

TOOL: Serve to Give Voice

Speak blessing • Daily



Introduction

It might seem odd to have serving as a tool in the practice of speaking blessing. Which one is it? Are we serving or are we speaking? If you were to study the life of Jesus, he married words and action, his voice and his hands. He would feed the community and speak a blessing to them. He would heal someone and then declare a blessing over them. The act of service would validate his words, and his words would explain why he served, pointing to a deeper need.

Donald Miller in his book *Blue Like Jazz* shared that people don't care to know the gospel is true until they see it as good. This is especially true in a post-modern, skeptical context. One of the primary ways we display the truth in our message is through the generosity, compassion, and service we give. This is not just a good strategy for how we can bless others, it is in line with the life of Jesus.

After washing his disciples' feet, Jesus said the following (John 13:12-17):

"Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them."

Jesus, our Teacher and Lord, chooses to express his teachings and truths through acts of mercy and kindness. And our Master has sent us out as his messengers. We share Jesus' message, not just with words, but as we serve others with care and attention.

But we must be willing to not just stop with an act of kindness – God wants us to speak blessing. This often takes more courage and boldness. As you explore this tool in the coming days, allow God to lead you to opportunities to serve and bless others in word and deed.

Pause and consider

- Which are you more comfortable doing: serving or speaking a blessing to others? Do you have a tendency to neglect the use of your words or to not courageously serve others when you see a need?
- What are the barriers from you serving others? What are the barriers to speaking blessing alongside acts of service?
- Read 1 Peter 4:9-11. How does this passage marry words and service? What are the helpful words of instruction in this passage?

Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Practice

Below are ideas for ways to serve others. Remember the goal is not just to serve, but to bring our acts of service with a spoken word of kindness. Go the next step in serving others - be willing to listen to others and respond with words of encouragement and affirmation. Though it is a cliché, there is truth to it: People don't care what you know until they know you care.

- **Listen for the opportunity.** There is a progression to these "Speak Blessing" tools. It is after we listen to others that we might be more likely to hear of an opportunity to serve others. In doing so, we don't serve based on our agenda or comforts but in response to an expressed or perceived need.
- **Give a gift or token of kindness.** We bless others when we give provisions and gifts as a physical representation of appreciation and compassion.
- **Draw close to suffering.** Is there someone going through a difficult season or challenging situation? Draw close to them and serve them as a demonstration that you remember them, care for them and stand by them. Who is going through difficulty right now?
- **Consider your literal neighbors.** Do you have an elderly neighbor that needs help around the house or yard? Is there a couple with young kids who could benefit from a date night? Instead of boxing up the leftovers, is there a neighbor who might enjoy a home-cooked meal?

- **Offer the service of prayer.** Regardless of people's religious affiliation or relationship with God, most people believe in the power of prayer. Even if they do not pray for themselves, most people are open to prayers from others. Consider asking others if they have a prayer need you can lift up. Or after serving someone you might say, "I'm going to spend time in the car after this. Sometimes I pray as I drive. Do you have a need I can pray for?"

Debrief your experience

After practicing with this tool, debrief your experience with your Praxis Group. Below are some questions to process together:

- Check in on life. (Where are you experiencing Christ's presence this week? What burdens are you carrying?)
- What did you learn from this practice?
- Describe your experience with this practice. (What feelings came up, what went well, what got in the way? How has it impacted your relationship with God?)
- What is the next step for you?