

**Russell Kelfer**

# **I'm Human Too!**

**1102-B**

**Series: Why Do You Run When I'm Crying  
(The Caring Church in a Hurting World)**

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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The crowd that exited Palm Street Church that Sunday morning was no different than the crowd in your church or mine. There were struggling young people trying to make sense of the pressures this wild society was placing upon them. There were young couples trying desperately to build a foundation for a marriage that would last. There were the displaced elderly, those “forgotten” saints who had been tucked away in the corner, wondering if, indeed, they really had made their mark in this world. There were the “go-getters”, those hyperactive movers who joined every group and made every fellowship. There were those “spiritual wallflowers” who seemed to fade into the woodwork whenever the activities surfaced or the ministries called for volunteers. They were all there.

Deacon Smith was there. And he wasn't the least bit embarrassed that he had snored through the pastor's message either. He wasn't embarrassed because he didn't know it, not yet. (Mrs. Smith would tend to that when he got home.) Even when Pastor Woodridge cried, “Awake thou that sleepest!” the good deacon only seemed to change an octave or two, but he never missed a beat.

Widow Fran was there. She was the church organist. She played every song at the same speed no matter what the music called for. “Consistency!” she reasoned, “music must have consistency!” The problem, Pastor Langley chuckled, was that “Onward Christian Soldiers” and “In The Garden”, just weren't intended for the same tempo.

All of them were there and as the crowd made its way across that beautifully tailored table of grass that surrounded the building, it would seem that this must be a factory that produced spiritual giants. So many of the men were the pillars of the business community. So many of the women were the heart of the PTA, the Women's Club, and the various civic endeavors that seemed to make this little town what it was. All of them came, Bible in hand, smiles on their faces as broad as the sunrise, to Palm Street Community Church each Lord's day. This day was no exception.

As the well-dressed throng threaded its way to their comfortable cars en route to cafeterias and coffee shops and homes, it was

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obvious that this had been another “red-letter Sunday” at Palm Street. The big red thermometer at the front of the church went over the top this morning as the church pledged its largest missions budget ever. The deacons had announced plans for a newer, larger educational building with an air-conditioned gym, and a kitchen big enough for wedding receptions and after-church fellowships. The pastor had just returned from his trip overseas, and had preached a stirring message on the great commission. The tempo was up-beat, the fellowship was sweet, and the enthusiasm was obvious. This was a church on fire for God and excited about its mission.

As the hurried crowds made their way across that carpet of green that served as a colorful backdrop to the majestic white pillars of that Gothic sanctuary, it seemed as though nothing could interrupt their serenity or their joy. Nothing, that is, but Phillip. And there he was. No one really knew his last name. No one wanted to. He was the town joke, the town nuisance, and the town embarrassment all at the same time.

Phillip was mentally-impaired. Born with a serious birth defect, he was just never “quite right.” He couldn’t speak clearly, couldn’t walk correctly, and he could barely see. Even his nearly one-inch thick glasses didn’t seem to help. Whenever there was a town gathering, Phillip would show up. Slobbering, stumbling, dirty, Phillip. There just didn’t seem to be any place that was safe from his harmless but annoying intrusion. And now, here he was, of all places, right smack in the middle of the lawn of Palm Street Church about to interrupt and ruin the happiest Sunday of the year. It just didn’t seem right.

You couldn’t help but notice the change in atmosphere the minute they saw him. Happy faces turned tense. Laughter quieted down. The people suddenly turned either to the right or to the left as though they suddenly had a change in plans or they remembered they parked their car on the other side of the church.

In a moment, that section of the church grounds had been vacated as quickly as if it had been declared unsafe because of radiation. And left standing alone, apparently crying, was Phillip.

No one could hear what he was saying. It sounded from a distance something like “hoo-man”, “hoo-man”, but no one dared and no one cared enough to get close enough to listen. Phillip had something in his hand. It appeared to be a piece of paper. He

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was holding it out, trying to hand it to someone in the crowd, but everyone fled before he had a chance to do so.

Phillip, you see, was a threat to the folks at Palm Street Church that Sunday. No one knew how to deal with him and no one wanted to be seen trying. And so they did what most folks do when they encounter something difficult. They run the other way. They pretend the difficulty is a mirage, they walk around it, or they walk away from it and pray that it will go away. In this case, the circumstance was a person, but they treated him the same. Why, if someone befriended the boy he might come back. And what if, oh, God, what if he tried to come into one of the church services? He was dirty, and Palm Street catered mostly to clean folks. He was distracting, too. Why, they surmised, he might up and make one of his indistinguishable noises right in the middle of the choir number, or even while the pastor was preachin'! It just wouldn't be right. You see, Palm Street was a respectable church. It was a loving church, too. But the loving seemed to be limited to the scope of their own church family. Beyond those walls, love took the form of money given to those in need. No one much minded that. It seemed safe and it seemed Scriptural.

