

# **Be Generous: Find a Need and Fill It**

*By Bobby Schuller*

**We're in a series about the greatest need. The greatest human need is bonding; to connect deeply with God and with other people. And one of the most important things we forget in that discussion is that in the Christian worldview, one of the main ways we connect with God is through people. That's why the church is so important. Not the institution, not all of the rights and all of those things as much as the family of God on earth that all week long is praying for one another, loving one another, caring for one another. The greatest human need is to bond deeply with others.**

**And maybe you come to church today and you feel like, Bobby, you don't understand. I am broken, lonely, sad, depressed and I've got nothing but people in my life. Sometimes, especially for us family or religious people, we can have people in our lives but we're not in a place where we're connecting deeply with them. And yet on the contrary, if you are bonding deeply with others, man, you can get through anything. Hannah and I have been through our share of suffering, I'm sure you have, too, and I can tell you that without the rich and deep relationships with the men and women of God in my life, I wouldn't have gotten through it. But even as we go through it, God carries us because of this**

**deep bonding we have. In other words, because God lives in us who believe, when you receive a touch from another believer, you receive a touch from God. It's not that the believer is God, but like the temple, you know in the old days, held the Holy Spirit, the real presence of God, so does the human life hold the Holy Spirit.**

**When another believer gives you a hug, Christ is giving you a hug. When another believer prays for you, Christ is praying for you. And so although for us as believers, although we go to the mountain top to pray in silence and solitude, and we should do that and that is good, we cannot forget that one of the best ways we receive a touch from the Lord is when we receive a touch from a loving person. And even though all of us are flawed and we have imperfections, I want to tell you something: God can touch your heart through the worst sinner, through the most backslidden heathen. If they have the Lord inside of them, even then God can touch you through people, and He does.**

**And so today, I want to begin by making you a promise, and that promise is that you can grow deeper in the relationships you already have. And even more important, I want you to know that you are worthy of love and belonging. You don't have to prove yourself, you don't have to make lots of money, you don't have to be educated, you don't have to have a bunch of trophies on your wall, it doesn't matter if you've been divorced ten times, it doesn't matter how many breakups you've gone**

**through or how many mishaps you've had, just as you are, you are worthy of love and belonging. Never forget it. Because if you believe that you have to prove yourself to be loved, it is then that you never truly feel love because you can't prove yourself all the time because people, frankly are just a little messed up. All of us are.**

**And so I want to begin today with this very important premise, and if you hear anything I say today, hear this: everyone is high maintenance. All right? Everyone. Okay. If you don't know what this term is, when I was in college and when I was single, some guy would date a beautiful girl, and she'd be way out of his league, and you'd think what is going on here, and then the guy would break up with the girl! And you'd think, how did such an ugly guy break up with such a beautiful girl! And you know what that guy would always say? He'd say 'you know what, man, she was beautiful but let me just tell you something, she was high maintenance. It was a lot of maintaining going on there. I just couldn't handle it anymore.'**

**And something I just want to begin with, when somebody calls you high maintenance, one, they're speaking the truth, but usually.. they're speaking the truth. Why? Because we're all high maintenance. But more importantly, when someone says that about you, what they're really saying is you're a taker. They feel like they're giving a lot and you're not giving much back. But I just want to say if you're here today, just own**

**it. If you say to yourself I'm not high maintenance, you're lying to yourself. You are. You're the worst kind. You're the high maintenance person that thinks they're a low maintenance person.**

**So we want to just begin there. That we all need maintaining, right? We have a lot of needs. Does that make you bad in some way? No! Sterling silver needs polishing or it gets tarnished. Rolls Royce' need to be brought into the shop a lot. I don't own one, unless Chad, if you want to buy me a Rolls Royce you can. But Rolls Royce' need; expensive things, valuable things need maintenance, and you need maintenance and that's okay. The step here is to recognize that you are high maintenance, and that's okay and that's a good thing, so just own it. Can we just own that today? Can we just wrap our arms around that and hold that tight? I am a high maintenance person? And I know the ones in here that are going I am not high maintenance, friend, you're the most.. sometimes.. so let's just begin here.**

