

1 Peter 2:12 — Good Works, Good Will, And Good News

November 7, 2021

Good morning CrossWinds. If you are a visitor it is great to have you. My name is Kurt. I am one of the pastors. Before we get started, I want to see if you can help me? Will you help me? Be careful if you agree to that. You don't know what I am going to ask. If you said, "Yes," I have you over a barrel.

Last week, we talked about the importance of being a church that doesn't isolate itself from the culture of the people we are trying to reach with Jesus. We want to be a church that intentionally removes barriers that exist between our culture and the people we are trying to reach in our community who need to hear about Jesus. As part of that discussion, we talked about music. When you realized that we are laser focused on reaching people with Jesus, that will help you understand why we have a modern style of worship. That will help you understand why we sing hymns but often sing them in a modern way.

A few of you contacted me and you were so encouraging. You let me know that the message was helpful. Like me, you found yourself challenged by how much Paul and Timothy were willing to sacrifice of their own freedoms and of their own culture to reach people with Jesus. Many of you told me the message helped you understand why we do music the way we do. A few of you mentioned that sometimes the music feels too loud or doesn't sound like it is mixed right.

Let me give you the back story of things that happened over the past few months in worship. What many of you don't know is our sound board broke a few months ago. It was supposed to be at the repair shop for a week or two. For a

variety of reasons, that repair turned into months. Tyler, our sound guy, out of the goodness of his heart, loaned us a small sound board he owned during that time. It is harder to mix things on the smaller sound board but Tyler was super gracious and did that for free, although not having the larger sound board left him for months working with a lot less tools in his toolbox.

Last week, we finally received our old sound board back and began reprogramming it. If it sounds too loud or the mix is off for the next week or two while it is fine tuned, I ask your patience while Tyler is dialing things in. He has to dial things in for this room then fine tune everything for the online experience.

So the first thing, I am asking of you is your patience. I think we are through a difficult season for the tech guys that lasted two months. I also expect the sound will dramatically improve in the next week or two.

Secondly, I want you to thank Tyler. He is our newest staff member. He moved to small town Iowa from Fresno, California. He has done a great job patching things together during a difficult tech time. After church thank him for his hard work to pull together the technical aspect of services while he was missing the most important tool in his toolbox, the sound board.

This morning is the third week of our Vision series. In this series, Pastor Jordan and I are sharing the elders' 5-year vision for CrossWind's future. In the bulletin, you will see the seven points the elders want us to focus on as a church for the next five years. They hope that by focusing on these points we will better achieve our mission of "Reaching people with Jesus." They also believe focusing

on these seven points will help us better live out our core values, which is our unique identity as a church.

In the first week of the Vision series, we looked at point one. We want to be a church where this point is true.

1. We are tirelessly focused on reaching people with Jesus, willing to leave the 99 for the one.

The elders are calling us to become a church that has greater love for people that do not know Jesus. That week, we looked at Luke 15. In that chapter, there is one parable with three stories. It is the story of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son. The point of each of these stories is the same. God loves lost people. If God loves lost people, we need to love them too. As Jesus said in the story of the lost sheep, there is more joy in heaven over one lost person who repents than over 99 righteous people who do not need to repent. If we want to be a church that brings great joy to God, we must be a church that cares about the lost. We want to be a church that puts in the hard work and sacrifice of reaching the lost and genuinely caring about people far from God.

God celebrates when the lost are found. We need to celebrate when the lost are found. We need to be like the shepherd in this story who was willing to look all night in the cold searching for the lost sheep. The shepherd went out of his comfort zone because he cared about the lost sheep. We need to go out of our comfort zone because we care about the lost. That is what brings joy to God. That is what the elders are calling us to do.

