



WOULD YOU LIKE TO GET WELL?

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Wayne Walker 0:01

Good morning, Bentry. Thank you for having us. We really appreciate this. I'm not here to tell you that homelessness is solved in the community. In fact, I'm here to tell you we need your help. Let me put it this way: We live in a city where people are living in places they should not be, exposed to trauma and dangers that they should not see, and isolated from the real help that can set them free. Years ago, late one Friday night, I was downtown with a group of folks serving a meal. We've all been there. We've all done that, giving out sandwiches and drinks. And a guy walks up to me. He'd been in the line, and his eyes were red and puffy. The tears he'd been crying that day had left tracks through the dirt on his face. And he looks at me with a quivering lip, and he asks the question, "Do you really think that sandwich is going to fix my problems? When we hand out a bottle of water, or you give out \$20 to someone, or a sandwich, we all struggle with these questions. Should I do that? Is that the best thing? Is that helping? Is it hurting? What will happen to this person next? What should we do? Am I enabling? I've been around people experiencing homelessness for most of my life, and so this morning I want to share with you some ideas, some principles, not from me, come from the Lord through the Word. So, if you would open your Bible to John chapter five, we're going to turn there. We're going to we're going to look at the story of Jesus healing someone from John chapter five at the very beginning there. But before we start, I want to pray for us, Lord. I thank you so much that you have gathered a people here with their own broken and dysfunctional self. Lord, I pray that you would open our eyes to your truth. Also, pray the words of Ephesians six, where Paul says, "Pray that I may have the words to fearlessly express the mystery of the gospel. We thank you, Lord, in Jesus' name, Amen. John chapter five, verse one. Afterward, Jesus returned to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish holy days. Now, afterward refers back to chapter four, where Jesus had revealed Himself as the Messiah to the woman at the well, and then he just healed a government official's son. And so after that, he returned to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish holy days. Inside the city, near the Sheep Gate, was the pool of Bethesda, with five covered porches. Crowds of sick people, blind, lame, or paralyzed, lay on the porches. One of the men lying there had been sick for 38 years. When Jesus saw him and knew he had been ill for a long time, he asked him, "Would you like to get well? Now, there's a few questions I get asked all the time, but that really is kind of the heart of the question I get asked the most. Why don't they go to the shelters? Why are they still on the streets? Why do they choose to be homeless? Do they want to get well? Do they want to get off the streets? Do they want to deal with the big issues in their life? Those are great questions. Those are also questions for you. Do you? Do you want to deal with the big issues in your life, or still pretend like they don't exist? Do you? Do you want to get well? Change, real change, requires the want. Jesus said, "Would you like to get well? Now, Jesus healed a lot of people, but the healing was rarely only physical. He's not just a doctor to the sick. He was a healer to the hurting. He was a counselor to those being held captive, he's in the restoration business. He's in the transformation business, and he's offering to him and to you and to me much more than just medical help. Would you like to get well? The guy doesn't just need his legs to work. Trust me, there are lots of really dysfunctional people with fully functional bodies. He needs total transformation. He needs holistic healing. The same formula that Jesus refers to in Matthew 22 when he says, "Love the Lord with all your heart, your soul, your mind.

Speaker 1 4:54

There's more to us than just our physical bodies. Now there are two ways. To help the homeless, if you look at all the different options, I've nailed them down and kind of narrowed them down to two options. The first would be to call a moving company to take them and all their problems and all their trauma and out of public view and away. You can call a moving company, or you can call a mission agency. Mission agencies focuses on holistic healing, mental health care, detox, addiction recovery, walking with Jesus, life skills, restoration through someone with broken relationships, economic security,