**So there are like kind of two types of people who are flawed in their relationships. One: those who are called high maintenance, and what that really means is that the person is a taker. That they want to be served a lot, but they themselves are not going out of their way to meet the needs of others. And so if this beautiful girl in this hypothetical scenario was giving back to the guy in some way through, I don't know, just ask him how his day went or, I don't know, going to a baseball game**

with him, or something, then maybe he wouldn't feel that way. But in this story of the hypothetical, beautiful high maintenance girl or guy, usually it means they're takers.

So the first thing we're going to talk about today is the importance of serving in your marriage, serving in your friendships, serving in your colleagues, and even serving your enemies. And then the second thing is that if you say I'm not a high maintenance person, what may be happening is that you're just not being maintained, and that happens, too. And I think for Christians this is actually the greatest risk – that we don't acknowledge the fact that we're high maintenance, that we need maintenance, and that we have to ask for what we need from our friends and family who love us, and that it's not only okay, it's necessary in order to grow in our relationship with God. If you want to grow in your relationship with God, you got to grow in your relationship with people.

And so many of us don't acknowledge our needs and we are only serve, and we serve too much without asking for what we need personally, whether it's a hug or time alone or boundaries or doing fun things, the sweet spot is to recognize I'm high maintenance, but so are my friends. And so as I maintain them, they'll maintain me. As I maintain my spouse, he or she will maintain me. Can I get an amen? If you're high maintenance, would you just raise your hand please? I'm so proud of you guys. Amen. I am, too. I am a high maintenance man.

**So let's just begin here. We want to just begin with this story of Jesus, that Jesus' whole life was generosity and service. Jesus is giving everything. He gave of us time, of His life, He gave His skin, He gave everything. He healed, He lived, and He just.. no matter what He was going through was just serving others even when they were neglecting Him, hurting Him, beating Him. Jesus just continued to serve and care for the people He loved.**

**In the scripture reading from today, John chapter 13, we get invited into this story. In this story, Jesus and His disciples have just entered Jerusalem, which is the capital city of Israel. And it is where the king would sit if the king had returned. And most of His disciples think that what's going to happen in the coming days is like heaven is going to open up and angels are going to come down, and it's going to look like what a lot of us today think of us as the rapture, just heaven and earth become one and that's it, and like here is Jesus and He sits on His throne. Even though He's telling them, I'm going to go to the cross, and I'm going to be raised from the dead, and I'm going to serve the world and not dominate the world. They're thinking oh we're going to have this new kingdom.**

**This is so important because as you see in the Luke passage, as they're walking into the room for the last supper on Maundy Thursday, they're all debating with one another about who's going to be the**

**greatest in this kingdom. They're young guys, so you can hardly blame them. But in the Roman Empire, they were leaning into Rome's values of glory and power and dominance and we're going to rule the world, and I'm going to be a governor, and I'm going to be a great this and that in this new theocracy. And they're all talking about themselves so much that they forget to do the most simple thing – to wash their feet.**

**Now feet are a big deal in Jesus' day. Most roads, not all roads, but most roads were dirt roads. A lot of Roman roads were great but even then they were dirty. And of course back then they didn't have cars, they had horses. And they didn't have In n Out, they had real cows, and real sheep. And so as people would travel, they wouldn't travel on their own, but they would be traveling with sheep and goats and horses, and so those roads would be covered with can we just say carbon emissions all up and down the road. And so people would be walking in open toed sandals, essentially just a sole with a little strap on it. And this was life. And you would walk from one person's house to the next. And so the feet would obviously be very, very dirty and unclean. In those days, of course, just as today, Jews were all about cleanliness and to separate what is clean from what is dirty.**

**And so what would typically happen is when someone would arrive at a house, there would be a slave and this slave would be sitting there at the door and before you walk in, that person would clean all of that**

stuff, all those carbon emissions and dirt off of your feet, and then you would enter into the house clean.