Last week, I told you the other points of the elder's vision all build off of this first point. Last week, we moved from the topic of reaching the lost to looking at the issue of change. We looked at 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. I expect it was a very convicting sermon for you. I know it was convicting for me as I was writing it. Paul and Timothy gave up their traditions, their preferences, and even their freedoms in Christ in order to adopt the culture of the lost people they were trying to reach. Winning lost people to Christ was so important to Paul, he was willing to take on Jewish customs and traditions when around Jews. Paul was free from those Jewish traditions and customs in Christ, but Paul was willing to temporarily readopt them and submit himself to them if it would remove barriers between him and the Jews in order to share the gospel.

A particularly powerful illustration of this was Timothy. Timothy had a Gentile father. He was not circumcised as a child. Timothy obviously did not need to be circumcised to follow Jesus. He was willing to be circumcised as an adult male, and that was without Novocain, if it would help him better share Jesus with Jewish people. If getting circumcised as an adult would make his sharing the gospel message more effective with Jews, he was willing to undergo that pain. That is crazy! That is a painful sacrifice! Yet Timothy was willing make the sacrifice if it would help him better reach the Jews with Jesus.

That was a great reminder that if we are trying to reach the people of the Spirit Lake and Spencer community with the good news of Jesus, we must be willing to humble ourselves and give up our traditions, preferences, and styles in

church if they have unintentionally become a barrier to us reaching the lost in the community around us.

Let me be clear. We are not talking about giving up on the gospel. That will not change. We will always have our fingers in the text. We are talking about giving up the subtle traditions and preferences that are distancing us from the lost in our community.

This past week in our pastors' meeting, we were talking about this topic. One of the things we realized is we don't spend time on social media. Social media is not my generation. Most of us are too busy for social media. The problem is that there are a ton of lost people in the community around us who live on social media. If we are going to reach them, we need to change. We need to learn about and use social media. I am not talking about Facebook. We know Facebook is not used by young adults in their 20s. They are now onto Snapchat and TikTok. I thought TikTok was the sound of a clock. Apparently it is something young people like on the Internet. I need to learn about it if we are going to talk to young adults about the gospel in a relevant way.

This morning, we begin the third week of the vision series. We are going to look at points 3, 4, and 5 of the vision. All of them are about better loving our neighbors. If we are going to reach people with Jesus, we need to do an amazing job of loving our neighbors. We will not look at these points in strict chronological order. We will look at them as points 3, 5, and 4. Let me show you why I have chosen that order.

Point 3 is about us doing a better job of loving our closest neighbors, those who are new in the church. This point is about loving our nearest neighbors, our new church neighbors.

Point 5 is about doing a better job of loving the physical neighbors next to us. Those are the people that in God's providence were placed right next to where we live, work, and play. Everyone that is our physical neighbor is our physical neighbor for a reason. God put us next to them so we can reach them with the good news of Jesus. Reaching them with the good news of Jesus always begins by loving them. It begins by caring about them.

Point 4 is about better loving the neighbors who do not live next to us but those who live near us in our community. As a church, we want to do a great job of loving those neighbors by seeing needs in our community and meeting needs in our community.

You can see why I chose this order. They are put in ever expanding circles. Point three is about loving our neighbors closest to us in church. Point 5 is about loving the neighbors physically next to us where we live, work, and play. Point 4 is about loving neighbors in need around us in the community.

After introducing you to these points, we will look at what the Bible says about the role loving our neighbors, meeting needs, and doing good works plays in sharing the gospel.

Let's begin.

3. We always have spots for people to plug into healthy, vibrant, sermon-based Life Groups.

You will always hear me talking about Life Groups. If you are new, after Sunday morning, the first place I would love for you to connect at CrossWinds is a Life Group. If you are a Life Group leader, when you meet new people in the foyer, please invite them to your Life Group.

Some Life Groups meet on Sunday nights. Others meet throughout the week. Some Life Groups meet every week while some Life Groups meet every other week. Some Life Groups have people with children and childcare, others do not.

In Life Groups, people work through the Life Group questions found on the last page of the sermon outline. They eat together. They pray together. They become close friends that do life together.