stability, sustainability, and healthy community, you can call the moving company or the mission agency. The moving company, we could get that guy in a hotel room tonight. We could give him 20 bucks, and we're going to move him to a 711 counter, at least for a little while. Move him to a table at a McDonald's or a mission agency. Stability, detox, hospital, mental health crisis center, followed by a shelter, long-term addiction recovery program, psychotherapeutic recovery, sober living, sex trafficking recovery, boarding homes, group homes, a facility for victims of domestic violence, stable and supported housing, or reconnecting them with family and friends, a moving company, or a mission agency. You can focus on transformation, transportation, or transformation. You can focus on relocation or recovery. The question is of healing or hurting, abundant life or abandonment. Now, housing is necessary, but housing alone will never solve homelessness. At our calling, we have an app. People use it on their phone all the time to report someone experiencing homelessness. We actually have people reporting themselves now, and this is a report that came to us through our app-a map, a location, someone that needs help. So our teams will go there and find the person. We go every morning. We look at these maps. We look at these app reports, and we go. When we approach them, we can collect up to 100 data points on people, and we use an app that I help create called Neighbor Solutions that uses artificial intelligence to help supplement our highly trained street outreach teams. It'd be easy to get him in a hotel room or take him to a shelter, get him in a bed, a place where he can get a shower and a rest. But maybe that's not the best option for him. Maybe he needs something more. So that guy in the picture needed something very difficult to find. He was a SMU college student. That during COVID, his depression and anxiety masked full-blown schizophrenia. One day, he had a psychotic episode and was taken to the hospital. And that night, he ripped out the IV and walked out the door. And for two years, he was a missing person. And for the past few years, with schizophrenia, he's sleeping in different places every single night. He's lost and dazed and confused. He's talking to someone who's not there, and the people he are talking to can't really understand him. He needed one thing more than a house, one thing more than shelter, one thing more than a doctor. The one thing we found in Georgia, in the state of Georgia, and we were able to fly it back in. So put that picture back up on there. That's not a volunteer. That's his mom. He was a missing person, and we were able to reconnect him with his family and just pause and let that soak in. That young man battling schizophrenia needed his mom. Jesus said that a good shepherd would leave the 99 to pursue the one that was lost. He was lost, and now he's found. And now look at the before and after. We are in the transformation business. That's cool. We're in the process of watching the Lord totally transform and restore someone, not just relocating them. Every day, our staff focus on two questions. Those two questions are: Will you trust the Lord, and will you let us help you off the street? Because the mission statement at our calling is to help neighbors experiencing homelessness walk with Jesus. Get off the streets and into healthy community. That's our focus. Jesus found this guy sitting by a pool in the shade in a covered area. It was a gathering place, or maybe a dumping ground of people that were broken.

Speaker 1 9:56

You drive around this city, you're going to find. Many places where people are discarded and broken, places where people are paralyzed, often physically, and sometimes they're just paralyzed by trauma. You've got people with untreated mental health challenges, paralyzed by an addiction. Usually, the addiction is there to deal with the trauma. 100% 100% of the chronically homeless community have suffered severe trauma and have PTSD. 100% People experiencing homelessness are 19 times, 19 times more likely to be murdered, 27 times more likely to be victims of attempted murder, 15 times more likely to be robbed, 12 times more likely to be to suffer aggravated assault, and nine times more likely to be sexually assaulted than someone living in a home. They're under bridges, behind liquor stores, in an alleyway, or crawled into a broken through a broken window into an abandoned building to escape the weather, and many of them have been there for years, many many years. And just like the paralyzed man, everything they tried hasn't worked. Homeless shelters are full. In Dallas, we have 2,300 shelter beds and 10,000 people that need them. What happens when they stay outside and they don't get into a shelter? The average age of death for a homeless man is 56. Harris County did a study recently. The average age of death for a homeless woman is 46. If you're sleeping on the streets, you're likely to die 30 years earlier than if you were in a home. Jesus said, "Would you like to get well?" "I can't, sir, the sick man said. "For I have no one to put me in the pool when the water bubbles up. Someone else gets there ahead of me. This is called the wait. He's waiting, waiting for the one chance, waiting for that one moment. Sure enough, one thing's going to come around and fix all my problems, and I'm waiting. Imagine this myth. Now, later Greek manuscripts told a story. It was all a myth that water would start moving and people would race into the water. First one in gets healed. That never healed anybody. Magic water never healed anybody. But you imagine this guy's just waiting there, day after day, just staring at that pool. I'm just waiting one moment. I'm just waiting. My time will come. The water will move. I'll get healed. The water starts moving. Someone else jumps in. Okay, so I'm waiting, I'm waiting, I'm waiting, and he's waiting there for years. But we play this game, don't we? We wait for the next job. Oh, that'll fix my problems, or the next bet on poly market, right? Or DraftKings addiction of gambling is just taking over this