Now in Jesus' day, and this is not to go into the world, they were in such a fuss about who was going to be the greatest that they forgot to clean their own feet. And here they are, they're sitting at the table and they're talking with one another. And remember, in those days, you would have a rabbi and a disciple and it would be like saying a mentor and his students, right? And so in those days, typically the disciples would serve the rabbi. And always the disciples would wash the feet of the rabbi, not only because the rabbi's feet ought to be clean, but it was a way of honoring and serving the office of the rabbi.

So they're all sitting there, and they're all arguing about who's going to be the greatest. And the rabbi interrupts them. He gets up, and he would have been wearing probably some kind of clerical robe, not just like this, but a symbol of his office, and he would have taken that robe off and would have maybe laid it over a chair or something. And we don't know but he might have taken off some of the rest of his clothing, as well, where he would have essentially gotten down to his underwear. And he'd put a towel around his waist so that he looked just like a slave. And with dirty feet Jesus went around to His disciples who forgot their duty, and began to wash their feet and they were humiliated. Here they



were talking about who's going to be the greatest, and Jesus begins by washing and serving them.

And washing their feet isn't just serving them, its serving them in the most lowly, embarrassing way possible. But you see Jesus wasn't embarrassed. If anything, He made it dignified. He made the act of service of another glory to the Father. And here was Jesus washing the feet of His disciples, and like they don't know what is going on, and they're embarrassed and Peter, who's horrified, goes no Lord! No! You won't wash my feet. I should wash your feet. I'm sorry let me wash your feet. Jesus says, sit down. Anyone who does not let me wash their feet will have no part in the kingdom of heaven. And then Peter says well then, Lord, wash all of me! Super religious Peter, you know. And Jesus; the NIV version says that Jesus looked at him in the eyes and said cool your jets, Peter. Just chill out. I'm just going to wash your feet.

And Jesus washes all of their feet, and then He gets up and He puts His robe back on, and He sits with them, and He says this, from John chapter 13: "Do you understand what I have done for you, He asked them. You call me teacher and Lord and rightly so for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and teacher have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set for you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who

sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.” Who will be blessed? The one who serves. The one who gives. The one who blesses. The one who goes the extra mile to make sure the other is cared for.

Now rightly so, this is a teaching about Christian leadership, about how religious leaders and Christian leaders, in general, whether it’s in business or life or school, how we ought to lead, but I think this also bridges very well to our relationships. And that’s how I want to look at this today. In our relationships, there is a sense after you’ve been wounded enough times, ignored enough times, hurt enough times, to just say maybe I’m not over in this relationship, but I’m not going to wash anymore. I’m done. I’m not going to do anymore. I’ve done enough. And they’ve ignored me and they haven’t helped me, so I’m done. And whether that’s in your marriage or your dating, or your friendship, or your colleagues at work, the Christian thing to do, the right thing to do, the blessed thing to do if you want to have a joy-filled, awesome, good life, is to wash others feet, to serve others, even if you don’t know they’re going to serve you, and that’s a good thing.

Can I just say that when Jesus washed the feet of His disciples, He knew that He would be dying on a cross in about 12 hours. It was imminent. It was right in His face. And even then, with the cross staring Him down, He took the time to serve those who were under Him. And

many of us in our relationships, in our friendships, or in our families, or whatever it is that we do, there comes a point where we just can't do it anymore. Or maybe we don't do it. Or maybe we don't recognize. And I just want to say there's nothing more blessed than to serve and to care for the people that God has given you.

