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Women of Witness

TIPS TO BETTER YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS



Dumpster Diving: Salvaging Relationships We'd Rather Throw Away

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“The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come!’ Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.” Revelation 22:17 (NIV)

Every Tuesday morning, my two preschool-aged boys and I waited with excited anticipation as the garbage truck circled our block and made its way to our home. The garbage men were modern-day heroes to my little guys, smiling and greeting us like old friends. Each week, it was the same routine as we watched our family’s waste get picked up and thrown into the massive, smelly dump truck.

One day, as my boys jumped up and down cheering on the task of hauling the garbage can to the street, an image came to mind. Much like an amused observer at a play, my reflection gave way to these thoughts: How many times have I wanted to throw away messy, difficult relationships? Or set individuals on the curb like yesterday’s trash, in hopes they would magically disappear?

Just as quickly as the questions bubbled forth, so did the answer: countless times.

In a world touting the elimination of toxic people, how do we respond when God clearly calls us to “dive into the dumpster” and salvage our broken relationships? Simply put, we respond as Jesus would.

On the days Jesus walked the earth, He leaned in, got close to, showed compassion for, pursued and redeemed marginalized people.

He touched the person with leprosy, healed the demon-possessed, gave sight to the blind and had a brood of friends who were the most unlikely of characters. Jesus saved them rather than discarded them, becoming a part of their life, not apart from it. Jesus loves us in our most unlovable state, never telling us to get our act together to receive His faithful presence. Jesus is in the business of upcycling souls, and His arms are open, welcoming everyone!

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In our key verse, the Spirit of Christ invites us to “Come,” not to leave or walk away.

“The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come!’ Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life” (Revelation 22:17).

Like Jesus, we too can say, “Come” to the untidy, complex and inconvenient people in our lives. (Of course it’s worth noting that I’m not talking about truly toxic or abusive people.) With a spirit of humility, we can love others despite what we think or feel about their seemingly imperfect, flawed character. Like Jesus, we too can be the refreshing drink of water to our spiritually parched loved ones, freely giving to them what so freely has been given to us.

It’s a leap of faith to “dive into the dumpster” and wade through the stench in hopes of salvaging our relational rubbish. When we open our hearts and give it a go, we gain spiritual treasure more precious than gold: the freedom to love all our relationships “as-is,” just like Jesus did!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I thank You for Jesus, as He is the perfect illustration of unconditional love. I pray You would equip me to be a model of His love in all my relationships, especially the challenging ones. I want to be a light and testament of His unfailing grace by standing alongside those You call me to be faithful to. Please reveal to me any relationships You want me to salvage and repair through the power, love and strength of Christ. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

TRUTH FOR TODAY

1 John 4:19, “We love because he first loved us.” (NIV)

John 13:34-35, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (ESV)

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