




# BEGINNING SELF-DIAGNOSTIC

As we explore case studies of Jesus the Caregiver, it's helpful to take a moment and reflect on how our own self-care is going.

**RATE YOUR QUALITY OF SELF-CARE THIS WEEK**



BAD ····· OKAY ····· GREAT


**BODY**





BAD ····· OKAY ····· GREAT


**RELATIONSHIPS**



BAD ····· OKAY ····· GREAT

**SOUL**

Let's do a deeper dive into our soul care. Here are five stages of a spiritual journey. Which best describes you?




**TRUST**

I try to value all kinds of people, but I don't usually trust Christians.



**CURIOUS**

I'm curious about how other people see and experience the world.



**OPEN**

I'm open to seeing if God can meet a need in my life.



**SEEKING**

I'm searching for deeper meaning. Could Jesus be worth following?



**FOLLOWING**

I'm following Jesus with my whole life. I hope my friends encounter God, too.

Share in your group about your self-assessments. One of the benefits to sharing in a group is that you can learn from the experiences of others. We can grow together. Feel free to ask one another questions to learn more about self-care, soul care, and the spiritual journey.

# CAREGIVER CASE STUDY 1



## A HEALING TOUCH **Mark 1:40–42**

A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.” Jesus was indignant [filled with compassion]. He reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed.

### BACKGROUND **1**

In ancient times, people with skin diseases were automatically considered contagious and “unclean.” They were shunned by society.

What are your favorite ways of receiving love and care?

How comfortable are you with giving or receiving touch as a form of care?

### LIFE APPLICATION **3**

Have you ever had to care for someone with a condition that repulsed you or made you uneasy? How did you feel about touching or getting close to them?

Even if we cannot heal instantly, our touch and presence have an impact. How can you express care through the gift of your touch or presence this week?

If you could have God touch one part of your body and heal it, what would it be and why? Just as the man asked Jesus for healing, would you like to ask Jesus for something today?

### ASSESSMENT **2**

What needs do you see in the man who came to Jesus? Consider the whole person and his physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs.

What about this situation could make Jesus indignant and filled with compassion?

Picture yourself as the man with leprosy. How would you feel as you interact with Jesus and as Jesus speaks and touches you?

How do you think this interaction changed this man’s life?



### SPIRITUAL PRESCRIPTION

Choose one day this week to bless or encourage as many people as you can. Ask Jesus to give you divine eyesight for opportunities to offer your touch, presence, or words of encouragement. At the end of the day, tell Jesus what caring for others was like. Ask Jesus for any care you may need. Share about your experience with the group at the next gathering.

*\*from Spiritual Disciplines Handbook by Adele Calhoun*

# CAREGIVER CASE STUDY 2



## AN EMBARRASSING PROBLEM Mark 5:24b-34

A large crowd followed and pressed around him. And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed." Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

## BACKGROUND 1

In ancient Jewish culture, irregular periods were stigmatized. A woman bleeding non-stop for 12 years could not have a normal life and would have been ostracized and shamed in her community.

How do you tend to react when you feel called out, embarrassed, or ashamed?

## LIFE APPLICATION 3

Jesus cares deeply about the suffering of others and invites us to join his care team. He partners with imperfect individuals like ourselves to accomplish his work. Who are the people in our society who are stigmatized, shamed, or invisible? How can you take steps to bring care and justice to these groups?

Think about an issue in your body or life that feels vulnerable to share about. If you were to share with Jesus, how do you think he would respond? Would you like to try doing that through Welcoming Prayer?

## ASSESSMENT 2

What physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs do you see in this woman? What do you think her life has been like?

Picture yourself as this woman. How do you feel throughout the interactions you have with the crowd and Jesus?

What do you think it meant for this woman and the crowd to hear Jesus say, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering"?



## SPIRITUAL PRESCRIPTION

Sit in a comfortable position, and breathe slowly. Scan your body from the top of your head to your toes. Where do you feel any tightness or pain? As you name that place, say, "Welcome, Jesus, welcome," and let any tension go. Breathe deeply. Release. Then think of any issues in your life that you would like to share with Jesus. Name the issues and say, "Welcome, Jesus, welcome."

\*from *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* by Adele Calhoun

# CAREGIVER CASE STUDY 3



## TIRED AND HUNGRY **Mark 6:31-43**

Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things. By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. "This is a remote place," they said, "and it's already very late. Send the people away so that they can

go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." But he answered, "You give them something to eat." They said to him, "That would take more than half a year's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?" "How many loaves do you have?" he asked. "Go and see." When they found out, they said, "Five—and two fish." Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish.