I realize some people have been in their Life Group a long time. Some Life Groups are not interested in adding people to their group. Unfortunately, that can put new people in the CrossWinds family in a bad position. It treats them like outsiders. If new people come to CrossWinds, and there are plenty of Life Groups but there are no Life Groups ready to welcome them, that is not loving our nearest neighbors. If I was a visitor and I came to a church and nobody would let me into a Life Group at the church, I would go find a church where people cared about me enough to welcome me.

This past week I met with a newer couple at the church. They are part of a Life Group that is made up of some of the older folks at CrossWinds. These older folks invited this young couple that are new Christians into their Life Group. It is a great mix. We have older, biblically wise people having the excitement of pouring

biblical wisdom into the lives of baby Christians who are full of questions and eager to learn about Jesus. The elders want us to be a church filled with open Life Groups. We want to be a church where new people in the foyer are quickly invited into Life Groups by leaders of those groups and by those who attend those groups. We don't want anyone to feel like an outsider.

If you are not part of a Life Group, you will struggle to connect on a deeper level at CrossWinds. That is because deeper relationships are made in small groups, not in large groups. Let me give you a statistic to help you understand why Life Groups are so important. This statistic comes from the Spencer Campus. During the COVID pandemic, 50 percent of the people on the Spencer Campus who were not in a Life Group drifted away from CrossWinds and never returned. That is a devastating loss. The good news is that 90 percent of the people who were in a Life Group stayed connected to CrossWinds during the pandemic and are still actively involved today.

I can't help but think that if we were able to connect more people into Life Groups that we would have retained more of those people.

If we had to only two ministries in the church, the two we would have are Sunday morning worship and teaching and Life Groups. They are that important.

Here is Nick to tell us a little more about Life Groups.

Cedar Point Amusement Park has some of the best roller coasters in the world. Unfortunately, some people choose to spend their day at the park trying to win a goldfish. Is trying to win a goldfish bad? No. At Cedar Point Amusement Park there is something better available. Life is often a choice between good things and the best things. Where do we grow best? Life Groups. Specifically, sermon-based Life Groups. Why is that? Life groups are more than a Bible study. Bible studies are good for gaining biblical knowledge and understanding. Life Groups are where we build true community and gain biblical knowledge and

understanding. I can join a Bible study when it is convenient. I can do it without people getting to know me. I also don't need to get to know those around me. Sermon-based Life Groups study the Bible but they also care for one another, pray for one another, hold one another accountable for faithful attendance, and deal with the natural frictions that arise when people really know one another. They develop a loving bond for one another that cannot easily be broken. But why a sermon-based Life Group? A sermon-based Life Group is the lab work of applying the sermon after hearing the sermon. It is where you wrestle with how the Sunday message that is founded in God's Word and taught by your pastor connects with specifics in your life. Sermon-based Life Groups are easy to invite friends to attend. The Bible passages, sermon notes, and suggested application questions are readily available. People outside the church can watch the message online. The apostle Paul tells us all Scripture is profitable for us. We can never go wrong when we study God's Word. We also believe God guides our pastors and helps them apply God's Word in a way we need to hear. We believe studying the Bible in a group after it was explained on Sunday mornings is one of the best ways to grow in our faith.

5. We are the best neighbors our neighbors ever had. We seek to have neighborhoods so connected that people turn down promotions in order to stay where their families are so loved and supported.

Jesus said this in Mark 12:

And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." Mark 12:30–31 (ESV)

The second greatest commandment is to love our neighbors. When we read that, it is easy to forget to take this at face value and love our physical neighbors. Those are the people who are right next to where we live, work, and play.

As a church, we want to be more intentional about knowing the people who live next to us. We want to invite them over for dinner to get to know them. We want to be intentional about getting involved in community activities so we can meet people around us. As we get to know people, we want to go out of our

way to serve people. We do not want to be the people of CrossWinds Church, who only have church friends. If we only have church friends, we will not reach any of the lost people in our community because we will not know any of the lost people in our community.

