

# Infrastructure of Blessing Pt. 1: Clay Jars

## Story of first Toy Drive:

- 10 years ago just days before christmas I got strange phone message from a person I have known a long time
- They were apparently drunk, and I could hardly understand the message:
  - “bob, its me, listen I got a bunch of stuff, you know toys, and christmas, and its for the poor people or SOMETHING? We need them out of here and I thought,,, well, just call me...”*
- so I called back and it turned out that this person was part of a motorcycle gang.
  - some people call them a club, but this particular one was actually monitored and on the federal gangs task force’s list
- being a motorcycle club/ gang this group of men really wanted to do what all the cool bikers do,,, A Toy Drive
  
- they collected a ton of toys, but they never actually figured out what to do with the toys, once collected.
  - here they were just days before christmas and their the clubhouse is full of toys that they don’t know what to do with
- They tried donating them to Toys for Tots, but that organization would not accept donations from what they called *“Criminal Gang”*
  
- So they called me !!!:). Could we come get the toys and find a way to distribute them to people who could use them.
- I made arrangements to meet them at their clubhouse**
  - when I arrived the police had 4-5 of the members outside against the wall apparently arresting them
  - I drove around the block for like 20 minutes trying to wait until the police were gone
  - i thought it would be embarrassing for them, if “the pastor” came and they were getting into trouble with the police
- Eventually I knocked on the door and a little peep hole opened and someone asked me what I wanted,,, I told them who I was and I was let in.
  
- we received the toys and within a few days they were in the hands of people all over this city and even in an orphanage in Jamaica**

## **Problem: Sometimes there is Blessing Available, but no Infrastructure to distribute it.**

- there were people who needed stuff,,, and there was a huge supply of stuff: but there was no system in place to get the stuff to the people who needed it.*
- Most of us live with Daily Shortages of: wisdom, provision, strength, or supernatural favor.
- Is it possible that God has already given all of that to us, but there needs to be some infrastructure established to get that stuff from him to us?

-Luke 5:17-26 One day Jesus was teaching, and Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there. They had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick. 18 Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. 19 When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

20 When Jesus saw **their faith**, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven."

21 The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? **Who can forgive sins but God alone?**"

22 Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts?"

23 Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? 24 But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." 25 Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. 26 **Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God.** They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today."

## **There were a lot of different needs in that Crowd.**

-1. The Pharisees and Teachers of the Law had come from far and wide to hear Jesus teach.

- we always immediately villainize these guys but they came seeking Jesus.

- some of them walked for Days

- they recognized that God was somehow present in the works and words of Jesus

- but they had a lot of questions and a lot of reservations**

  - they had a lot of Pre-conceived notions of what the Messiah would be like,,, and they were confused how Jesus fit into all that

  - they really were trying to sort all of that out

-2. Common Israelites were there. They were God fearing decent people, but they had been a part of an empty Religion.

- seeking something more than rituals and rules**

- They were drawn to Jesus because he seemed to really know God,,,, and the miracles he did showed that God was somehow WITH HIM and AT WORK through him.

-3. The broken, the sick, and the outcasts were present in the crowd.

- the reason that the Sick and Broken were Outcasts is that the Prevailing understanding of that day was that Disease was Punishment for sin.*

  - if you had an obvious disability or disease you were seen as people as being extra sinful

**-Is sickness and disease a direct result of sin?**

**-Yes and No:** all sickness, disease and death Originally entered the world because of human sin

-There are times in the Bible where someone's sickness was Judgment or discipline from God  
-but there are also times when Jesus specifically says that someone's sickness is not because of sin  
*-So,, In general sickness, disease, and death are in the world because of human sin, but someone's individual sin may or may not have anything specific to do with their personal hardship.*

*-at most of the gatherings where Jesus was,,, People with illness, disability, and disease were miraculously HEALED*

***-rather than shunning the sick like the religious institution of his day did, Jesus embraced broken people***

-because of this, any time Jesus was around, BROKEN PEOPLE FLOCKED

- 4. Finally there were people like the guys who carried their friend.  
-they were not in crisis, they were stable, moral people who genuinely loved God  
-and they really cared about helping people who needed it  
-They were people who craved PURPOSE.