This hasn't always been natural to me, and it is still hard for me to learn to do this, but I remember when Hannah and I were first dating, and I went to her dad's house and her dad's an alpha male, and to be honest, I can be a bit of an alpha.. not an alpha male, but a little bit of one sometimes. And we went to her dad's house, and there was a big mess that a bunch of kids had made. And we walked in and this was years ago. I would never do this today, but back then.. so we walked in and her dad said, all right everybody, we need to clean up. And it wasn't my mess, so I didn't want to clean it up. So I sat down with a book, as obnoxious as that is, and just began to read my book while everybody was cleaning in the house. And Dr. Presley looked at me and he said, hey Bobby, hey, you want to help us clean up? And I looked at him and I said, no, doc, I did not make this mess. I am not cleaning it up. I'm going to enjoy my book. Is it that bad, really? Woo! I need to cool my jets, I guess.

Well I guess that was something that was not untypical for me to say. I sound like a spoiled brat, now that I'm saying it out loud. But at

the time, it didn't feel that way. It felt like a power move to impress my girlfriend, Hannah.

So a couple years go by and Hannah and I decided one year that we want to make a new year's resolution with one another. And what we do is instead of picking my own new year's resolution, I'm going to let her pick mine and I'm going to pick hers. And you know what she picked for me? She said Bobby, you need to serve more. You need to help pick up dishes, you need to clean things, when we have guests over, you need to be hospitable, and to care for them and I was like I thought I was. I was just like.. but I was like all right, I'm going to pay attention. And actually as I began to lean into it, I noticed that the more I served others, the more joy I had. I thought that.. there's this weird part of me, this wounded part of me that used to think that if I served others, they'd take advantage of me; that they wouldn't respect me, that they would break all of my boundaries. Well just the opposite happened. When I began serving others, I found a deeper joy in my heart and began to culminate a more domestic Bobby. And in fact, I'm proud to say this ultimately led to what Hannah calls the sexiest picture of any man she's ever seen ever. Ladies and gentlemen, may I present you with this picture. Yes! Yes, sir! Nothing like a married man with a baby strapped to his chest washing dishes. That is sexy. So thank you, Hannah, for teaching me that.

**And one of the things I would just say is that in any relationship, whether it's marriage or friendship or even sometimes with enemies or people we have conflict with, we forget sometimes that the human heart is a bit like a love bank. This term was originally from William Hartley. He has a book outside that we offer. It's one of my top 15 or whatever books that I think are most important, and it's called *His Needs, Her Needs*. But the premise is essentially this: you can't make withdrawals in your relationships before you make deposits. You can't do it in your bank account and you can't do it with your love accounts in your life whether it's your friends, your family or the people you're leading. If you want people to follow you, you have to make deposits in them before you make withdrawals.**

**And this is so important because sometimes we often think I'm doing everything for them! All I do is make deposits. But you have to remember, and this is the biggest mistake, sometimes we think we're making deposits, and we're actually making withdrawals. Because the way that I experience love isn't always the way you experience love. And so very often if we're service oriented, sometimes we think serving others, but there may be other deeper needs like a long conversation, or doing something fun, or whatever.**

**And so very often we don't recognize that we are not really making deposits in the way we think we are. And if you want to make better**

deposits in your friendships, in your marriage, in your relationships, in your dating or your parenting or whatever it is that you do, here's a great question you can ask yourself and that is – what do they need right now. And actually, an even better question you can ask is what's the greatest need you have from me that I'm not giving you. Nobody wants to ask that question, right? Because they ought to ask me that question, right! You feel like if I ask them that question, there's probably a part of you that already secretly knows what they want and you don't really want to give it, so just asking that question, again, the question is what's the greatest need you have from me that I'm not giving you. If you ask that question of your friend or colleague or especially your spouse, already you're making deposits. Just the question itself is such a loving thing to do. Because what you're doing is saying there might be some blind spots in this relationship where I could be helping you, and I'm not. And I want you to know I'm there for you, and I'm ready to learn, and I want to be a better friend to you. And so it's a terrific question to ask and I would even encourage you, married couples and if you're here with a best friend or a sister or brother and you guys do everything together, to when you have a second, get some coffee and you can laugh about it, but ask that question from each other. What's the greatest need you have from me that I'm not giving you? And if you're the least likely person in your couple or whatever to ask a question like that, be the