We want to know the people who live next to us and talk to them across the fence line. We want to know and serve the people who work in the cubicles next to us and people who are on the exercise machines next to us at the YMCA. The better we love our neighbors, the more effectively we can share about Jesus with our neighbors.

Here is Chelsea to tell you a little bit more about our vision for neighboring.

What if Jesus was serious when he said, “Love your neighbor...”? Your actual neighbor. We want to be known for being the best neighbors anyone ever had. What does this look like? We get to know our neighbors. As they allow, we learn about them, about their families, their dreams and their aspirations. We serve them and allow them to serve us. We love unconditionally. We love even if they don’t love us back. We love even if they shut us down when we talk about Jesus. We trust God to open doors and when those doors remain closed. We may need to overlook things that annoy us because they ultimately do not matter in light of eternity. Let’s encourage each other to neighbor well and share the stories of what God is doing. We neighbor well so that our neighbors will someday ask us about the hope we have in Jesus that changed our life.

4. We are known as a church that loves on the communities it serves in tangible ways. People know us for the things we do outside the four walls of the church building.

We have talked about better loving the people who are new at church. We have talked about better loving our physical neighbors who God placed next to

where we live, work, and play. Now we are looking at better loving the neighbors in our community, especially meeting the needs in our community.

Many churches are busy with things they do inside of the church. Those things are not necessarily wrong. The problem is that we have a limited amount of time and energy. We need to make choices. We want to be known as a church that is not only involved with ourselves. We want to be a church that sees needs in our community and meets the needs in our community. We do not want to be a church where the only way you will be able to see the CrossWinds family in action is by coming to church. We want to be a church that constantly rubs shoulders with people in the community who need to meet Jesus because we are serving people in need.

In Luke 10, Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan. In the parable, Jesus stretched our understanding of what it means to be a good neighbor. In the parable, a man was traveling on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. He was robbed. He was mugged. He was left beaten on the side of the road. Two men saw him and passed by him on the side of the road. One was a priest. The other was a Levite. Those were the church people of Jesus' day. These church people were too busy on their way to and from Jerusalem doing church work that they missed the real work God had for them that day, which was stopping and meeting the need of someone in their community on the side of the road. Someone eventually stopped to help the mugged man. It was a Samaritan. Samaritans were hated by the Jews. They were despised by the Jews. The man who was hated by the Jews turned out to be the better neighbor. This teaches us

that often times it is people who are far from God, people like the Samaritan, who are doing a better job of serving their community and meeting the needs of people around us than we are. We are like the priest and the Levite, too busy doing church work to meet the needs around us, which is the real work God wants us to do. At CrossWinds, we do not want to be a church filled with Levites and priests that ignore the needs of people. We want to meet the needs of people.

Changing and inward orientation will be hard. It will be some hard conversations. We will probably challenge ministries to do less work inside the church and more work outside the church helping those in real need. At times, this will be hard, but it is the right thing to do.

Here is Teresa to tell us a little about loving our community well.

How do we want to be known in our community? How do we get to be known? These are hard questions. At CrossWinds, we want to be known for loving our communities well. That means we are selective and focused in what we do. A sustained, consistent, and loving ministry to our community gives us something for which we can be known. As individuals, we can choose to use our gifts outside the church in a variety of ways. We should be known for pitching in and helping our communities do good things wherever we can. Serving our community in a sustained and consistent way as well as a spontaneous way are important. Both require that choices must be made. In five years, we want CrossWinds Church to be known for at least one sustained and consistent way we serve our communities where we have a campus. When people think of CrossWinds we want them to think of the way we serve our area and appreciate what we are doing. We do good in our communities so that we can leverage our good reputation to help us reach people with Jesus through loving our neighbors well.

We want to become a church that reaches people with Jesus by doing a better job of loving our neighbors. This involves loving our nearest neighbors, those new in church next to us. This involves taking the time to know and serve

those God places next to where we live, work, and play. This also involves getting out of the church and meeting the real needs around us in the community.

