

Ministry to the Aging

• Lesson Four •

Putting God's Word into Practice

1. Christ's love compels us!
2. What are we doing now?
3. What will we do with God's blessing?

Worship

Read selected verses of Psalm 77. Answer the questions: What troubled the psalmist? Where did he find comfort?

A: When I was in distress, I sought the Lord; at night I stretched out untiring hands and my soul refused to be comforted. I remembered you, O God, and I groaned; I mused, and my spirit grew faint. You kept my eyes from closing; I was too troubled to speak.

B: I thought about the former days, the years of long ago; I remembered my songs in the night. My heart mused and my spirit inquired:

A: "Will the Lord reject forever? Will he never show his favor again? Has his unfailing love vanished forever? Has his promise failed for all time? Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has he in anger withheld his compassion?"

B: Then I thought, "To this I will appeal: the years of the right hand of the Most High."

A: I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds.

B: Your ways, O God, are holy.

A: You are the God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples.

B: With your mighty arm you redeemed your people, the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we know that in this life we will face hardship and difficulty. Guide us safely through these difficulties and strengthen us with your Word so that we may encourage others. Amen.

Introduction

"Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers" (Galatians 6:10). God's will is obvious. He wants us to minister to our fellow believers. He wants us to be his hands and his voice that comforts and encourages the aging as they face physical, emotional, and spiritual, problems. But where do we start? Today we will explore possible ways to begin or expand this important ministry after reminding ourselves of the proper motivation.

Studying God's Word

Christ's love compels us

Like Paul, we “have the desire to do what is good” (Romans 7:18). Like Paul, we also we may have difficulty doing it because of our sinful nature. As we consider our personal and congregational ministry to the aging we remind ourselves that we do it all out of love for Christ. The law does not motivate us to serve; it guides us. We seek to minister to the aging as a way to thank the God of our salvation for his grace. Before we discuss the “how” of this ministry, let's remind ourselves of the “why.”

Ephesians 2:8-10

⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

1. What “g” words does God use to describe our salvation? What do these words mean?
2. God mentions another “g” word in verse 10, “good works.” What role does God play in these works according to verse 10? What is the relationship between grace and good works?

2 Corinthians 5:14-15

¹⁴For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ¹⁵And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

1. What motivates us to put God's Word into practice according to these verses?
2. What guides us in how we are to live for God?

For Discussion

Mary has been in the nursing home for many years. She has lost her ability to communicate. When you visit on behalf of the congregation she does not even appear to know that you are there. Mary's new roommate is a person who has a rather negative outlook on life. At times she has made some snide remarks about Mary not knowing you are there. You begin to feel discouraged and uncomfortable when you visit Mary.

Why is it important for you to focus on the reason you are visiting Mary at times like this?

One day Mary's roommate bluntly asks you why you waste your time visiting Mary. You answer, “I visit because this is what God wants me to do.” What is misleading about this answer?

Come up with a better answer that would be also benefit Mary's roommate.

Just doing the right thing is not enough for a Christian. We want to do the right things for the right reason. When we approach our ministry to the aging only on the basis of the law it can become a burden, something that we have to do. When we minister to the aging as a way of thanking God for his free gift of salvation we will find joy and great blessings from God.

What are we doing now?

Gospel ministry to the aging is taking place in our congregation now. Both informally (as individuals) and formally (as a congregation) we are reaching out to the aging to care for their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. As a group, discuss what is being done in each area. In the area below list that things that are being done.

Informal Ministry

Formal Ministry

Physical Needs

Emotional Needs

Spiritual Needs

For Discussion

Look at the lists you have created. Discuss which things are being done well and which areas could be improved.

What will we do with God's blessing?

While we are on this earth there will also be room to improve our service to the Lord. Only in heaven will our service to God be perfect. As a group, take the time to brainstorm ideas that could be a part of your congregation's ministry to the aging. Even things that you think are out of the realm of possibility are worth discussing here. Explore new avenues for gospel ministry remembering that our God is "able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine!"

Informal Ministry

Formal Ministry

**Physical
Needs**

**Emotional
Needs**

**Spiritual
Needs**

Pick one idea from each column that you would like to implement first in the congregation.
Answer the following questions for these ministry ideas.

How do we educate our members to recognize the need for this ministry and also support it?

What resources are needed to carry out this ministry?

Which do we have?

Which do we need to find?

What training do we need to carry out this ministry? Who will provide it?

Discuss any further steps that would need to be taken to start this new ministry.

“Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:58). The Lord will bless what you do in ministering to the aging. Lean on his strength and share his precious gospel.