## BACKGROUND **1**

Jesus and his 12 students (disciples) had been working very hard, caring for the masses of people in need. They were tired and hadn't had a chance to eat!

When was the last time you were so busy that you forgot to eat? How did it feel when you later realized how tired and hungry you were?

## ASSESSMENT **2**

Who are the different groups of people in this case study? What are their various physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs?

What do you like about the unique ways Jesus cares for each of the groups?

## LIFE APPLICATION **3**

What would you like Jesus to multiply for you so that you can care for others? Compassion? Energy? Something else?

Jesus offers care through a special invitation: "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." If Jesus gave our group this invitation today, how would you respond? Is there something you would need from Jesus to take him up on his offer?



## SPIRITUAL PRESCRIPTION

Schedule time to eat a meal with someone in this group. Meet in person if you are able or on video chat. Turn off all unnecessary technology to completely focus on eating and enjoying meaningful conversation together. Try these questions: (1) What is on your plate this week? (2) What are your hopes for self-care this week? (3) What help might you need? Group support by text? Prayer?

# CAREGIVER CASE STUDY 4



## RUNNING OUT OF HOPE John 5:2-9a

Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?” “Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.” Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.

### BACKGROUND 1

Shrines to gods of healing were common in the ancient world. Living with a disability was much more difficult than it is today. Many with disabilities would seek healing by going to a shrine to worship and purify themselves in its pool.

What is a difficult area of your life where it's hard to have hope?

### LIFE APPLICATION 3

How can you care for people who express unfulfilled hope or deep frustration in a difficult situation?

Who or what do you place your hope in? How satisfied are you with that?

If Jesus invited you to place your ultimate hope and faith in him, how would you respond? How much of your hope and trust are you willing to place in Jesus?

### ASSESSMENT 2

What physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs do you see in this man who can't walk? What do you think his life has been like?

What did the man's response to Jesus' question reveal about his attitude toward his situation?

What do you like about the unique ways Jesus cares for this man?



### SPIRITUAL PRESCRIPTION

Ask Jesus a question that is on your heart, or share what it would take to trust him. Spend a moment in silence and notice any thoughts, images, sounds, or sensations that you experience. Share as a group.



# ENDING SELF-DIAGNOSTIC

Over the last few weeks, we have gathered to discuss and learn together from various case studies of Jesus the Caregiver. These case studies point to the greater story of caregiving from God to us. Let's take a moment now as a group and reflect on that story together as someone reads it out loud.



**In the beginning, God created a good world.** All our needs were well met. We had the best Caregiver.

But we humans decided that we can meet our own physical, emotional, and spiritual needs without God. As a result, we can see all around us today what is unhealthy about our world. **A world without our Caregiver has led to anxiety, sickness, loneliness, injustice, and everything else that is wrong in our world.** The burden of having to care for ourselves is far too heavy for us alone.



So where does that leave us? Well, God the Caregiver loves us too much to leave us in our suffering. **Jesus joined us to bring healing and hope.** In his suffering and death, the Ultimate Caregiver took our world's evil to the grave with him. He came back to life to bring new life to us.

Once we invite Jesus into the center of our story, **we are part of his community. We receive Jesus' love, healing, and power daily.** Out of that overflow, we can care for others. Jesus sends us out into the world to join his mission and healing work, together caring for the most vulnerable around us with hope.



## LISTENING PRAYER EXERCISE

On your own, tell Jesus how you feel about this story. Ask Jesus a question that is on your heart, or share what it would take to join Jesus' community and invite him into the center of your story. Spend a moment in silence and notice any thoughts, images, sounds, or sensations that you experience. Then share as a group about your experiences.





Here are five stages of a spiritual journey. Which best describes you?  
Is there a different stage you want to be at?



**TRUST**

I try to value all kinds of people, but I don't usually trust Christians.



**CURIOUS**

I'm curious about how other people see and experience the world.



**OPEN**

I'm open to seeing if God can meet a need in my life.



**SEEKING**

I'm searching for deeper meaning. Could Jesus be worth following?



**FOLLOWING**

I'm following Jesus with my whole life. I hope my friends encounter God, too.

## INVITATION FROM JESUS

Jesus invites all of us to join his community, trust him with our lives, and bring him into the center of our self-care. Would you like to do that today? Is there a step toward Jesus that you feel ready to take today? Share as a group.

