



Face the Issue:

This past Sunday, we were challenged to be difference makers.

This challenge is not new. God has always challenged His people to make a difference in this life for others. We were put on this earth to bless others. It is one of the purposes that we learned in our recent church wide study of The Purpose Driven Life.

Volunteering is one of the ways that we can fulfil this purpose.

Let's look at the life of an Old Testament prophet named Elisha as an example.

Into the Word:

Read 1 Kings 19:15–21.

Elijah, the prophet of Israel, was a king maker (1 Kings 19:15–16), but his more important legacy was to pass on the mantle of prophecy to Elisha. In a way that foreshadows Jesus calling his disciples, Elijah came to Elisha's workplace to summon him to a ministry of prophecy; and like Jesus' disciples, Elisha gave up all he had to follow in Elijah's footsteps.

Do you agree or disagree that leaders in the church are responsible for calling and training others including volunteers? Explain your answer.

What leaders (pastors, etc.) have you known who have seen this as part of their task? How have they worked at it? Do you have instances in your life when a church leader or another Christian tapped you on the shoulder and encouraged you to use your gifts for the kingdom of God?

Volunteering doesn't mean giving up your means of livelihood to respond to the call of God on your life, like Elisha and Jesus' disciples did. Yet many people feel that volunteering is their means of serving God. Can you give some examples of how volunteering is a means to serving God?

How can we use volunteering to witness to the gospel of Christ?

St. Francis said: Share the gospel, and if necessary use words. What do you think he meant by that?

Read 2 Kings 4:1–7.

One of the recurring themes of the Old Testament is that God is a protector of widows and orphans, and that likewise the people of God should care for such vulnerable and powerless persons. In this story, Elisha demonstrated this kind of care for a widow about to lose her children as slaves to her creditors. Elisha came to her rescue in a miraculous way. He did not use the wonder-working power God gave him to advance his own cause, but to help and give hope to the weak and powerless.

Can you identify the weak and powerless in our church and community? What is the cause of their powerlessness? What influence do you have as a volunteer that might lift these people up and give them hope for the future?

This story is just one example of how Elisha was a blessing to those around him. Whatever we do—the way we put bread on our tables, our hobbies, our volunteer time—our true calling is to be a blessing to others. Jesus taught and demonstrated that we are to bless and not curse others, even those who curse or persecute us.

What do you think it means to bless another person? To curse another person? Does bless simply mean to say nice things to them? And curse is to say mean things? (Blessing another person means to empower them, lift them up, and help them to become all God intends them to be, while cursing another person entails tearing them down, using them for our own purposes, and keeping them from becoming all God intends them to be.)

Apply The Word

Take time to reflect on the people in your life who have blessed you. Thank God for them. How many of them have been volunteers here at Meadowdale?

Are there people in your life who have been a curse to you? How have you handled these people? Pray for them, too, and ask God for the power to forgive them and live above their negative impact.

Reflect on relationships in which you have been a blessing to others, as well as a curse. Ask God for the power to make your life a blessing to others, even to those you don't like or find difficult accepting.

Reflect upon how volunteering can help you be a blessing in someone's life. Ask God to make you a blessing in someone's life.