

## The Discipline...of Blessing

1. There is a remarkable woman named Naomi Feil who works out of Cleveland. [ONE] Born in Germany, she came to the US and worked as a social worker with aging members of society. She noticed that those with dementia (often misunderstood and not always called Alzheimer's) were shunted off to the side. It was assumed that they had nothing to say and that nothing we could say would make an impact on them...
2. So the world quit listening to them. I won't go into all the hows and whys, but Ms Feil developed a system to communicate with people with dementia and called it Validation Therapy. [TWO] The basic principle of the therapy is the concept of validation or the reciprocated communication of respect which communicates that the other's opinions are acknowledged, respected, heard, and (regardless whether or not the listener actually agrees with the content), they are being treated with genuine respect as a legitimate expression of their feelings, rather than marginalized or dismissed.
3. [Example of man pounding his tray] Notice what happened here: she got down on his level. She looked at him straight in the eyes. She entered his world and communicated on his terms. By doing so, she validated his communication. She blessed him.
4. And that takes me to John 13. Jesus is concerned about his coming ordeal – trials, beatings, and the cross. There are no weightier issues than the ones he is facing. We know that but...focus on that. Now...what is going on in the room? Those in the room have argued about how is going to be greatest in the kingdom. Luke 9 tells us about that argument.
5. Jesus does not call them into his world; he goes into theirs. [John 13:3-16]. I will walk through this rather slowly]
6. Notice the close: you know this. Now do it.
7. When I was a young boy, we would go in and out of Appalachia. I heard hymns there I haven't heard since. One of those was "Make Me a Channel of Blessing." The lyrics were all about confronting

sinners and telling the story of the gospel and the cross. [I may call Albert Lemmons up to lead the song from the central mic. The lyrics are below]

8. The song has a great message, but did you notice something? It approaches on one level...and it might not be the level the person is on at present. If we watch Jesus, he approaches people where they are. He eats with them. He befriends them. He serves them. He blesses them where they are and, sometimes, but only sometimes, he speaks to them about God and truth and life.
9. It was President Theodore Roosevelt who first said “people won’t care about what you know until they know how much you care.” And he was right.
10. So where is this going? A Christian discipline is, as Jesus told us in [THREE] John 13:17 – to DO what we KNOW. We know that people around us need a blessing. So...bless them.
11. When I do seminars on raising children, one of the things I ask parents to do is to catch their children being good. And, if at all possible, super-praise them, meaning, praise them in front of others. This isn’t a silly, “you’re totally amazing and perfect” thing but, rather, a blessing – an acknowledgement that they are worthy of respect and they have done well.
12. John Trent and Gary Smalley wrote a book called “The Blessing: Giving the Gift of Unconditional Love and Acceptance” back in the 1980s. It has been continually updated and is still in print. [please grab title and pic of book cover at [https://www.amazon.com/Blessing-Giving-Gift-Unconditional-Acceptance/dp/0849946379/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?keywords=the+blessing&qid=1553186439&s=gateway&sr=8-1](https://www.amazon.com/Blessing-Giving-Gift-Unconditional-Acceptance/dp/0849946379/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=the+blessing&qid=1553186439&s=gateway&sr=8-1)]
13. As important as this is, we also need to expand our theater of blessing. The people you meet every day are in desperate need of a blessing. Be the blessing. Be the person they remember at the close of the day. Be the person who spoke to them where they are [acknowledging the hard work of wait staff, speaking grace and kindness to shepherds, thanking staff].

14. As with all disciplines, this only works if you practice it to the point where it becomes automatic. When people see you as a fountain of blessing, you will be the person Jesus was asking his disciples to be.

### Make Me a Channel of Blessing

Is your life a channel of blessing?  
Is the love of God flowing through you?  
Are you telling the lost of the Savior?  
Are you ready His service to do?

Refrain:

Make me a channel of blessing today,  
Make me a channel of blessing, I pray;  
My life possessing, my service blessing,  
Make me a channel of blessing today.

Is your life a channel of blessing?  
Are you burdened for those that are lost?  
Have you urged upon those who are straying  
The Savior Who died on the cross? [Refrain]

Is your life a channel of blessing?  
Is it a daily telling for Him?  
Have you spoken the Word of salvation  
To those who are dying in sin? [Refrain]