But it never dawned on a single soul walking across that church lawn that Sunday that Phillip might have a need. He was an untouchable.

So the crowd ignored him, as is so often the case, until finally you could see the hunchbacked figure of that pathetic young man turn around and begin to walk, in unusually staggering steps back towards Main Street and the poverty-stricken neighborhood from which he came. You could just hear the sighs of relief as the folks at Palm Street realized that their near-confrontation was over. They had avoided a scene. Jesus, they surmised, would be proud of that.

It was just a few hours later that most of the congregation heard the news. KLZR, the local radio station had broken it first. It seems that about 12:45 in the afternoon, a tragic accident took place at the corner of Main Street and Elm. A young man had run out in front of the intersection and was hit by an oncoming car. His name was Phillip. Clutched in his hand was a piece of paper. Scribbled in almost unintelligible script were these words:

“Please come with me. My mother is dying. She needs help. I know you don't like me, but I need you. Please don't turn away. Please don't run. I'm human, too. I'm human, too.”

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When the folks returned for church that Sunday evening the pulpit was empty. On the overhead screen above the podium, however, in bold print, were these words:

Assignment for tonight. Sit quietly and memorize these words:

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profits me nothing.

(I Corinthians 13:1-3 NKJV)

Underneath was one other brief passage:

Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.'

(Matthew 25:45 NKJV)

This was a church filled with activities, filled with programs, and filled with spiritually mature men and women who had made their mark in the marketplace. Many even learned to be quiet in the quiet place, but they had not learned to love the unlovely. And so they had offended the Son of God by rejecting one He had sent as an angel unawares to test their love for Him. Phillip did not fit their pattern for normality, so they walked around him in his hour of need. They had forgotten how God defines "normal." He defined it in Luke 14 in the parable of the great banquet. There, you remember, the "normal" folks had all been invited by the king to a great feast. But the "normal" people were all too busy. They all had excuses. One wanted to go out and inspect a piece of real estate he'd just bought. Another wanted to test out some oxen he'd just bought. Still another was newly married and was too busy for fellowship with the king. So the king redefined "normal." He decided there must be some people in the world who were so needy they would be grateful. It was to them the king would go with his invitation. So he commanded his servants in Luke 14:21:

...Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and the lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed, and the lame, and the blind.'

(Luke 14:21 NKJV)

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Now the door was open for God's new "normal" people: hungry people, poor people, crippled people, mentally-impaired people, and blind people. People who are suffering so in the physical realm that they would look beyond this world into the realm of a world in which their afflictions would dissolve in an ocean of equality at last. Go to them. And when you receive one of them, one of what the world calls "the least of these," Jesus said, "you will have received Me."

The minute the church decides that God is giggling in heaven with joy because Freddy Fatcat, the president of High-Tech International, who has lots of dollars to give, is visiting this Sunday, that church has lost its way. The minute the church sees a "Phillip" enter its doors and the bulk of the people run or look the other way, Beloved, that church is as dead as a doornail. I don't care if it's so doctrinally perfect that every saint in the sanctuary has the names of every beast in Revelation memorized. I don't care if they have a missions' budget bigger than the federal deficit. If Phillip isn't welcome there, neither is Jesus. All the teaching, and all the giving, and all the doing, is just so much sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. It profits zilch. Nothing.

With that somewhat intense beginning, I would remind you that we are in the midst of a study about people who are crying, people the church often doesn't see, and often doesn't hear. People who stand, like Phillip, right outside our doors, or God forbid, right inside our doors, and whisper, "Why do you run when I'm crying."

Today's study is about some of the more "normal" people in God's family, people the world calls "handicapped." People God calls "blessed". People the world walks around. People Jesus runs to, opens His arms to, and welcomes into His banquet feast of love. And if the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is supposed to be His family on earth doing on earth what He did, then you and I ought to be out there looking for the Phillips in this world to love. We need to be looking for the mothers and fathers of the Phillips in this world to love. They may not be dying, physically, as his mother was, but oh, so many of them are dying on the inside for someone to listen, to care, to help. Our Title is simply: "I'm Human Too!"

I tried to spend some of these past few weeks interviewing and listening to the heartbeat of people who have handicapped children or loved ones. I spoke with families whose lives have been eternally interrupted by a unique gift from God, a gift that will

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never “conform” to the world’s concepts of normality. Parents of children with Down’s syndrome, muscular dystrophy, and other crippling diseases that either prevent the mind from growing, the body from growing, or both. To those in the outside world they are trapped in little prison houses of inescapable circumstances, never to be released. Their time will never be their own again. Their families will never be “typical” again.

