

2013

Valuing What is Of Worth

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Recommended Citation

Freed, Shirley (2013) "Valuing What is Of Worth," *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership*: Vol. 7: No. 2, 4-6.

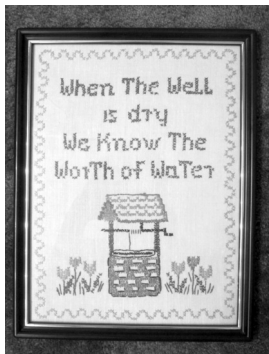
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EDITORIAL

VALUING WHAT IS OF WORTH

My Dad was a collector of unique artifacts. As he worked the land, he noticed and brought home things in nature that were growing in odd places or in unexpected ways. I remember limbs of trees with big bulges on them and rocks with interesting striations. My Dad frequented the local farm sales, estate sales and farmers markets. Often he was attracted to items portraying a homespun philosophy.



One day he brought home a framed cross-stitch picture with the following words: “When the well is dry, we know the worth of water.” He hung the picture in his museum and as people noticed it, he would talk about the truth of the saying. Invariably, conversations would wander into a sense that there are many things we take for granted—until we no longer have them.

Just last week, we experienced this truism in Southwest Michigan where I live. After a big wind storm, we didn’t have electricity for more than two days—about 50 hours. When there is no electricity, there are no lights, no heat, no water, no hot food, no frozen food, no hot showers, no cold showers, no hair driers, no washing machines, no clothes dryers and no home phones. Pets begin to shiver, people begin to shiver, and everything—beds, floors, chairs, and the very air we breathe—gets really, really cold. Life as we have come to take for granted was disrupted. “When the electricity is gone, we know the value of electricity.”

It is somewhat like that with our health. We take for granted that we will be strong enough to walk and run and play and be healthy enough to do our daily chores. And then suddenly we lose our health. We are sick. We can’t get up from our bed. Our head hurts. Our body hurts. We are in deep pain and distress.

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Each day, thousands, yes, millions experience the loss of their health. Through famine, disaster, disease and sometimes wrong choices, people wake up to a reality that says, “I am not healthy. I am not what God created me to be.” When health is gone, we are devastated. We immediately try to restore our health. Where do we turn? Pills? Rest? Friends? Doctors?

This issue of *JACL* focuses on things related to health. Each author is involved in some form of health ministry. Two articles in particular form the bookends of this issue. In the opening article, hospital chaplain Lance Tyler points to the healing ministry of Christ. By systematically reviewing each healing episode of Jesus in the book of Mark, we come to a better understanding of how to go about ministry. The way Jesus related to sick people provides principles for our own work. And each one of us is involved in health ministry. Every day we come into contact with the sick. No one is exempt. The sick and suffering are all around us. What will we do? How do we respond to the tears and fears of those who are sick? Jesus shows us the way.

One book review in particular provides the other bookend to this issue. This is the review of Swartley’s book, *Health, Healing and the Church’s Mission: Biblical Perspectives and Moral Priorities*. In many ways this book does what a single issue of *JACL* can never do. It explains healing in the Old Testament and the New Testament and proposes a new paradigm for sustainable healthcare. In the United States, this is a very hot topic that we Christians can’t ignore.

In the “Feature Articles” section, we learn from two CEOs of large hospital and institutional settings of their challenges in maintaining alignment with faith. Randy Haffner describes the process whereby the core values of the Adventist health systems were identified and then employees surveyed to ascertain levels of commitment to the values. Rick Stiffney interviewed 10 CEOs in the Mennonite health system and describes the challenges faced by the leadership of faith-based institutions. The tension between market-driven and mission-driven values becomes clear in both articles and raises questions for Christian leaders in any environment. Whether in schools, churches, universities or industry, Christians will be encouraged to do similar work while asking the basic question, “What makes our place a Christian place—a place where Christian values are lived and Christ’s presence is felt?”

Barbette Weimer-Elder’s research looking at engagement in the hospital setting is a gentle reminder that while large proportions of the workforce are disengaged, we can avoid that problem by embracing

specific attitudes and behaviors of service. The highly engaged groups in her study put the patient first. They put one another first over themselves. I'm reminded of the miracle of the loaves and fishes. A little boy gave what he had, even though he must have been hungry, too. And then as Jesus broke the bread, He asked the disciples to serve the people. And as they all focused on the needs of others, the food kept multiplying.

In the "Leadership Lived" section, we see the service and multiplication principles operating again. Chet Dalski describes his work as a program coordinator in emergency medical services and how God lifts him up as he innovates with simulations to provide the best education possible. Brenda Pfeiffer Boyd shows how medical mission trips bring healing to everyone involved—especially the providers. And the healing she talks about isn't just physical healing—it's emotional, spiritual and relational. You'll notice this wholistic way of healing is a sub-text throughout the issue.

In the "Dialogue" section, Phyllis Woolford challenges us with the reality of increasing childhood obesity. How should we in Christian leadership respond? Do we conveniently turn away? Or do we, like Jesus, say, "Let the little children come"? And when we say "come," what do we have to offer? Guilt? Shame? Hope? Please talk to someone today about this problem and strategize things you and your organization can do.

Finally, our book reviews and dissertation abstracts open possibilities for new learning. You'll find many new ideas related to the topic of this issue—health. And you may be better equipped for that moment when someone near to you loses their health.

In this issue, each article tells the story of someone coming alongside Christ in His healing ministry. In their own unique way and special place, each author shows us the path they're walking on as they reach out and touch others with the gift of healing. I think Paul sums it up well: "He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully" (2 Cor. 9:6. NKJV).