

**Proverbs (6): Refreshing Others**  
**Bible reading(s)- Proverbs 11:25 & John 4:1-26**  
**Message Notes**

Proverbs 11:25 *A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.*

- When I was in my early teens, for a while we had a regular Sunday afternoon ritual, and it was to kick the footy at the local primary school oval.
- Lots of people of all ages from the Church would meet down there and we would go hard for a couple of hours.
- Wasn't your jack in the pack kind of kick to kick, this was more like your constant running full tilt until you were exhausted kind of session.
- By the end of it there would be sweat pouring off us, out of breath, bright red face like a tomato and every muscle would be physically exhausted.
- Primary School they had a bay of those drinking taps.
- Drinking taps were all the way up a flight of steps and then up a hill. Drag your feet all the way up the hill where there was this oasis of drinking taps.
- Kind of taps that kids would stick stuff in and so when you pulled the handle down, they would blast you.
- Make your way up and you would stand back and try every tap until you found one with a gentle stream and I just remember drinking that water for what felt like 10 minutes because we were so thirsty and parched.
- Needed a drink.
- When we finally finished drinking, we would then fill up our bottles and just pour it over your head.

Invigorating feeling of refreshment and...

It was so refreshing, because of how much it was needed.

This morning we are continuing our Proverbs series and for today's message we are focussing on one verse; in fact, we are actually focussing on HALF a verse.

Proverbs 11:25 *A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.*

SAY IT TOGETHER: *whoever refreshes others* **will be refreshed.**

What great advice at the start of 2021. We've just come off what for many people was the toughest and perhaps the most discouraging year of their lives.

Lost jobs, lost loved ones, some felt very isolated and others struggled with mental illness and depression.

Some lost relationships or their relationships became strained and on top of all that our world seems to be more divided than ever.

Like Dan Andrews / Don't like Dan Andrews?

Lockdown or no lockdown?

COVID real or not real?

Masks or no masks?

Vaccine or no vaccine?

Liberal or Labour?

Women in ministry or no women in ministry?

Trump or Biden?

Add to that the polarisation and tribalism of Social Media where so many people, sadly even Christians have become hyper critical, negative and bickered amongst themselves- even to the point of losing friendships and we

would have to conclude that the Devil has had a field day in 2020 and if you're anything like me your emotional wellbeing tank, your encouragement reservoir is probably running on empty if not in deficit.

That was 2020...We are now in 2021!

At the start of a new year, with exciting new possibilities how do we bounce back when perhaps you still feel a little tired, beaten up or maybe even exhausted.

**In this New Year how do we find refreshment for our parched souls, when it is so desperately needed?**

Lots of different ways- Just last weekend I went and stayed a couple of nights in the City by myself. Went for walks, I took photos, I read books, I ate out, I went to a movie. I turned my phone off. It was great to refresh.

There are also spiritual disciplines of being in the Word, prayer, rest and meditation. They can all help.

Maybe you're having a holiday in January as we haven't been able to travel with family and friends throughout 2020 and hopefully that is refreshing.

These are the things we generally think of as refreshing, but today's passage has some timely and perhaps surprising advice on how to be refreshed and it's not only by doing things to refresh ourselves, but refreshment is also found as we proactively refresh others.

*Whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.*

New Year's is often a time of resolutions.

This year I'm going to lose weight, make friends, save money, break habits or travel the world (Maybe not this year...)

So many of our resolutions are all about us. What if our New year's resolution (or at least one of them) was actually about others?

How would this world be impacted if every Christian person on the planet made a proactive and deliberate resolution that this year, in 2021, we would set our hearts on refreshing others? **I believe this world**, let's bring it in, this community, our families, our marriages, our friendship circles, our Church, our streets...they could be radically different- profoundly impacted if with the help of the Holy Spirit every one of us took every opportunity to refresh others.

Here's the kicker- when we refresh others, we too will be refreshed.

Jesus said "It's more blessed to give, than it is to receive"

Our lives are designed by God to be give and receive. As Christians who have encountered the life changing power of Jesus, we have received what he refers to as streams of living water.