You know what I found? I found the cream of the crop of Christendom. Crown jewels in the making. Lives that in various stages reflect an understanding of the mind of God that transcends the comprehension of the most learned of men. I found men and women who know God. And for the most part, they wouldn’t trade that little bundle of frustration for any other child a sovereign God might have given them. They have been thrust into the mainstream of real Christianity, and are becoming God’s kind of men and women.

I spent time with them, wanting desperately to catch a vision of what they had experienced, and searching for ways that you and I can break through the barriers of prejudice and love the “Phillips” of this world. I wrote a lot down. I’ll share some of that in the next lesson. But the bottom line was and is, I can’t fully grasp what it means to walk in their shoes. The writer of Proverbs said it best:

Only the person involved can know his own bitterness or joy—  
no one else can really share it.

(Proverbs 14:10 The Living Bible)

In other words, I cannot fully enter into either the grief or the joy another feels. That is not possible. I have not walked through the same fire. My thermostat is not set the same. My heart is not tuned to exactly the same frequency. But we can learn from them, and we can learn from the Scriptures how to discern the heart of the hurting, and the heart of God where the handicapped or afflicted are concerned. We simply must endeavor to do that. God demands it.

Time will not permit us to complete this study in one lesson, so I would like to conclude part one by simply asking some questions concerning the handicapped. I would like to answer those questions by giving us some Scriptures to consider without elaborating.

I would ask you to take one week and meditate on these passages and lay them alongside your own life and form some convictions not based on what I say, or even on what the handicapped may

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say, but on what God says!

In the next lesson, Lord willing, we will lay those passages end to end and look at God's perspective of what the world calls "afflictions" and what God calls "extra grace." We will also seek, by God's direction, to hear how the handicapped feel, and what we as individuals and the church can do in the days to come in order that we might better understand Paul's admonition to:

...take tender care of those who are weak...

(I Thessalonians 5:14 TLB)

For today, let's simply ask ourselves for the sake of learning God's heart, these ten questions:

1- Why did Jesus spend so much of His time ministering to those who were afflicted or handicapped? I challenge you to do as I did this week. Take a concordance and look up "lame, afflicted, crippled, maimed, blind, diseased", and other similar words. As you do, you will find the mainstream of Jesus' ministry. Ask yourself why. Ask yourself how the church today could so neglect those Jesus deemed as so important.

2- Was Jesus' primary ministry to the handicapped to heal their bodies, or did He go to those who knew they had a need and heal their bodies to signify that He could heal their souls?

Jesus answered them, "It is the sick who [know they] need a doctor, not those in good health.

My purpose is to invite sinners to turn from their sins, not to spend my time with those who think themselves already good enough."  
(Luke 5:31 TLB)

Think about that!

3- If you had a choice between having a handsome, healthy child whom God knew would ignore His call and the claims of Christ and spend eternity in hell, or a crippled child whose very sense of need would draw them to Christ and glorify God, which would you rather have?

This verse gives the Father's perspective:

It is better to be crippled and on your way to heaven, than on your way to hell with both hands and feet.

(Matthew 18:8 paraphrase)

4 -If you knew that your affliction was, in essence, God's training ground to equip you for a special ministry, would you be

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more inclined to welcome that affliction? Paul said that's exactly what God is doing.

Thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He is our Father and source of all mercy and comfort. For He gives us comfort in all our trials, so that we in turn may be able to give the same sort of strong sympathy to others in their trouble that we receive from God. Indeed, experience shows that the more we share in Christ's immeasurable suffering, the more we are able to give of His encouragement. We are quite confident that if you have to suffer troubles as we have done, then, like us, you will find the comfort and encouragement of God.  
(II Corinthians 1:3-7 J. B. Phillips Translation)

5- If you knew that God was greatly honored when you open your home and your heart to the world's "have nots" and the world's "handicapped", would that change how you spend your time?

... "When you put on a dinner," he [Jesus] said, "don't invite friends, brothers, relatives, and rich neighbors! For they will return the invitation.

Instead, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind.

Then at the resurrection of the godly, God will reward you for inviting those who can't repay you." (Luke 14:12-14 TLB)

Verse 14 in the New American Standard Bible says,

"and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."  
(Luke 14:14 NASB)

6- Do you honestly believe that the one thing that will transform the life of a handicapped person is the touch of Jesus Christ?

One Sabbath, as he was teaching in a synagogue,

he saw a seriously handicapped woman, who had been bent double for eighteen years and was unable to straighten herself. Calling her over to him, Jesus said "Woman, you are healed of your sickness!"

