

**Subject (series) “The Caring Church” – Part 3**

**Scripture Reading: Acts 2:41-47**

**Part 1**

- I. **It Starts With the Heart of Our Father**
- II. **Care Starts Early**
- III. **How Is the Church to Know?**
- IV. **Where Does Care Come From?**
- V. **Stop, Look and Reach Out**
- VI. **Changed by What You See**
- VII. **The Search Continues**

**Part 2**

**Subject: “Broken to Be Poured Out!”**

**Introduction:** The New Testament church is a suffering church.

The ministry of *care* can only be realized by passing through the doorway of brokenness.

- I. **Is a Ramp Enough?**

**Meet Mary.** Her face is bruised, especially around the eyes.

Then **Martha** comes up the ramp at the side of the church with her husband in a wheelchair.

- II. **What Do Believers See?**

A look around many churches today reveals a group of people doing reasonably well.

How would Jesus profile the person who is not attending your church?

- III. **Can We See Jesus Hurting?**

How we view the person not going to church depends on how we see Jesus.

What does the Savior look like to church people?

**Part 3 – Last Week:** (3) things and I’m through:

- I. **What Is Your Picture of Christ?**

**Isaiah** illustrates the suffering Christ graphically in chapters 52 and 53 of his prophecy.

- II. **Is There Value in Caring for the Hurting?**

The examples the church follows are often the opposite of the examples Christ left us.

Instead of following Him to the afflicted, we rush to the unaffected.

When we should follow Christ to the prisoner, we parade the privileged.

We have it all backwards.

Besides developing a guiding vision for *care* (ch. 2), one of the strategic steps for a church to take is to list its core values.

- **Core values** are the most important ones held by the church.
- **Core values** are not developed overnight; they are not the product of a late-night meeting of a single board or committee.
- **Core values** are actually the reflection of the existing values of the church.
- **Core values** in the church incorporate those priorities the church is currently developing.

Displaying its foremost ideals, the **core values** of a church state clearly and consistently what the church holds most dear.

A church's very existence is dependent on how it *cares*.

### III. **How Can the Church Minister With Care?**

Look at **Mary**, **Martha**, and **Martha's** husband.

The congregation rises at the end of the sermon, and a woman walks up the aisle.

The people have their heads bowed in meditation at the request of the pastor, and a believer named **Sarah** moves next to **Mary**.

**Mary** looks up and sees tears streaming down **Sarah's** face.

**Sarah** has read the story in **Mary's** eyes; she knows why **Mary's** clothes are long—they are hiding her bruises.

**Sarah** too has fought with a husband blinded by rage.

There is another movement, and Martha looks to her left.

Amazingly, **three men**, old friends of her husband's, have come to pray with him.

**Now for tonight:**

**Part 4**

**Subject: "A House for the Homeless!"**

When the church has no system for *caring*, the body is without wholeness.

The needy hear only *words* and never experience *actions*.

While the members of the body can become disjointed and dislocated, *care* is the sinew that holds the various parts together.

No matter how strong the “parts” of the system of the church are, no matter how gifted “individuals” may be, with no planned venue for *care* and *compassion*, the body is dysfunctional and dismembered.

- Feelings and sentimentality must be turned into structure.
- Care must be structured so that it relates (connects) to every person in the church.

(4) things and I'm through:

## I. **Bringing Care Home**

Everyone knows about the *homeless*.

They are defined as a group in society without a house, an apartment, or a place to live. They wander in cities and in rural America.

They live *outdoors* mostly—under highway overpasses, in alleys and in temporary community shelters.

- They have no money and no food.
- They move through our roads, villages, towns, cities, and highways, primarily unnoticed until certain times of the year.

For some people, Thanksgiving is more meaningful if they help feed the homeless.

Other holidays stir up memories of the less fortunate.

Some make feeding the homeless a regular, weekly, or even daily part of their lives.

A heroic *few* have dedicated their lives to caring for the homeless.

**Meanwhile**, back at the church on the corner.

Even if the church feeds the needy every day, how many saints within the church have a place in their hearts for those with nowhere to live?

Few churches do more than give the homeless a passing thought between holidays.

Even in churches that benevolently reach the less fortunate, the “fabric of the church” is not significantly sewn with a “ministry of *care*” to those who are on the outside looking in.

The irony is that if you ask the average churchgoer, "*Do you care about those in society who are without—without food, without shelter, without clothing?*" the resounding, sincere answer will be, "**Yes!**"

It will be a sincere answer, uttered from pure hearts.

- But what causes the compassion within that answer to leave the homeless wandering outside?
- What drags like an anchor on the spiritual bottom of most churches to keep them from moving?
- What does it take to propel a local church past intentions, all the way to intervention?

A church gives only what it possesses.

