

The Power Points of Life:  
“The Power to Do Good”  
Acts 10:34-38, 44-48

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Dr. J. Howard Olds

When it's all been said and done, only two kinds of people populate the earth. There are those who put in more than they take out; and there are those who take out more than they put in. A getter or a giver, which are you?

There are many positive things that could be said of Jesus Christ. He was a brilliant teacher, a prophetic change agent, even the Savior of the world. In our scripture for today, Peter describes Him this way: *“Jesus of Nazareth went about doing good!”* O, that all of us who call him Lord could do the same. How might we do that? May I suggest some ways?

**FOR GOODNESS SAKE, DEVELOP YOUR CONSCIENCE.**

The Bible calls the conscience a law written on the heart. It is an inward principle which determines the character of one's actions. The conscience is a guiding light, a moral compass, an internal road map designed to lead us through the twists and turns of life to our purposeful destination.

Just as there is a law of gravity, there is a law of goodness. The world is united in the nature of goodness. Tell the truth. Do not kill. Do not steal. Honor your parents.

Whether or not we post these principles on public buildings, we would be wise to inscribe them on our hearts and honor them with our lives. Paul dares to say in Romans 2:16 that people who have never heard the gospel will be saved by following their consciences. The law written on their hearts will be credited to them for righteousness on the Day of Judgment. Let your conscience be your guide—but remember this: Your conscience is like your computer. It spits out what you put in! My mother was certain that dancing and movies were inventions of the devil. She was insistent that even a little wine for your stomach's sake was a sure trip to hell. She taught us boys not to “smoke or chew, or run around with girls that do.” My mother had an overactive conscience, made that way by fundamentalist parents and rigid church doctrine. I often thought, and still do, that she went to extremes.

Content of the conscience can go the other way too. Everything in the conscience can be weakened by neglect and erased by culture. What first we abhor, we come to observe, and finally to embrace. Once upon a time the standard for sexual relations was only approved between a husband and wife. Then, sex between consenting adults became acceptable. Some reasoned that sex between two lovers, whatever their age, is all right. Now we are confronted with sex between adult teachers and students and sex between fathers and their daughters. What

will inform our conscience of right and wrong or will we live by the ethic that anything goes?

**FOR GOODNESS SAKE, CULTIVATE YOUR COMPASSION.**

He went about doing good, extending compassion to all He met. When the crowd was hungry, He had compassion on them. When the Rich Young Ruler was searching for a deeper purpose and meaning in life, He had compassion on him and loved Him. Jesus had the power to feel the touch, hear the cry, sense the need of those who came by. He never went out of his way to help anybody, but he zeroed in on the neediest person in the crowd.

Remember the story that Luke tells. One day Jesus was on his way to visit a child who was dying. The crowds were so intense they almost crushed Him. There, in the crowd, was a woman who had been hemorrhaging for twelve years. She touched the hem of Jesus' garment and was instantly healed. Jesus stopped and insisted that the disciples find the person who touched Him. When they did, He affirmed her faith and sent her home in peace. Have we that kind of compassion? Are we that aware, tuned in, responsive, to the cry of the needy?

Fred Craddock may be the finest preacher alive today. His mother was a pillar of the church, but his father wanted nothing to do with organized religion. He stayed home on Sunday and complained of all the hypocrites who went to church. When a new preacher would come to visit him, Mr. Craddock would say, "You're not really interested in me; all you want is another name on your roll and a pledge for your budget." Then as Fred tells the story: "One day my father became seriously ill. They operated on him, but it was too late. I flew home to be with him. The room was filled with flowers, plants, gifts and cards from the church. My dad had a tube down his throat and couldn't talk. As I sat by his bed he asked for a pencil and on the side of a tissue box, he wrote these words from Hamlet: 'In this harsh world, draw your breath in pain and tell my story.' Fred asked, "What is your story, Dad?" Once more he took a pencil and wrote on the tissue box. "Tell them I was wrong!" Life can make us tough. Will you let the Holy Spirit make you tender?

**FOR GOODNESS SAKE, ALERT YOUR CONCERN.**

What gets under you skin? What irritates you in the night? What are the wrongs of the world that you have the power to make right?

It is a humbling experience to stand in this pulpit Sunday after Sunday. Sometimes I lie awake at night thinking about it. When I think of the future physicians, teachers, ministers, mothers, leaders, lawyers, scientists and servants that come through our Youth Ministry year after year, I pray the Lord to help me not to blow this opportunity.

When I cast a gaze across this congregation and consider the corporate wisdom, knowledge, experience and expertise contained in this membership, I find myself saying in the night, "Is there any world problem that this congregation could not solve if they set their minds to it?"

Sometimes we dare not just sit there! In the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., there is a plaque that says, “Thou shalt not be a victim, thou shalt not be a perpetrator, above all, thou shalt not be a bystander.” Abraham Lincoln said, “To sin by silence when they should protest makes cowards of men.” Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.” Do you care anymore?

Do you remember Erin Brokovich who was a dizzy, unemployed, single mother, who became a reluctant legal assistant in a law firm in order to pay a debt? No one took her seriously given her trashy clothes and earthy manner, but Erin Brokovich brings a small town to its feet and a California power company to its knees when she decides to passionately pursue the polluting of a city’s water supply. Do you have any passion anymore? What’s happened to your dreams of a better world? For goodness sake, act on your concerns, stand on your convictions, and invest your life in making the world a better place.

**FOR GOODNESS SAKE, FOLLOW YOUR CALLING.**

I keep a little plaque in my house. It goes like this:

I expect to pass through this life but once.  
Therefore, if there be any kindness I can show,  
Any good I can do and difference I can make,  
Let me neither defer it nor neglect it—  
Let me do it now—for I shall not pass this way again.

You don’t follow your calling because its neat or cool. You follow your calling because of that constant whisper in the night that will not let you go. A calling is an urgency that is also important. A calling is a need that is not being filled. A calling is a something that lies before you now. It is one thing to pursue a career, it is quite another to answer a call. We are called to belong to Jesus Christ. We are called to become what He made us to be. We are called to use our resources, our influence, our time, our talent to bring His kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Are you following your calling?

Through the years I’ve planned my life a number of times. On the one hand, life has never unfolded according to my plans. I never served the churches I thought I might serve. I never got to do some things I thought I wanted to do. There have been mountains to climb that I haven’t enjoyed and pains to endure that I haven’t appreciated.

On the other hand, my life has unfolded better than I could imagine. Do you remember that country song that says, “Thank God for unanswered prayers”? I am so grateful that God has not limited my life to my feeble vision. And so you just walk one step at a time; you find His strength to climb every mountain and you find His presence in every pain. For goodness sake, follow your calling. When one door has closed, an even better one has opened. In God’s time the rough places have become a plain and the difficulties have become sources of blessings. Jesus Christ went about doing good, would we do the same? My only prayer now is to finish well.

So, I leave you with these words from our founder, John Wesley:

“Do all the good you can,  
By all the means you can,  
In all the ways you can,  
At all the times you can,  
To all the people you can,  
As long as you ever can!”

Amen.