He touched her, and instantly she could stand straight. How she praised and thanked God!  
(Luke 13:10-13 TLB)

7- Is it true that simply accepting a handicapped person, treating them as "normal", brings them immeasurable joy? Paul answers for us:

But even though my sickness was revolting to you, you didn't reject me and turn me away. No, you took me in and cared for me as though I were an angel from God or even Jesus Christ Himself!.  
(Galatians 4:14 TLB)

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8- How does the picture of heaven painted in Matthew 15:30 give the handicapped an even greater hope of glory?

What a spectacle it was! Those who hadn't been able to say a word before were talking excitedly, those with missing arms and legs had new ones; the crippled were walking and jumping around, and those who had been blind were gazing about them! The crowds just marveled and praised the God of Israel!  
(Matthew 15:30 TLB)

9- How did the crowd react, and how did Jesus react when the handicapped interrupted His schedule?

Two blind men were sitting beside the road, and when they heard that Jesus was coming that way, they began shouting, "Sir, King David's Son, have mercy on us!"

The crowd told them to be quiet, but they only yelled the louder.

When Jesus came to the place where they were, he stopped in the road and called, "What do you want me to do for you?" "Sir," they said, "we want to see!"  
(Matthew 20:30-33 TLB)

10- Is there any Scriptural basis for the claim that those who are afflicted or handicapped actually have a greater potential spiritually? It would appear that is what Paul was saying:

Three different times I begged God to make me well again.

Each time He said, "No. But I am with you; that is all you need. My power shows up best in weak people." Now I am glad to boast about how weak I am; I am glad to be a living demonstration of Christ's power, instead of showing off my own power and abilities.

Since I know it is all for Christ's good, I am quite happy about "the thorn," and about insults and hardships, persecutions and difficulties; for when I am weak then I am strong—the less I have, the more I depend on him.

(II Corinthians 12:8-10 TLB)

I believe those ten questions, and the answers engraved on the Living Word give us at least a glimpse of the mind of God where the crippled and handicapped are concerned. As Paul said so often: "Beloved, think on these things."

One more question:

"Do you dare, as we close, to pray this prayer with me?"

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*Dear God:*

*I want to be your man or your woman no matter what it takes or where it takes me. Therefore, I want to learn to see others the way you see them. And I want to specifically this week go out and find the people you would have been most likely to go to.*

*I want to accept them  
and love them  
and minister to them  
in Jesus' name.*

*Send them to me, Lord, or send me to them. The poor, the blind, the crippled, the emotionally ill, the physically handicapped, even those who may be unpleasant to look at and unpleasant to touch. And dear, dear, God, as I meet them, may I see them through your eyes. May I touch them with your hands. May I love them with your love even as I hear them softly cry, "Don't turn your head, I'm, human."*

### DON'T TURN YOUR HEAD, I'M HUMAN

Don't turn your head, I'm human,  
Inside, I'm just like you.  
And though my body's different,  
Don't run! I'm human, too!

No, I can't run and jump and do  
The things that others can,  
But does that mean I can't become  
God's woman, or God's man?

And can't you see God's special mark  
Of love He placed on me?  
He gifted me with weakness  
To set His power free.

He gifted me with extra grace  
Most men will never know,  
He gifted me with less of me  
So more of Him would show!

So please don't look the other way  
The way so many do...  
My Jesus made me just like this!  
And I am human, too!

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Let's pray.

*Our Father, we thank You for the broadness of the spectrum of the Body of Christ and for those You have imprinted with a mark of weakness on this earth so that through their weakness, You might magnify Your Holy Name and demonstrate Your great power and transform Your Body. Some of us Father have ignored the parts of the Body, the weak ones that You have given most of Yourself to. And some of them are crying Father, and some of their mothers and fathers are crying, and some of them are saying, "Please don't run when I'm crying." May we as a church and as individuals stop running, start loving, keep caring, until You return.*

*In Jesus name, Amen.*

### A Challenge for Further Study

1- Reread the ten questions posed in the latter part of this lesson. Read the Scriptures for yourself. Most of them are quoted from The Living Bible.

2- Retrace the steps Jesus took as He ministered. Were His priorities at all the same as ours? Why did He spend so much time with those who seemingly had nothing to give? Why were the disciples so often irritated that He stopped to spend time with the likes of lepers, blind men, crippled men, rejected men?

3- When was the last time you opened up your home and your life to those Jesus insisted were to be included on the guest list? Why not? Do you have a propensity to hobnob or fellowship only with those this world calls "normal"? Or worse still, with those who can help you or return the invitation? What made Jesus' social life so distinctively different? What can you do this week to make your life more perfectly reflect His in this area?

4- Ask God to send you to, or to send to you someone this week who may not qualify as "normal" to the world. Ask God to teach you from them what real normality is.

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