

# The Power of One

by Senior Pastor: Bill Couch

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**MEDIA INFO:** After Choir Anthem, dim lights and project the following statistics on separate slides. Have the facts “appear” from the background--small letters growing larger as they “move” to the foreground of the slide. Music background, rather mellow to reflect sadness of the facts.

16.7 Million American Children  
Struggle with Hunger

23% of Children in Lubbock  
Live in Families Below the Poverty Level  
Family of 4: Annual income less than \$22,350

750,000 Women and Children  
Forced into Sex Slavery  
Each Year  
50,000 in the USA

21,000 Children Die Every Day  
Of Preventable Diseases  
7.6 Million Deaths Every Year

“A Million Deaths is a Statistic.  
The Death of One Person is a Tragedy”  
Joseph Stalin

Can One Person Make a Difference?

## The Power of One

The needs in our world are overwhelming. News reports inundate us with stories of violence, abuse, neglect, oppression, poverty, and war that cause the suffering of millions of people every day. When Paul Rider and I traveled to the Congo last summer, we saw the complexity of the problems in persons' faces who are living in extreme poverty. The majority of persons in the Congo live on less than \$2 a day. There is little access to clean water. Sanitation is non-existent. Fifty percent of the children will die before the age of 5 from cholera, diarrhea, and malaria—all of which are preventable diseases. Food is scarce. We walked through several villages that had no electricity. There is no garbage pick

up—trash is everywhere. Much of the government is corrupt and does little to help the people. Mining companies rape the land of natural resources and put little back. Where can you possibly begin to make a difference? Why even try?

The needs of persons in our own church and community are overwhelming. Every week I receive emails about families that are struggling, marriages that are breaking up, people who have lost their jobs. Every week we have about 50 people who come to get food vouchers and clothing at our Good Samaritan and Clothes Closet ministries. Another 8-10 contact us every day for assistance with utilities or rent or gas. It is overwhelming.

The Apostle Paul helps us to put things in perspective:

<sup>9</sup> Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. <sup>10</sup> Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.  
Galatians 6:9-10

The problems of poverty, hunger, disease and abuse are overwhelming. We cannot ignore it, but we cannot fix it. We wonder what's the use? Why even try to do anything?

Compassion fatigue is real. There are so many problems that we can't give money to every one of them. We give and give, and it does not seem to have an impact. The problems just keep multiplying. At some point we feel like saying, "I just can't do it anymore." Paul says to not become weary in doing good. As you have opportunity do good. That is the key: as you have opportunity.

Our culture is saturated with a mantra of fairness. You remember when you asked a teacher if you could do something and she said, "If I let you do it, I have to let everybody do it." The rule is: I can't do for one because then I have to do it for everyone. Unfortunately we have applied this rule to helping people who are in need. If I can't help everybody, I'm not going to help anybody. It becomes an excuse for not doing anything for anyone.

Let's make a new rule based upon God's word to do good as we have opportunity. The new rule is: Do for one what you wish you could do for

everyone. My prayer is that God will put on your heart one thing or one person. God will present you with an opportunity and say “You can do for that one what you wish you could do for everyone. Now do it.”

I never thought I would quote Joseph Stalin at any time, much less in a sermon. But Stalin spoke a profound truth when he said, “A Million Deaths is a Statistic. The Death of One Person is a Tragedy.” We hear the statistic 21,000 children will die today and every day of preventable diseases. That was a hard statistic for me to get my head around. That represents the population of Plainview dying every day. Then we had the opportunity to visit the nutrition center at the mission station in the Congo. There about 50 parents—some of whom had walked all night—brought their children to receive food for a week. One child about 9 months old was severely malnourished. They admitted her to the infirmary to provide extra care. Two days later, the missionary told us this little girl had died. 21,000 children dying every day was no longer just a statistic because we saw the tragedy of one child who died needlessly. It became real.

