

Life of Christ

A study of the life and teachings of Jesus

Inasmuch as You Have Done It

—by Nate King

I was praying one night with some friends when Andy walked into our church in Clarksville. I was instantly drawn to him—a sixty-four-year-old homeless man, hoping someone would give him ten dollars. He could have asked for just about anything, but all he wanted was ten more bucks. Why? So he could afford to get off the street for one night.

He wanted to stay in some run-down shady hotel—the kind of place you would find in scary movies. “No way!” I thought as we were chatting. I had to help him. I asked him to stay and wait with me while I finished praying. After our prayer time ended, my friend Jordan and I took him to dinner. I said, “What do you want to eat, Andy? You can have anything you want!”

He said, “I want to eat clean.”

I was like, “Cool!” I’d never had a homeless guy tell me they like to eat clean before, so I took him to Subway. “Eat fresh” is pretty close to “eat clean,” right? As we ate, some friends were hanging out, so we introduced Andy to them. I watched his social walls begin to crumble in response to faith expressed in love.

After dinner, Jordan and I drove Andy right past the shady no-tell-motel he had requested. Instead, I took him to Best Western. I asked the girl at the front desk if they named it that because they like to show the best cowboy movies. She didn’t think I was funny. I laid off the lame dad jokes and got Andy the best room they had.

Meanwhile, Andy waited in the car with Jordan. He was nervous about leaving his bag, and everything he owned, unattended in my car. I was a little nervous about leaving a stranger in my car. Jordan was a little nervous about both.

Finally, I jumped back in the driver's seat and wheeled around the corner of the building to the room I'd rented. I could tell Andy was apprehensive. He was clearly unaccustomed to being treated with kindness. I parked the car and walked around to open the passenger door for Andy. I wasn't chivalrous or anything; the old car door just gets stuck, and I didn't want Andy to have a stroke if he thought I was trapping him inside.

He wouldn't hand me his bag when I offered to carry it for him, but I got him to follow me to the building. I could tell he still wasn't sure what was going on, even as I opened the door to the room. I stepped inside to make sure everything was safe for him.

Returning to where Andy and Jordan waited, I threw my arms wide open—like I do sometimes when I surprise my kids with ice cream or a treat—and exclaimed, “Andy, here is your room!” He immediately started crying.

I hugged him. I looked in his old, tired, tear-filled eyes and told him, “Jesus loves you. You matter to God. You have dignity before God. You have value before God. You are His son.” And then Jordan and I were able to pray with Andy.

Do you think Andy went to bed that night thinking, “I met some Christians who told me how dirty I am”? No. He went to bed knowing someone loves him.

I'm sharing this story, not because I'm some kind of benevolence-minded hero, but because I have a lifetime of memories of getting this far too wrong. All too often, I've ignored someone who needed help in favor of my opinions, schedule, or agenda.

Jesus made it clear. What we do for the ones often identified as the “least of these” we are really doing for Jesus. He taught me that they aren't the least because they matter less, but because I hadn't helped nearly enough. So, I decided to change the trend in my own life. I still get it wrong sometimes, but Andy's story is a regular reminder of the opportunity I have to get it right.

Jesus used Andy to remind me that when my politics aren't compatible with love, they are no good. When my social conscious doesn't echo love, it is just noise. If my prayers don't lead me to more love, I've wasted my breath. If my Bible studies aren't propelling me toward more love, I'm reading the wrong thing. Like Paul affirmed in Galatians, “The only thing that matters is your faith expressed in love.”

Love everyone around you. Love the people who make you nervous. Love the dirty ones and the clean ones. We don't have to agree, but we do have to choose love. We do need to help.

What has Jesus done for you? Where has His love made the most significant difference? What voice are you listening to in your life? Jesus' love speaks the loudest on our worst days! Grace is so BIG in the middle

of our mistakes. On Peter's worst day, Jesus called him beloved. On a day that could have been Andy's worst, God gave me the chance to tell him how much he is loved! On your worst day, God's grace is the biggest!

I want the grace God showered on my life to splash everyone I meet. But I don't want to talk about it—I want to do it. And Jesus doesn't need advocates. He doesn't need more religious people trying to be the behavior police. He needs His people to be people of action. He wants His people loving others who don't even know how much they need Him yet. Don't just gather up knowledge! Unleash love on the people in your everyday world.

Question In what area of your life has Jesus' love for you made the most significant difference, and how can you extend that mercy forward?

Family Chat Have you prayed and made Jesus the boss of your life? Let each family member talk about the day they did that. If you haven't and want to, today is a great day to make that decision!

Prayer Starter Jesus, I invite You to show me a practical need that I can fill today. Grant me courage by the power of Your Holy Spirit to overcome any attack of anxiety or fear from the enemy that would try and prevent me from following through!

Take Action Don't just gather up knowledge! Unleash love on the people in your everyday world today.