John 7:37-38: "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. (we find refreshment in our relationship with Jesus. Soul longs for connection with our creator and as we come to know God through the person of Jesus He brings refreshment to our souls) 38Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them."- John 7:37-38

What does this mean? Means through the work of the Spirit we have the God given potential to not only be the most refreshed people, **but also to be the most refreshing people to those around us.**

Unfortunately, that's not always the reality.

In 1986 Gordon MacDonald wrote a helpful book called "renewing your spiritual passion" and in it he talked about 5 different types of people and he rated each person on a scale from +3 all the way through to -2 based on the impact they have on others.

The titles he gave them were...VRP's, VIP's, VTP's, VNP's and VDP's

Bit of a mouthful, so what do they stand for?...

VRP's: Very Resourceful people **+3**

*Ignite* your spiritual passion

*Mentors, coach, role model- someone you look up too in life and they invest into you and believe in you as a person. When you leave their presence something significant has been added*

VIP's: Very Important people **+2**

*Share* your spiritual passion

*Teammates, close friends. Fellow disciple makers- spur you on towards faith and good deeds. People who engage in faithful and fruitful ministry.*

VTP's: Very Trainable people **+1**

*Catch* your spiritual passion

*Teachable spirit; want to grow in their life and faith. Hungry for God and they really want to learn. Even though you're giving out to these people they still add to your life because it's encouraging watching them as they grow.*

---

VNP's: Very Nice people **0**

*Enjoy* your spiritual passion

Fun to be around and you may hang out regularly, but they don't share in ministry, they simply benefit from it. Unlikely to serve in anyway but they may attend Church and they're nice people. Acquaintances.

VDP's: Very Draining people **-2**

*Sap* your spiritual passion

We all have people in our lives that can be draining and that's ok. We want to serve, encourage and help people through difficult times- part of our mandate is to care for the poor, broken, hurting and lost and so we should all spend some time with people like this.

And all of us probably go through seasons where we are draining on others because we need help.

Then there's people who just never shift from there. Hyper critical, always negative, undermining, self righteous, complaining and rarely contributing. When you leave their presence you ultimately feel discouraged.

Point of MacDonald's book is to have a balance of different people in your life. People that you are serving and helping and sowing into but also people who are challenging you and investing in your life as well.

Challenge for us as Christians is that ideally, we want to be people who predominantly live above the line so that we regularly add to the lives of others in a way that we are refreshing. If we're going to make disciples as Jesus has commanded us too, we need to be adding into the lives of those around us in a way that they are refreshed and they grow and they come to know Jesus.

Q. How do we go about that? How do we become a refresher?

Want to share three things from a Biblical perspective that can help us to become these people.

The first one is absolutely critical but may sound surprising. If we are going to refresh others, a skill we must master is the skill of listening.

## 1. **Listen** to people's stories

**There are so many people in our world who desperately need someone who will simply take the time to listen.**

If we're going to reach people with the good news of Jesus and be a refresher of others, we must learn to listen well.

You've probably heard the old saying that we have two ears and one mouth, and we should use them in that proportion. Brilliant saying and it's also Biblical.

*James 1:19 My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry*

Unfortunately, we don't always get that right.

- In fact, I think Christians are often **not** perceived to be good listeners.
- STREET TALK: Interviewed some regular people on the streets of Melbourne, I could almost guarantee if we asked them if they believe Christians are good listeners, the majority wouldn't agree.
- Quick to speak and quick to judge. Quick to declare all the things we stand against- Tell you how you should be living your life and all the things you're doing wrong and what you should believe, government should be doing BUT we are often perceived as people who are SLOW to listen.
- Slow to listen to other perspectives and slow to listen to the stories of people's lives.

What I believe God wants us to see this morning is that it's the exact opposite of what we are encouraged to BE in Scripture.

*take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry*

**Listening leads to understanding. Doesn't mean we'll end up agreeing, but at least we will better understand. We'll never understand until we first listen.**

**When we read about Jesus life, one thing that is clear is that Jesus was a great listener.**

The longest conversation recorded in the Gospels is the conversation Jesus had with the woman at the well. Josiah read it for us this morning.

Beautiful account where Jesus models patient listening.

It all starts with Jesus going to Jacob's well in need of a drink for physical refreshment and it ends with this woman learning how she can be spiritually refreshed in Christ for all eternity.