Do for one what you wish you could do for everyone. You cannot save all 21,000 children every day. But you can save one. Hundreds of you are saving one. You sponsor a child through Compassion International. You are doing for one what you wish you could do for everyone. If you have a burden to save children, I encourage you to sponsor one child. We have a table in the foyer where you can sign up to sponsor a child for \$38 a month. You will receive a picture and information about your child. I want to encourage you to be a good sponsor which means to pray for your child and write letters occasionally—to

send something special at Christmas or a birthday. Develop a relationship. Do for one what you wish you could do for everyone.

God has given several of you an opportunity to get involved in ministries to homeless persons. Some of you prepare and deliver hygiene bags for homeless persons. Others of you help out with our Family Promise ministry to homeless families with children—provide food and help to host the families. Others of you deliver burritos and water to the tent community where several homeless persons live.

One family in our church provides a meal every Monday night to homeless persons at St. Benedict's chapel on Broadway. Shelby and Teresa Stephens prepare a meal at their restaurant, Cast Iron Grill, and take food to feed 75 to 100 persons every week. As they built relationships with these persons, the needs were overwhelming. But God provided an opportunity for them to do for one what they wished they could do for everyone. I've asked Shelby Stephens to come and tell us their experience in making a difference for one.

#### SHELBY STEPHENS TESTIMONY

Shelby and Teresa have one thing they want to do to make a difference. They do it faithfully every Monday evening in feeding homeless persons and the working poor. While doing that one thing God gave them opportunity to do for one what they wished they could do for everyone.

I encourage you to find one thing you can do. Or find one person you can help. You don't have to do everything but you can do one thing. You can't help everyone, but you can help one.

Our children's minister, Laura James attended a parents' meeting to plan for an upcoming 8<sup>th</sup> grade dance. During their planning, an opportunity came up. One of the counselors mentioned that there would be some of the students who would not be able to afford formal clothing. Laura seized the opportunity to make a difference for one. "What if each of us who are able donated the funds to provide formal clothes for a child who can't afford it?" They began to brainstorm other ways to help like asking hairdressers to donate their time to fix hair and apply makeup. They will each do for one what they wish they could do for everyone.

God will give you an opportunity to do one thing or to help one person. You can volunteer to be a tutor at one of the public schools. You can volunteer to be a big brother/sister. You can give to our Change for Children which provides lunch and other necessities for kids who can't afford them. Or you might help a single mom or dad by providing free babysitting one night. What will you do for one that you wish you could do for everyone?

Jerry Krueger stood in line at the grocery store. A lady checking out at the register carefully counted her money. The bill was \$72. She said, "I am going to have to put some things back." Jerry asked, "How much do you have? She said, "I have \$55." Before he could do anything, a lady also standing in the line handed her \$20. Whenever God provides an opportunity, do for one what you wish you could do for everyone.

Paul said that if we do not become weary in doing good, at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Over one billion people in the world

do not have access to clean water—another statistic. Drinking contaminated water is one of the primary causes of death in our world. There are other problems that contribute to these deaths—lack of food and medical care. Again we cannot do everything, but we can do one thing. Last spring, Joy Vroonland shared with me that her family decided to make a faith promise to provide one water well for a village. She was faithful to do for one what she wished she could do for everyone. We shared her vision with the church and you made faith promises totaling over \$340,000. You have not grown weary in giving. You have given over \$242,000 of that amount already. As a result we have provided through World Vision 14 villages in Uganda with access to clean water—saving tens of thousands of lives. We have also provided through other mission groups access to clean water for communities in Guatemala, Congo and Nicaragua-- saving thousands of lives. Because you have not given up, we are doing one thing—providing clean water--to save the lives of tens of thousands of people. We are reaping the harvest.

We can't do everything, but we can do one thing. As God gives you opportunity will you do one thing? Will you help just one person at a time? Our ministry brochure contains many opportunities for you to do for one what you wish you could do for everyone. I hope you will pick up one and look opportunities in our community and around the world. Brochures are available at the literature rack on the mission wall.

What will you do for one that you wish you could do for everyone? Get ready to reap the harvest!