country, or the next lotto ticket, or the next broken relationship just waiting. Oh, for real this time! Now I'm going to stop drinking. I'm going to stop my addiction to porn. I'm I'm going to finally stop abandoning my family for work. This time will be different. I'm going to stop smoking weed. Stop taking those pills. Stop going to that hookup app. Stop doom scrolling for scrolling for hours. We wait and we believe this myth while ignoring the truth that is right in front of us. For 38 years-that's a long time-but I bet there's someone in here who's been paralyzed by something for longer than that. People in this place, believe a myth about magic water. Trying harder will not heal you. Wanting it more will not heal you. Working more will not heal you. Coming to church will not heal you. You need the same thing this guy needed. He needed Jesus. So, will a bag of snacks, will a nice little packaged bag of snacks, will that help a 65-year-old man who's living behind a liquor store? Will a \$20 bill help a kid who's dying of a fentanyl overdose? That kid, this report on the left was actually reported to us by a Dallas Fire Rescue. He was dying of a fentanyl overdose on the side of the road. They administered Narcan to him to wake him up, and he refused to get in the ambulance. He said, "Leave me alone so I can die. That's what the ambulance guy reported to us. If you gave him another \$20, that next fentanyl hit might have killed him.

Speaker 1 14:23

Our team was able to go and get him in a long-term recovery program, discipleship program, where he now is walking with the Lord amongst other men. We get to see the coolest stuff, guys. Do you really think a sandwich is going to help a woman who lost count on how many times she was assaulted last week. She needs recovery. She needs restoration. She needs healing. She needs hope. A job is a terrible idea for a 70-year-old man who's living under a bridge. He needs restoration. He needs so. We're living. He needs full-on recovery, not just another job. So why do we keep waiting? Why do we keep waiting for things to get better? We keep believing a myth, hoping it will just magically fix itself, right? How long do you want to wait? There's only one cure for your brokenness, there's only one cure for addiction. Only one cure for your broken marriage. Only one cure for the bitterness you're holding on to. Only one cure for the anger and your laziness. There was a crowd of people at the pool that day. All of them there were there for different reasons. So why don't they go to shelters? Many of them do. They've been to shelters. They tried it. It didn't work. Maybe they were promised something that didn't happen. They were promised housing, or they got housing and they went into the housing, and there's more violence in the housing that they got than they were finding on the streets. This day we are still a crowd gathered. Welcome to Bentry, all the dysfunctional people in the area, right here in one room. Right, we're all here for different reasons. We're all paralyzed by different struggles, different sins. We all have sin on the menu. Your menu may look different than mine, but it's still on there. But the same cure that healed him is available for us, another false hope, another empty promise won't fix what's wrong. We need and you need Jesus, the Word. Our calling is not a faith-based ministry. I'm going to say that again. You didn't mishear me. Our calling is not a faith-based ministry. Faith-based ministries have a chapel and a chaplain. DFW Airport has a chapel and a chaplain. A faith-based ministry means some faith somewhere inspired some person to do something, and now they're using this phrase to fundraise. It doesn't mean that has anything to do with their mission. It doesn't mean it has to do with their vision. Our calling is not a faith-based ministry. Our calling is a Christ-centered ministry. Every single staff member is a believer. Every single staff member has a testimony to share. Every single staff member knows the Lord and wants to tell you about Him. The gospel is not something we do when we're bored. It's not something we do when the real work is done. The gospel is the real work. It's why we are here. Why do I say that? Because people need Jesus. They don't need to be inspired by some random faith, or inspired because you have faith. No, they need faith. They need the Lord. They need to know Him. Now, our calling is 100% inclusive in who we serve. We serve everybody, any age, any gender, any identity. We don't care. Come to us. Jesus said, "Come to me, all who are weary and heavy burdened. We are 100% inclusive in who we serve, but we are also 100% exclusive in what we believe. We believe God's word is true, and He speaks truth through us, even some truth that we don't want to hear, and that Jesus can absolutely save us. Now, at our calling, we've turned down a lot of money from foundations, from governments, from donors that want us to quiet or muzzle the gospel. We're not interested because Christ-centered organizations means we trust Him to deliver the message God has called us to deliver, and He will provide the needs that we have to do this work. It would not be kind to help someone off the streets and ignore their eternity. It would not be kind to lead someone to Christ and ignore them and leave them there, it would not be kind to leave them on the streets or ignore their salvation. That's why we're focused on both. This year, this day, today, so far, this number changes every day.