As the account is read, we see that Jesus takes the time to listen patiently to her questions and her statements throughout the conversation.

**Listening leads to understanding. For us, we'll never understand how to refresh others until we first learn how to genuinely listen to them.**

- When we pioneered the Bless collective Food van in 2016, I must admit I had a lot of assumptions about people who were homeless or disadvantaged.
- Stereotypical assumptions. I'd never spent heaps of time with people in that position and so I'd never listened to what they'd been through and I'd replaced listening with assuming. ASS-U-ME
- **I assumed that people were in that situation** because of the choices and mistakes they had made.
- They had done silly things and chosen to drink too much or be violent or take drugs and so now they were living with the consequences of those decisions.
- Ashamed to admit that they were the assumptions I made of every person in that situation. I embarrassed to say that I made so many generalisations about these people in our community who are precious to God and should be precious to us.
- Over the last few years all of that has changed and I could put it down to one thing. I took the time and I learned to listen.



- As I have sat down with these people at Bourke Park on a Tuesday or Thursday night and listened to their stories, I have learned that my assumptions are so often wrong.
- No doubt there are often bad decisions that have been made, but sometimes these people are the victim of circumstances well beyond their control.
- Most of us have grown up with favourable circumstances; food in the fridge a roof over head and a family who love us. Watching this on a TV! That's a luxury!!
- Many of the people I have met at the Bless Collective have never had these things we so easily take for granted.
- Many of them were born into brokenness where they were shown very little love. Others were victims of abuse; some were given away because their parents didn't want them or didn't have the capacity or skills to care for them.
- Many of them never had role models to look too, family support or anybody that cared.
- Others were born into family violence and drug addiction in their family and that's all they have ever known.
- Some have mental illness, disability or other issues that have caused them to lose employment or never have any in the first place.
- Some have had relationship breakdown which has led to them losing everything.
- After listening to so many of these stories, it dawned on me that if I had grown up in the same circumstances, **there's every chance it would be me sitting at the park looking for a meal and someone to chat too.**
- When we learn to listen, it changes everything, and it helps us better understand people (local community, or even in our Church community) and as we genuinely take the time to listen we start to learn how we can bring refreshment to people's lives.

**Incredible thing about Jesus encounter with the woman at the well is that he already knew all about this woman.**

At one point he says to the lady, "Go and get your husband" and she replies by saying "I don't have a husband" Jesus says "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is you have had five husbands and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have said is quite true"

I find it quite fascinating that even though Jesus already knew about this woman, he still took the time to listen. He didn't start the conversation by telling her all the things she'd done wrong. He simply listened.

Perhaps that's exactly what she needed?

**Before people open up, they want to know we care, and they know we care when we take the time to listen.**

What if Christians were known as the best listeners? How refreshing would we be!

To bring refreshment we need to listen to people's stories

### 1. **Speak** words that build

*Proverbs 16:24 Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.*

*Proverbs 18:21 The tongue has the power of life and death*

*James 3:9 With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. 10 Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be.*

Truth is that every moment of every day we have a choice on how we will use our words.

We can use them to cut down, undermine and gossip OR we can use them to build up, encourage and love.

**JENGA: Build up tear down. Words can so quickly tear someone down BUT they take a bit longer to build people up.**

STATISTICS VARY but Psychiatrists have concluded that it takes anywhere from 5-10 POSITIVE **comments** to overcome the effect of 1 NEGATIVE **comment**.

- Just recently I sat down with a young girl who is really discouraged by the words that are being spoken over her life.
- Her friends have let her down and she is being consistently criticized and torn down by her parents of all people.
- Over and over again words that manipulate and tear down.
- And I could tell through our conversation that it was soul destroying. She was starting to believe these things spoken over her. Clearly doubts and fears, hurts and disappointments written all over her face
- As the conversation wore on I listened to her pain and then I simply took the opportunity to speak words of life over her, reminding her of how precious she is to God and how much Christ loves her.
- At first it didn't seem to make much difference but as we sat in that café and the tears welled up in her eyes and she started to brighten up I saw right in front of me the power that words of truth and encouragement can bring into someone's life.
- They have the power to build.

In Jesus conversation with the woman at the well, His willingness to listen to her story, opened up the opportunity for Him to speak words of refreshment into her life.

