys were upstairs, our elderly neighbor called us late at night. Our next-door neighbor had fallen in the shower and couldn't get up. He had been battling cancer and struggling with his health for over a year. Our oldest, Bauer, has regularly visited our neighbor, so we have a good relationship with the family. Bauer and I went over to the house and helped. Here is the thing: we have only been in the neighborhood for two

years. This means other people have been longer, and the family has called us. That says a lot about my family, being neighborly, and being available.

People matter.

People matter.

So here is the challenge:

Since people matter, will you be “a good neighbor” --- good neighbor in the subdivision, your work, and your community, and find ways to be present and experience the phone call? Who will call you to help in a time of need?

Begin with prayer. If you make yourself available to be present and help others, God will allow you to share His love and make an impact, and God will use that opportunity to change someone’s eternity.

Make Room.