## **-Jesus had exactly what everyone in that crowd needed.**

*-the verse said "everyone was amazed and Praised God, and recognized they had seen something remarkable that day."*

-1. for the Pride filled stubborn religious leaders Jesus had a merciful but humbling experience to Open their Eyes and Answer their questions.

**-sometimes that is what we need from God....**

-sometimes our issues/ questions are really born out of stubbornness, or pride, sometimes refuse to see truth in front of us

-Jesus purposely let this situation play out as it did to both forgive sin and heal this man in front of those Religious leaders,,, because their preconceived idea of who the MESSIAH would be, was wrong,,, and they needed to be humbled and have their IDEA CORRECTED AND EXPANDED.

**-But even when we need to be Humbled and expanded Jesus deals gracefully and mercifully with us....**

-2. for the Average Religious person who had never really experienced God, Jesus was speaking the words of God and doing the works of God.

-in connection to Jesus they were Experiencing something Eternal, and Transcendent

*-Some of us today can relate to those people in the crowd:*

-maybe you're familiar with religion ,,,, **but you desperately want to experience something Transcendent;;; Something more than LIVING, Buying, Consuming, and dying**

-Jesus still invites us into something Powerful, Eternal, Something Real.

-3. For the Broken, the Sinful, and the Outcast.

-Jesus had real power and real solutions

-he healed,,, he forgave,,,, he set people free from things that had controlled their lives

-Jesus poured out his love and restored the Value of people who thought they had NONE.

*-Some here today may relate to the Broken, the Sinful, and the Outcast.*

**-whether you are talking about physical issues,,, heart and head issues,,, or even if you FEEL MORALLY BROKEN,,,,,**

**-Jesus can fix what nobody else can.**

*-He still welcomes the broken, sick, and outcast.*

-4. For the 4 men carrying the Mat, Jesus told them THEIR FAITH Healed this man.

-They were desperately searching for PURPOSE, they wanted THEIR LIVES TO MATTER.

*-through Jesus that came true*

*-if nothing else good ever happened from then on,,, their lives MATTERED*

*-So many of us today desperately want what those 4 men found:: we want purpose,,,, we want our lives to matter,,, we want to leave the world better than we found it.*

***-Jesus still offers purpose that will give your life Eternal meaning.***

**Everyone experienced something that day which they would not have experienced if they had not been there.**

-The Blessing poured out by Jesus was limited to a specific time and place.

-the man simply would not have been healed had he not been there

-the same with what everyone else experienced

-We often make the mistake of assuming that if God is real and if he has anything for us, he will insert himself or that thing into our lives.

-but that is not how it works

-Jesus invited anyone who was willing to “Come to him”, he gives us the choice

-Still today, we much choose to “Come to Jesus” and receive all God has for us.

**—Is there some Infrastructure that needs to be built between us and God that will take what He has available and deliver it to the point of need?**

*-Toy Drive:*

*-Those bikers had something that other people needed*

*-The toys were there.      -Their Intention was to Give those toys*

*-But there was no infrastructure from the Point of Provision to the Point of Need*

-God has supplied everything we need, but there is an infrastructure needed to deliver his blessing to the points of need.

### **-There are 3 Forms of Blessing Infrastructure: Mental Spiritual Relational**

*-imagine a factory that uses 3 modes of transportation.    -Truck,,, Railroad,,, Cargo Ships*

*-there are different situations when different ones are key*

*-At Grace Union we have the 3 P's.*

**-pray (spiritual)    -pursue (mental)    -party (relational)**

-1. Mental: often times spiritual nourishment, growth, and change are SPURRED by LEARNING.