What I would like to do for the second half of this message is look at what the Bible says about the importance of loving our neighbors and the role that plays in evangelism.

Since we don't have much time, I only want to look at two verses.

For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. 1 Peter 2:15 (ESV)

Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. 1 Peter 2:12 (ESV)

Let me give you the sermon in a nutshell. *The single greatest tool for opening hearts to hear the gospel is how we live.* As Peter said in verse 15, we will silence the critics of the Christian faith by how we live. Peter also said in verse 12 that our good works, our neighborly, will be used by God to open people's hearts to hear the gospel. Peter didn't say that it is what we speak that will make people bring glory to God. He said it is how we live that will make people bring glory to God.

Outside of the gospel message itself, the most powerful tool we have for evangelism is how we love and serve our neighbors. People do not care what you say about Jesus if it is not backed up by how you love your neighbor.

Let's begin with a little background. When Peter wrote this letter, he was writing for Christians that were scattered around the world. At the time, the world was mostly hostile to the Christian faith. Peter told people to expect hostility.

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 1 Peter 4:12 (ESV)

Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good. 1 Peter 4:19 (ESV)

Today, while we don't face great opposition to Jesus in Iowa, there are places in the United States and around the world where it is costly to be a Christian.

How do we live in the face of persecution to silence the critics and to spread the good news of Jesus? It is by devoting ourselves to good works. It is by devoting ourselves to being good neighbors.

This is the way it works. Good works lead to good will, which will open people's hearts to the good news. Living lives of good works and fantastic neighboring silences the critics of Christ and opens hearts to Christ. This idea is not original to Peter. Jesus also talked about it.

In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. Matthew 5:16 (ESV)

So we see that according to 1 Peter 2:12+15, the way we live our Christian lives, the way we love our neighbors, should have both a negative and positive impact on the people around us. Negatively, the good works that come from our lives will silence the critics of the faith. On the positive side, the good works of our lives will soften people's hearts so they can see the truth of the faith. The way we live our Christian lives should make Jesus attractive. The way we love our neighbors should make the gospel believable.

This is especially true in a hostile environment. That was the kind of environment the first-century Christians Peter wrote to were experiencing.

In 1 Peter, Peter gave a number of examples of how good works silences criticism and softens hearts to the gospel. We will only have time to look at one of

Peter's examples this morning. You will look at others tonight in your Life Group questions.

In 1 Peter 3, Paul talked about how a wife with an unbelieving husband is to use good works to silence her husband's criticism of her faith and to ultimately win him to the Christian faith.

Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct. 1 Peter 3:1–2 (ESV)

So a woman with an unbelieving husband is to win him to the faith not by her words or by nagging him to death. She is to win him to the faith by her good works, her attitude, her respectfulness toward her husband and the purity of her heart and mind. When her husband asks her what made her into such a different person that is kind, gentle, and loving, then she has an opportunity to talk about Jesus. Her good works and her transformed character silenced the criticism leveled against her and drew her husband to Jesus.

This principle does not just work in marital relationships. It works in all relationships. If we are talking about the neighbor who lives across the street, across the cubicle, or is at the exercise class with us at the YMCA, it is the good works of our lives that will silence criticism of the Christian faith and break up the hard ground of people's hearts so they can hear the good news. Remember the way this works. The good works of our lives are used to create good will, which God uses to open hearts to the good news.

Let's study 1 Peter 2:12 to learn more.

Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. 1 Peter 2:12 (ESV)

Peter began by reminding us to keep our conduct among the Gentiles, those are people who do not know Jesus, honorable or noble. The word conduct means your daily conduct. It means the way you live every day. Every day we are to live honorable lives around people. The Greek word behind the word is *kalos*. It means morally excellent, morally attractive. It means gracious. As Christians, our public behavior must be attractive to people. We should be engaging with people. We should be kind to people. People should enjoy being around us and have a positive experience with us.

We all know people who are hard to be around. We should not be relationally repulsive people. We should be relationally engaging people. Some are hard to be around because they have potty mouths and gossip. As Christians, we are not to be that way.