The problem of reaching the *homeless* must begin with reaching the *abandoned* within the church. Ironically, many of the *homeless* in the church would tell you they have a home.

Yet, many will tell you that they do not feel at home in their churches.

Many *homeless* people on the streets, without four walls and a roof over their heads, feel more of a “sense of home” than people who have the walls, the roof, the heat, the air-conditioning, and plenty of food on the table.

It may be that the church does not reach out more to the needy because it has not yet learned how to meet its own needs.

The message of this series is still about caring for the *searching*, the *hurting* and the *hungry*.

The focus will not suddenly change and zero in on the church *ministering* to itself.

**But** what message does the church have to give to the *homeless* if empty, hopeless, and *homeless* people are found within the local body of believers?

What gifts can they bring, what difference can they make, when people who attend do not feel that the church is a home and a haven for them?

- Reaching one group is directly related to reaching the other.

How well you know the suffering and hurting determines how well you will minister to them—both inside and outside the church.

- How well do you know the *homeless* in your church?

Sporadic attendance, occasional participation and lack of enthusiasm may indicate that they feel like outsiders, although they have attended the church for years.

You may say, "*They need to become more involved*," "*They only get out of church what they put in*," or "*They know we're here for them*," but the fact remains that many in our sanctuaries feel they have been left on the outside.

## II. **Begin at Home**

### Love for the Homeless Begins at Home

- Ministry is an extension of the condition of the church.
- A church ministers out of the riches of its relationship with Christ.
- A church also ministers out of the relationship of its members to each other.

Proclaiming Christ was never intended by the heavenly Father to be something that only He does.

It is not merely something people in the church do as individuals.

A Christian's personal walk with the Lord may be wonderful, but *ministry* is not something done by individuals in isolation from others in the church.

The greatest battles of *ministry* are won by an army of believers, not by individuals.

A church is not fully *ministering* if the activities of ministry representing that local body are only done by a handful of people.

*Ministry* flows from fellowship; *care* is created by community.

Help comes from the church home of the family of God.

Christ *ministered* first to His disciples, then to the crowds around them.

He did not stop for the blind before he instructed the men who followed Him.

Christ led the disciples, conversing with them, eating with them, resting with them, and experiencing life with them.

They felt at home with the Master; they didn't just show up for a meeting once a week.

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Love for one another in the fellowship of the church is a great rehearsal for loving the world.

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Many in the church today have not even shown up for practice!

The pastor works on the stage, the staff prints the tickets and faithful workers print programs.

But when it comes to the time to perform, there is no play or production.

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The church has skirted around the issue of loving one another, and as a result it is not prepared to offer love and **care** to the world.

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### III. **Bless Your House**

[Isaiah 58](#) exploded into the consciousness of the people of *Judah*.

Cry aloud, spare not; lift up your voice like a trumpet; tell My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek Me daily, and delight to know My ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and did not forsake the ordinance of their God. They ask of Me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching God ([vv. 1, 2](#)).

Through the prophet, the Lord demanded that the message be cried out and nothing held back.

But like a verdict falling on a defendant's ears in a court room, [verses 3-5](#) unmasks their pleasurable religion and reveals their lack of love.

God told them that truly serving Him meant that those in bondage would be released, those under a heavy burden would be relieved and the oppressed would be delivered ([v. 6](#)).

He challenged their personal involvement by asking if truly serving Him meant "that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh? ([vv. 6, 7](#)).

The Lord did not say, "Make sure the hungry are fed." That would have been good, but He went further. He said to feed the hungry yourself.

You may think the Lord was speaking about ministry to the people outside of Judah. However, he summarized their work by telling them to "not hide yourself from your own flesh" ([v. 7](#)).

They had failed to even take care of themselves.

Jesus said, "Whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it" ([Matthew 16:25](#)).

Of even deeper interest was His use of the word *house* in [Isaiah 58:7](#).

God did not answer their prayers, because they were not answering the cries of their own brothers and sisters.

#### IV. **Blend Work and Care Together**

Those searching for a *caring* church want to see care demonstrated within the church.

The church may advertise care, talk care, and even do acts of care for its visitors.

The searching soul, however, needs to see care in action among the people of God. The visitor asks, "Do I want to be a part of a church that treats its own people this way?"

Picture someone who is kind to everyone else but has little time for his or her own family.

You would have a hard time believing the sincerity or integrity of that person.

A strategic step for a church is to approach ministry from a team or group perspective.

Rather than just equipping individuals to do the work of the Lord, equip people to work together, with and for each other.

Members should see each other informally, outside of church, just because they care for each other.

They should ask about each other's family and share about how things are going at work.

They even need to have fun together, much as Jesus must have when He lived and walked with His family of 12 disciples.

**We will stop here for tonight...**

The Caring Church.

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This series of sermons are taken from the Book, *The Caring Church* by Oliver McMahan

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The Caring Church.