

Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to me. MATTHEW 25:40

“That which selfish hearts would regard as humiliating service, ministering to those who are wretched and in every way inferior in character and rank, is the work of sinless angels. The spirit of Christ’s self-sacrificing love is the spirit that pervades heaven and is the very essence of its bliss. This is the spirit that Christ’s followers will possess, the work that they will do ” (Steps to Christ, p. 77).

“Lord, I don’t think I can do this! You made a huge mistake this time! I want to work for You, but not here!” This was my cry to the Lord after He placed me in an alternative high school for teenagers who needed to complete their education certificates and prepare for the work world. Many of these children were homeless, victims of abuse, or involved in gangs, drugs, and even prostitution. I had spent over 20 years teaching in a sheltered Christian school environment, and this new assignment seemed like more than I could endure.

Students entered the classroom on the first day holding up their pants and wearing hoodies that covered their faces. Trouble broke out within the first hour as one boy began to shout threatening obscenities toward two other young men. Here I was, totally out of my comfort zone, with a fight about to begin. I was intimidated. Their crude language, music, and explicit images displayed on their computer screens made me long for my protective environment. I didn’t belong here. I felt like a lamb among wolves; like the disciples on the turbulent sea, I cried out, “Lord, save me!”

I had been reading Jeremiah for my devotions, and the Lord brought to mind these words: “‘Do not be afraid of their faces, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord. . . . They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you,’ says the Lord, ‘to deliver you’” (Jer. 1:8, 19).

Sending up a prayer for help, I pressed the Lord to fulfill His word given to Jeremiah and bring calm into the room. Then, with an unnatural courage, I told the students, “I will not allow this kind of behavior in this classroom. Each of you must take your seats and quietly begin working on your assignments.” Imagine my surprise when they quietly complied! I glorified God in my heart, praising Him for His goodness and mercy. Over the next few weeks, I continued to plead with the Lord to take me out of my work situation. I believed I didn’t belong there. He answered my prayer in an unusual way—by showing me the condition of my own heart.

I was working with a student at the computer when he asked me a strange question, “Jodi, you came from a Christian school, right?” When I answered, “Yes,” he said, “Then why are you here with us?” His question pierced my heart. The Lord impressed me, “You are not ready to minister to the world. Not until you move beyond your built-in prejudice and fear will you be able to reveal My love to these children. You are here to make a difference in their lives, to reveal My character to them.” God was right! I wasn’t ready to minister because I did not have love. “I guess I just want to make a difference in your life,” I told him. Later that afternoon, the same scenario happened, this time with a young girl.

What difference could I make? It began with little things, such as providing a healthy breakfast so they could start the day with at least one good meal. I won their confidence by listening to their stories and entering into their sufferings and by becoming a friend and mentor.

When the 2004 tsunami struck Asia, the students wanted to find out what I thought of the tragedy. I told them that the

tsunami was a sign of Jesus' soon return. One of my students, who boasted that he was raised in church, said, "Doesn't it talk about that in Revelation?" I invited him to read a passage. The students were very sober when I explained that Jesus was warning the world to get ready. I added that if anyone wanted to know how to prepare for Jesus' coming, I would be happy to tell them. Later that day, a girl came into my office and said, "Please, I want to know." I told her of Jesus' love for her and her son and led her to receive Christ as her Savior. Throughout that year, I had several opportunities to present Jesus to "my kids" and lead them to accept Him.

"God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as coworkers with Him" (Conflict and Courage, p. 278).

Suggested Format for the Prayer Time Praise

- Lord, we praise you for being sensitive to our sufferings.
- We praise You for those who have nurtured us in the faith, leading us to a closer relationship with Jesus.
- We praise You for Your never-ending faithfulness to us.

Confession

- Father, please show us which sins to confess openly and which to confess privately. We claim Your victory over those sins.
- Lord, forgive us for doubting Your leading. Forgive us for trying to find our own way out of a challenging situation, when You may have put us there for a reason.
- Forgive us for when we allow fear or prejudice to keep us from sharing Your love with others.

Supplication and Intercession

- Lord, we pray for Your protection for vulnerable children and teens. We ask You to guard them from those who seek to exploit them.
- Lord, may those who are caring for homeless children have hearts of compassion, gentle hands, and kind words.
- We pray for the family members of children who are in rebellion against authority. Please give them Your grace to deal with the situation compassionately.
- We ask You to raise up urban missionaries to plant churches for the 806 people groups in the 20 countries of Inter-European Division.
- Please raise up an army of workers to plant churches for the 948 people groups in the 38 countries of Inter-American Division.
- We pray for the heart burdens of our own church members and everyone here at this prayer time.
- We uplift the seven names we've written down on our cards. Father, You alone know every situation that our friends, family, and co-workers are experiencing. Guide them in Your path and bring them close to You.

Thanksgiving

- Thank You for Your unfailing love and compassion toward us.



- Father, thank You for always watching over us with tender regard.
- Thank You for understanding and pitying us in our weakness.

Suggested Songs to Sing

“Lead Them, My God to Thee” (SDA Hymnal #653); “Rescue the Perishing” (SDA Hymnal #367); “Seeking the Lost” (SDA Hymnal #373); “Work, for the Night is Coming” (SDA Hymnal #375); “Far and Near the Fields are Teeming” (SDA Hymnal #358)

Promises to Claim as You Pray

- “Defend the poor and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy; free them from the hand of the wicked” (Ps. 82:3, 4).
- “But thus says the LORD: ‘Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible be delivered; for I will contend with him who contends with you, and I will save your children’” (Isa. 49:25).
- “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27).