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.
Ephesians 4:29 (ESV)

Some people are hard to be around because they whine and complain all the time. Those kinds of words are not to be on our lips. We are to be a grateful people, not a griping people.

Do all things without grumbling or disputing... Philippians 2:14 (ESV)

Some are hard to be around because all they do is talk about themselves. We are not to be that way. We are to listen to others and take a genuine interest in others.

Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Philippians 2:4 (ESV)

When we are in a conversation, Christians are to be the type of people who look you in the eye. Christians give you their undivided attention. They do not take out their phones and check social media when you are in a conversation talking with them.

Folks, if we are going to share the good news of Jesus with people, we must have an honorable, pure, positive, other-centered character that is engaging. We must genuinely care about other people.

Our honorable character will silence the critics.

...so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. 1 Peter 2:12 (ESV)

Peter said that when they slander you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and end up glorifying God. We should expect people to say bad things about us and to assume the worst about us because we are Christians. That should not surprise us. We should expect that. There is a way to turn that negativity. When people see the positivity of our lives, when people see the good deeds that come from our lives, when people see how we love our neighbors in spite of being slandered by our neighbors, that will prove the gospel is real. That will prove the transforming power of Jesus when they see the transforming power of Jesus in our lives.

I want to show you how the good works of Christians silenced the critics and spread the gospel. First, I will give you an example of this in the first century, then I will give you an example of this in our century.

In the first century, there were nasty rumors circulating about Christians. They were accused of rebelling against the government and being atheists

because Christians wouldn't burn incense to Caesar and worship him as God. They would only worship Jesus as God.

Christians were accused of being cannibals because it was said they gathered together to eat the body of a man named Jesus and drink his blood. That was a misrepresentation of the Lord's Supper.

Christians were accused of incest because they called each other brother and sister and frequently talked about their love for one another.

Peter said there was only one way to deal with these false accusations. They didn't gossip. They didn't slander. They didn't make a big stink. They just smiled, loved people and got busy doing good works. When people experience the good works in our lives, they will know the false accusations can't possibly be true about our lives.

For example, early Christians went out of their way to care for people in distress. In the year 251, the bishop of Rome wrote a letter to the bishop of Antioch. In it, he mentioned that the church in Rome was supporting 1,500 widows, orphans, and others who had fallen on hard times in the city of Rome. The city of Rome had no welfare system. They had no social safety net. The early church saw all these people on the streets in desperate need and created a welfare system for the down and out in society. Do you think that changed the perception of Christians in Rome? You bet it did! Do you think that led to people being interested in Jesus and becoming Christians? The Christian faith began growing overnight as the good works of the church met needs in society.

Tertullian, an ancient church leader, wrote about how this worked around the year 200 A.D.

On the monthly day, if he likes, each puts in a small donation; but only if it be his pleasure, and only if he is able... these gifts are used to support and bury poor people, to supply the wants of boys and girls of destitute means, and of older persons confined now to the house, of those who have suffered shipwreck, those who are banished to islands or of those shut up in prisons. — Tertullian (155-222)

We are just coming out of COVID. That was a minor illness compared to other plagues that decimated the ancient world. In the year 165, during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, a plague swept through the Roman Empire. We think it was smallpox but we are not sure. During the 15-year duration of the disease, between one-quarter to one-third of the population died. During the peak of the plague, caravans of carts drove through the cities for people to throw the dead bodies of their loved ones on the carts. Only a hundred years after that plague, another plague struck the Roman Empire and many more died. At that point, people were so afraid of the plague that at the first sign of the disease families would throw their own loved ones on the street to fend for themselves before they died of the disease.

Christians treated their sick differently. Christians didn't abandon their sick. They gave basic nursing care to the sick. Sometimes those abandoned to die on the streets by their own family were taken in by Christians. They were nursed back to health by Christians. As a result, two-thirds of those who contracted the plague recovered because of the courageous nursing care offered in the Christian community.

