

What is Jesus Doing?

HERE'S MY CELL PHONE... CALL JESUS

Today, I had a mentoring session with a long-time Christian brother who only recently gave his whole life to the Lord and has begun to take up his cross daily and follow Him. I am always joyful when a person who identifies as Christian but is seeking true relationship with God, comes into Abundant Life Church and gets what I lovingly call “switched on”. This particular fellow, upon asking Jesus to be the Lord of His life, began praying and reading the Bible daily, seeking regular fellowship with the Body of Christ, and began meeting with me weekly as Care Pastor for Abundant Life.

After a few months of attending Abundant Life Church and our weekly Men's Bible Study, shortly after we began our weekly sessions, he revealed to me that the Lord had put the poor on his heart and he knew he wanted to do something about it. This was remarkable, he said, because he had not before been one who particularly cared about homeless or disadvantaged people one way or the other, and had, he said, been more likely to look away when confronted by, or was forced to be in the proximity of, “those types” of people on the street. As he revealed this to me, we prayed for the Lord to open a door for him to use his newfound passion. The following Saturday morning, at our weekly men's Bible study, I hooked him up with a good brother and fellow soldier of mine who goes to a different church and has a monthly Skid Row ministry where he takes volunteers to get an orientation at the Dream Center in Los Angeles and then takes them to the streets of Skid Row to bring the love of Christ, and give water, food and clothing to the people who are living there in miserable conditions.

In our meeting today he was telling me, now that he has been going to Skid Row monthly for about six months, he wants to start up a weekly meal for the homeless in Simi Valley. He is on fire and it is all Glory to God!

What is Jesus Doing?

As we were praising Jesus for the work of the Holy Spirit in my friend, I was reminded of how amazing God has revealed Himself in my life and that even though we who serve don't need validation for the work, we do often receive it through God's incredible generosity and love.

This was what the Lord brought to my mind as I remembered. At a weekly church feeding in Van Nuys, about 12 years ago, there was a regular client named Virginia. She was a sweet, disheveled and very dirty older woman who looked to be in her late 70s (but may have been younger). She was always very appreciative of the food we served, and also of the Word that was preached. When I first met her, she would always sit by herself and seemed fearful of the others, especially the homeless men. I would always try to strike up a conversation with her, and she was very kind and grateful, but closed to much interaction. Whenever I asked her if she needed anything other than the food we were serving, she would always say "no thank you" and that was pretty much all. One day, we did begin to talk and I asked her why she was so afraid to be around the others. She revealed to me that she had been raped several times on the street. When I learned of this, I made a point of introducing her to some of the other women. Over the course of about a year, she began to form friendships with a couple of other women who had had similar experiences on the streets and eventually, the three of them pooled their meager resources and were able to stay together in a local motel. As she was able now to shower and dress in privacy, Virginia began to take more pride in her appearance, and she was always clean.

Now that she was not ashamed of her condition, she began to seek out conversation with me every week. I soon learned that although things for her were much better, she was riddled with guilt because she had walked out on her family when the children were in their teens because of depression and because her husband had been abusive. She had been homeless, she said, for over thirty years.

What is Jesus Doing?

I asked her about her children. She said that they had gone to live with her sister in Indiana after she left and that a short time later her husband had died. She would call her sister twice a year to see how the kids were doing but would never tell her sister where she was or ask to speak with the kids because she was too ashamed for leaving. She lost track of her two sons and her daughter completely six years ago, she said, when her sister passed away. I asked her if she wanted to pray for her kids. At the suggestion she began to cry and was clearly terrified, but she agreed. As we prayed, the Holy Spirit came on me in power and spoke reconciliation and restoration over her relationships with her children. It was clear that Jesus wanted to give Virginia back the “years the locust had eaten”.

And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you.

- Joel 2:25

After we prayed, I asked Virginia if she knew where any of her kids had gone. She said that the last time she knew, before her sister had died, the two boys had gone to live in Texas, but her daughter had stayed in Indiana. I asked her if she wanted to speak with her children now. She said that as we were praying, the thought has burned in her mind and heart that she wanted desperately to reconnect with her daughter, the oldest child. She was in tears as she said to me that she had no idea how to reach out to her. I asked her to tell me her daughter's name and last known location. She said that the last thing she knew was that her daughter had married a man and told me his name. I tried to look him up on my cell phone and came up with a few possible numbers which I called but to no avail, as all those numbers were disconnected. I then tried her daughter's name with the man's last name. Many of the same numbers came up but one was different.

What is Jesus Doing?

I felt the Spirit on me when I called that number. I got a voicemail. It was her. I left a message saying that I was a Pastor and a friend of a woman named Virginia who had been homeless in California and that I needed to speak with her.

Virginia's daughter called me back in 5 minutes. The first thing she said to me, in fearful tones, was "Is my mother dead?" She had been home listening to my message when I called and was so shocked that it took her that 5 minutes to compose herself enough to call back. I told her, happily, that her mom was not dead, and was in fact, standing right next to me. I asked if she wanted to speak with her and she said, in tears, "Oh yes, that would be wonderful! As I handed the phone to Virginia to speak to the daughter with whom she had not been in communication for thirty years, I thought she was going to faint, so I brought her a chair and they started to talk. Here is where the Lord gave me a great gift! I got to be a witness to God's incredible generosity as Virginia's face went from abject fear to unspeakable joy in the course of 15 minutes!

As it turned out, her daughter had been actively searching for her mother since her aunt had died. She was recently divorced from her husband (who was also abusive) and was a successful business owner with a beautiful home and two kids and a beautiful extra bedroom all set up for her mother, should she ever be fortunate enough to find her. With a look of stunned happiness, Virginia handed my cell phone back to me and said that her daughter had something to say. Her daughter thanked me in tears and we prayed together, thanking the Lord for all He had done that day! Her daughter was a believer who had been praying for her mother to return! She then asked if she could make a donation to my ministry and I told her to send her offering to the Rescue Mission.

Later that very day, Virginia's daughter wired her the money to come to Fort Wayne and live with her and her children.

What is Jesus Doing?

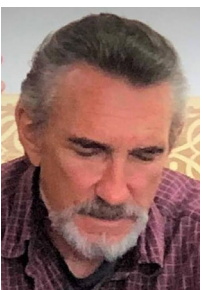
A few months later, I got a call from Virginia thanking me again for facilitating the great thing the Lord was doing and letting me know that she had been reconnected with all her children and that they understood why she had left and were in fact grateful to her for getting them to safety with their aunt before she left. They were a family again!

Anyway... I related all this to my friend who was just beginning his life of ministry to the poor to let him know that whether he gets this kind of validation from the Lord or not (and I believe that everyone who truly serves does receive it), he should always be aware that every act of love done to the poor and broken is done unto Jesus and brings Glory to God!

The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

- Matthew 25:40

What is the Lord speaking to you today? Ephesians 2:10 says that YOU are His workmanship, created IN Christ Jesus for good works that GOD has prepared beforehand that YOU should walk in them. Let us walk joyfully in those good works as God is glorified in us. THAT is what Jesus IS doing!



*With Joy unspeakable and love for you, my brethren
In Jesus' Mighty Name!*

- John Henry Raskin, Roadhouse Rabbi