*-Read the Bible.      -Teach about Jesus and the Bible at church*

*-we read books.      -often just learning things about the world and nature enriches us spiritually*

**-One major channel God sends blessing through is our Mind.**

-2. Spiritual: *there are many things that seem to happen in my Heart rather than my Head*

**-often it is not that I needed to know something more,,, sometimes I pray and God Softens my heart toward someone or something**

*-times when I needed Strength, and in Prayer God somehow breathed strength into me*

*-there are times when I need clarity and assurance and God works in my heart*

*-As we develop the ability to connect with the heart of God in prayer,,, we develop this second channel of communication and movement between us and God*

*-it takes some time and practice to learn how hear clearly from it*

*-We would traditionally call this stream of Infrastructure Prayer.*

**-By Prayer I mean Spirit to Spirit direct contact with God:**

*-worship.    -prayer.    -meditation.    -listening and waiting silently in God's presence*

-dreams. -visions. -impressions in our spirit

*-traditionally the Christian Church has done a much better Job of emphasizing these first 2 Pieces of Infrastructure.*

-often times particular groups are stronger in one than the other.....

*-some are very intellectual and theological,,, some are very experiential and almost mystical....*

*-but this 3rd Infrastructure piece tends not to be as well emphasized.*

**-3. Relational: often God's plan for delivery of blessing is other people.**

-For the Man on the Mat,,,, the most crucial component of his encounter with Jesus was his 4 Friends.

-it wasn't just that they carried him,,, it was THEIR FAITH in Jesus than healed HIM

-this guys life is for ever better because of who his friends were.

-Without those 4 Friends that man would not have been in the presence of Jesus that Day.

-Proverbs 13:20 Walk with the wise and become wise; for a friend of fools suffers harm

-Friendship can serve as an Infrastructure to deliver things in our lives.

-both blessing and harm

-There are many people that are PUT in our lives and we get no choice.

-all of us have a certain number of channels bringing liability into our lives

-But WE DO GET TO CONSCIOUSLY CHOOSE TO ADD CHANNELS OF BLESSING

-Sitting around you every Sunday there are 300 + possible channels of Blessing between God and you.

**-will you open and build up those routes?**

**-In acts of Sacred Incarnation God delivers blessing through the human hands of friendship.**

—have you ever had a friend correct you,,, and you knew their correction was from God?

-have you ever been at your whits end and a conversation with a friend lifted you and put you back on track....

-have you ever been in physical need and friends were the difference makers....

-have you ever seen a friends marriage or finances or parenting and been inspired to reach for more and better things in yours?

**-Do you have one of those friends who, when they start talking about Life, or God, things become CLEARER TO YOU?**

-you should. -what if you had more than one??

-think of the COMPOUNDED BLESSINGS if you added 2-3 more this year???

*-For both the guy healed and the friends who carried him, just think how much God showed them and gave them through that friendship.....*

*-I think we often understand the importance of the Mental and Spiritual, but let me show you how much emphasis the Apostle Paul put on the Relational As well....*

-2 Corinthians 4:6-7 For God, who said, "Let there be light in the darkness," has made this light shine in our hearts so we could know the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ.

7 We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like **fragile clay jars containing this great treasure**. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves.

**The people sitting around you in this room are like fragile imperfect jars containing bits of the Indescribably Glorious God.**

-There is some of it in: Shane, Joyce, Shelly, Randi, Glenn, Don, David,....

-Relational Infrastructure requires something more than Casual Contact.

*-like when your girlfriend got mono from one of your friends (that required more than casual contact ) :) (it wont happen in passing....)*

-it happens over shared meals. -it happens through daily contact

-it happens through phone calls and hospital visits

-it happens in Regional House parties ,,,, It happens on Mens' and Women's retreats

-it happens when you are there to share the good and bad days of life

-Every time you deepen a Relationship with another Christian it is like opening another Jar and seeing little bits of the Glorious God you would never otherwise glimpse.

**-God had already made provision for the needs of so many kids on that Christmas 10 years ago.**

**-But an Infrastructure had to be put in place to Carry the Blessing to those who needed to be Blessed.**

-Will you develop the Infrastructure needed to Receive all that God wants to give you?

## **Application:**

-I want you to read the Bible each day and I want you to Pray.

-But I also and Especially in these next few weeks want us to Learn to Harvest the Blessing of God that has been Hidden in Jars of Clay. (build new Friendships, and build deeper Friendships.)

### **-open yourself up to new friendships**

-maybe you don't need it,,, maybe in many cases you will be like one of the 4 who carried,,,

-maybe you still have no idea what is possible what lies out there waiting to be delivered to you through Relationships you simply need to open up.