Bishop Dionysius of Alexandria wrote a letter to the members of his church around 250 A.D. In the letter he talked about how many of the Christians that nursed the sick back to health lost their lives in the process.

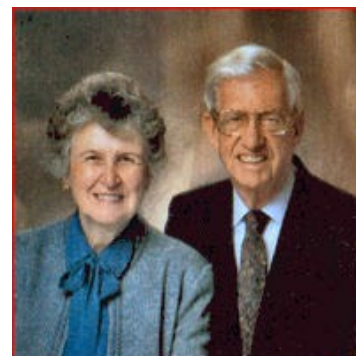
Many, in nursing and curing others, transferred their death to themselves and died in their stead... The best of our brothers lost their lives in this manner. — Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria.

What do you think happened after these plagues because of Christian nursing care? As Peter said, the critics of the faith were silenced and a massive growth of the church followed because the good works of Christians led to the good will of the people which opened hearts to them hearing the good news. This is what the elders are calling us at CrossWinds to do.

Our honorable character will open hearts to the gospel.

I told you I would not just give you an illustration of this in the first century, but let me show you how this works in our century.

Herb and Ruth Clingen were career missionaries. During World War II, they were held prisoner by the Japanese in Los Banos Prison Camp in the Philippines. It was a long and grueling ordeal. As it became apparent that America would win the war, the Japanese soldiers became increasingly brutal.



The Japanese soldiers gave the prisoners nothing more than basic sustenance. There was no meat and they were only provided two small meals of mush a day.

The prison camp was run by a Japanese man named Konishi. He was brutal. Toward the end of the war, he was determined to inflict as much agony as possible on the more than 2,000 prisoners of war in the camp. As he kept them

on the edge of starvation, some tried to sneak out of the camp at night looking for food. When he caught them, he shot them in the head.

While starving to death, incredible Christian character was seen as people willingly gave up what little food they were given to provide food for pregnant women who were eating for two.

When prisoners were at the edge of starvation. Konishi offered the prisoners unhusked rice. If eaten, the rice's sharp outer shell would cut the prisoner's intestines and they would die in a matter of hours of internal bleeding. It was a cruel punishment to offer starving people food that would only result in their painful death. Eventually people in the camp were dying of starvation at the rate of one per day. They were desperately calling to God for rescue.

God answered their prayers. At 7 a.m. February 24, 1945, the Americans, led by General Douglas MacArthur, went deep behind enemy lines to liberate the camp, striking simultaneously from the land, sea, and the air, literally filling the sky with parachutes.

They timed it perfectly. They landed when the guards were on their morning exercises and their guns were locked in a cabinet. The ground soldiers seized control of the armory cabinet cutting the Japanese off from their weapons. The rescue that day



is considered one of the best military operations of World War II. All 2,147 prisoners were freed from the Los Banos Prison Camp. Nobody lost his or her life. Only later did they learn how close they came to death and how God answered their prayers. Later the same day the Japanese planned to shell the prisoner of war camp as they retreated, killing everyone. Instead, the invasion that morning saved everyone's lives.

One week after being liberated, Ruth Clingen delivered a healthy baby girl. A healthy baby girl thanks to so many in the camp that sacrificed portions of their meager rations so the baby could live.

Konishi, the brutal sadistic Japanese lieutenant that was second in command at the camp, escaped into the jungle that day. Later he was found, put on trial, and sentenced to be hung. Before he was executed, he asked if he could become a Christian. When they asked him why he wanted to become a Christian, he said after watching how the Christians in the prisoner of war camp and how they lived, how they sacrificed for one another, and did good for one another, that changed his heart. Their good works created good will in his heart and before he died he opened his heart to the good news.

Folks, if the good works of prisoners starving to death in a World War II prison camp could soften the heart of a sadistic Japanese lieutenant, imagine what would happen if we flooded our community with good works from our lives. I guarantee you that CrossWinds would be filled with people whose lives and hearts were changed by the good works God did through our lives.



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