**first one to ask it. Don't make them ask it, okay. Can we get an agreement from all the men in the room? Can we just get an amen? All right.**

**The best way to love Jesus is to love the people He's given you. You want to love Jesus, love your friends. You want to love Jesus? Love your family. Love them and when I say love them, recognize that they're high maintenance and that's okay. And that sometimes you're the engineer. All right? They're high maintenance, but guess what – you are too! And so am I, and I'm proud of it. I know what I am. You are high maintenance and that's okay. Acknowledge it and own it and be maintained because you need it. You need maintenance. You need to be cared for.**

**I think I already said this, but man, being maintained doesn't make it bad. The most valuable things in the world need maintaining. The Statue of Liberty needs maintaining. It's very high maintenance. Expensive cars are high maintenance. The best stuff in the world is high maintenance. And you're extreme incredible value, so recognize that you need maintenance, and don't neglect the maintenance that you need. You need it because you're valuable to God and you're valuable to me, and you are so, so loved, and reaching and getting your needs is important.**

**So we need maintenance, right? Sometimes that means we need boundaries. Sometimes it means we need rest. It always means that we need deep bonding with our friends and family. And that can also mean that sometimes we just say no, and it's okay to say no in a kind way. You don't have to lash out. And what happens is if we don't maintain our soul, then our soul begins to wither and it begins to break down and we begin to withdraw or become passive aggressive, or we say things we don't mean to say, or we get really low energy and we are just trying harder. You're so valuable to God and to the people in your life it's okay to be messy, it's okay to be imperfect and to not have it all right. You don't have to get it all right to be loved. And so it's okay that you're high maintenance because we all are.**

**So it's so good to just acknowledge your needs and ask for them. It's okay to be vulnerable and to go to the people in your life that you love and ask for what you need. Can I tell you if you've been making a lot of deposits in that bank, asking for what you need, you're going to get a very positive response, I think. And if you get a negative response or somebody pushes you away, you need to keep asking. You can ask in different ways, and you can try and make more deposits, but never neglect the fact that you cannot maintain yourself. Did you catch that? You can't maintain yourself. You need people in your life. You need deep friendships. Deep friendships that will carry you through the difficulties**



**of life. And sometimes that friendship is found in your spouse, and sometimes it's found through people at church, but it's so important.**

**And in those friendships, you have to be willing to ask for what you need. In your family, you have to be able to ask what you need. It's okay. Can I say, everyone, it's not fair to expect other people to read your mind. I even made a slide for it. Because very often we feel angry when people don't know what our needs are, and aren't providing them. And that anger is, in a way, valid, but it's not valid if you don't ask for what you need. If you don't help the people in your life understand how they can help you. It's such a loving thing to do, actually, in some ways to help people love you.**

**The most important thing I want you to know is that whatever it is you're going through today, maybe you're just struggling in life, I just want you to know you are so worthy of love and belonging. You don't need to be ashamed of anything. You don't need to be ashamed of how you feel. You don't need to be ashamed of what you think. You don't need to be ashamed of anything. You are God's beloved sons and daughters. And although we should always do what is right and are going to be moral Jesus people, in the end, it is so important that we never allow our mistakes, our sins, our imperfections and our flaws to keep us from a deep, rich, awesome relationship with people and with God. Can I get an amen?**

**How many of you are high maintenance? Me too, and that's okay, right? That's all right. That's all right. And so we learn that we serve one another, and we ask for what we need, and just watch as that can bring your relationship with God to incredible life. You're loved. You're doing better than you think, and we love you. Amen.**