

December 17, 2017

Faith to Persevere

Acts 14:8-11, 19-23

Vanessa Howard owns Giving Hands Hair Salon in Tampa, Florida. One Sunday a month, she opens her salon on her day off and gives “free trims, facials, and manicures” to women and children who are homeless. Howard understands the struggle of homelessness because she herself was “a homeless single mother of three with only \$1.75 to her name.” She received kindness from a landlord who helped her to get back on her feet. Howard said, “It was from there that I found hope and restoration. I just wanted to pay it forward.” She has helped “275 women and children.” She said, “All of us have a story and I believe that we should use what we’ve been through to help others.”¹

In today’s lesson, we witness Paul giving and receiving healing. The student book writer says, “Paul brought healing to the lame man in Lystra, and then the church Paul helped to form offered healing to him after his stoning.”² For some people, it can be difficult to receive assistance from others, sometimes because they are used to being the one who gives. This story of Paul in Lystra illustrates that ministry is giving and receiving so that others can be in the ministry of giving.

Because of the kindness Vanessa Howard received from a stranger, she was moved to make a difference in other people’s lives. Paul’s church, having seen him bring healing others, offered healing to him. Healing that brings wholeness comes in many forms, including the healing we receive when we offer love and kindness to others.

1. How have you witnessed people demonstrating kindness to others living in a circumstance they once experienced? How does accepting kindness allow others to engage in ministry?
2. When have you been a recipient of your congregation’s love and kindness? How did it make you feel to be on the receiving end?
3. How does helping others allow us to experience wholeness? How does that wholeness affect our own need for healing?

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¹From “Formerly Homeless Hairdresser Gives Free Makeovers to Homeless Girls,” by Jennifer Earl at CBS News (cbsnews.com/news/formerly-homeless-hairdresser-gives-free-makeovers-to-homeless-girls/).

²From *Adult Bible Studies*, Winter 2017-18, by Chuck Aaron (Cokesbury, 2017); page 22.