Speaker 1 18:57

But since January 1 of this year, our team has helped 1,139 people get off the streets. They are no longer homeless. Like they're not homeless anymore. They're in housing. They're in recovery programs. They're in rehab. They're in detox, and we track them for a year to make sure it's working. We want to make sure that they stay off the streets, that they're in healthy

community. People do need to get off the streets, and they need Jesus, the Word. In this story in John five, the guy was laying on a mat, and imagine that mat. It's an old blanket that some old incontinent man had slept on for years, and I bet that mat was nasty. It was gross. Jesus says, "Would you like to get well?" "I can't, sir, the sick man said, verse seven. "For I have no one to put me into the pool when the water bubbles up. Someone else gets there ahead of me." Jesus told him, "Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk.

Speaker 2 20:08

Wow!

Speaker 1 20:11

Pick up that nasty mat and walk. Instantly, the man was healed. He rolled up his sleeping mat and began walking. Why did Jesus tell him to pick up that mat? I believe the mat was a sign, a symbol. It was from the world he came from, and the testimony he was carrying with him. He had his new life walking. That's the walk. The mat was a testimony, and he was about to start walking with Jesus with that story. Each of us have a mat. We have a past. We have something in our life that symbolizes the atrophy in our lives, the life we've been missing, the paralyzed person we have become. Maybe your mat is a story of addiction recovery, or a business that you at one point sold your soul to, or bitterness and resentment, or a marriage that was falling apart. Maybe Jesus wants you to pick up your nasty mat, your troubled past, and walk with Him. Walk with Him and take that story of restoration and healing with you. Take that wealth that you have idolized, the comfort that has held you captive, the sin that has strangled you, the depression that defined you. Take that story, wrap it up. The passivity that was paralyzing you, roll it up, pick up that testimony, and walk with Him. Walk into a new life. Walk into the work God is calling you to do. Walk with Jesus today, right now in this city. There are people lying on mats around us. These aren't just dots on a mat. There are people right there where we are. That's the that's where Denton County and Collin County meet Dallas County, and all those dots come from us. Our data points on where people are, where people are sleeping outside on mats made of cardboard. They're sleeping in cars with their kids. Some are deep in the woods and are hard to find. You can't readily see them, and others you pass, you will pass by some as you drive home today. Take a look at those maps, those dots. I see people that need Jesus. Those same story applies to us. Do you want them to get well? They've been there for too long, and it's time that we find them. It's time that we find the places where they gather, and be the body of Christ He's called us and equipped us to be. Or do you want to keep waiting, waiting for them to get up without anyone there to help them, waiting for the drive-by philanthropy and the cash out the window or the bag of snacks on the park bench or the government to fix all the problems that God has called us, the body of Christ, to do. Can you imagine people from this body, Bentry, joining with our teams to hit the streets? Can you imagine people, the men and women in this church, walking under these bridges to go and make disciples? Can you imagine a day when there is not only a team but an army of teams that come from the birth of this new relationship with Bentry and our calling to help us plant a movement that will love your neighbors, to help them walk with Jesus and get off the streets? Do you want to see the word, the message of Jesus spread throughout the city. Do you have the walk? Are we ready to walk? Are we ready to pick up our mats, stretch and wake up those atrophy legs of the body of Christ that have been sitting for far too long, laying and watching the problem for far too long, and start the walk. It's time to do something amazing, church, to help the homeless community in this area, and it's time to help us launch our calling here. It's time to pick up your mat and follow Him. Jesus asked the man, "Would you like to get well? And today, I ask the church, "Do you want to see your neighbors well? Because if you do, then we all need to pick up our mats and walk together. Make a move that will get us going, joining a missionary journey or serving locally.

Speaker 1 24:35

When you walk out of here, those tables are not paper spam for you to lose in your car, there are opportunities for you to sign up and get plugged in and serve all over the community, because you live in a city where people are living in places they should not be, exposed to trauma and dangers that they should not see, and isolated from. Real help that can set them free, church. It's time to walk. Thank you.