It may be the longest conversation recorded in the Gospels, but it was a relatively short conversation, but by the end of it I think we could conclude that it was life changing for that woman.

Words have the power of life or death.

As we listen, it opens up the opportunity to speak words of refreshment that can point people to Jesus or even change somebody's life.

God has given you and me that ability by simply activating the gift of encouragement.

I felt in 2020 that our world went through a drought of encouragement.

I saw a new Australian movie the other day called the "Dry" set in rural Victoria in a time of drought and the footage of the dry fields showed rock hard, cracked, dry ground where crops once grew.

Visual representation of encouragement in 2020. **There was a drought.**

Only way that ground will ever come back to life is rain, just like the only way to overcome a drought of encouragement is through words of encouragement.

It's not hard to be discouraged in our world, just watch the news tonight and you'll be reminded.

In a drought of encouragement how do we refresh others/ By using our words like rain to build people up.

You might think well I'm not an encourager- that may be true, BUT don't let it be a self-fulfilling prophecy because you could become one!

Pick up the phone, send a message, organise a coffee, use your words to build. Make a change in 2021. Be a refresher. Live above the line.

God has given each of us the weapon of words.

Weapon of mass destruction OR a weapon of mass construction. Your choice!

In 2021 let's use our words regularly to refresh others.

How do we bring refreshment to others? By **listening** to their stories and by **speaking** words that build. Listen, speak and finally love.

### **3. Love** unconditionally

What is most stunning about the account of Jesus being at the well is that according to the religious establishment He should never have been there.

- One of the things I love about Jesus ministry is that Jesus constantly opposed the religious hypocrites of the day and He ignored all of their rules and regulations by prioritising love.

- He dared to heal a precious person of a lifelong illness on the Sabbath and instead of the religious rejoicing about this life changed forever, they plotted on how to kill Jesus.
- He healed and forgave people of their sin and they accused him of blasphemy.
- He came to seek and save those who were lost, and they crucified Him.
- While the religious continually built walls to shut people out, Jesus consistently tore them down to bring people together.
- Jesus loved unconditionally and the religious hated it.

With the woman at the well he broke so many of their taboos.

Jesus was willing to go somewhere and do something that the religious people of the day would never do.

**Firstly**, she was a Samaritan. Jews saw them as unclean half breeds not to be associated with whatsoever. Second rate citizens. Hated them. Avoided them. Not worthy of love.

**Secondly**, she was a woman and women were seen as unimportant and unvaluable.

Daily prayer for a Jewish man in Jesus time and beyond was to wake in the morning and thank God that He didn't make you a Gentile, a slave or a woman. That is how women were viewed in this culture.

- One of the beautiful things about Jesus ministry is that he turns that on its head in the way he loves, values and respects women whether the ones He encountered throughout His ministry or the women He had on His ministry team. It's stunning and radically counter cultural in the day.

**Thirdly**, this woman was alone, and women were never meant to be alone with any man except their husband.

**Fourthly**, she was a 5-time divorcee and was now living with another man who wasn't her husband! She was worthy of stoning.

This woman was off limits. She was viewed as unlovable and as unreachable and yet Jesus meets her right where she's at, He listens to her story, He speaks into her life and He loves her unconditionally and as He does, he shows the way for us to follow His example.

I watched Christians on Social media in 2020 and it grieved my heart. I saw so much criticism, division, squabbling, sarcasm, disrespect and negativity. It's like we've read the Scriptures and it says that these three remain; Faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is anger!

It's not the way of Christ. It's not refreshing- it's discouraging.

The greatest of these is love.

As this woman refreshes Jesus physically by drawing from the well, Jesus brings spiritual refreshment to her life by demonstrating unconditional love and guiding her to the eternal living water that will quench her ultimate thirst.

#### **Q. How willing are we to love others unconditionally?**

Follow has always been a Church that is willing to get its hands dirty by reaching out to serve the least and the lost and we will continue to be that Church, but it's not just the least and the lost that need love; it's everyone we encounter.

Family and our friends- it's the people who love us and those who hurt us.

Those who we align with politically and those we don't. It's strangers on Facebook, it's people living in our streets and it's people in our Church.

If you want to be a refresher, be a person who not only receives the unconditional love of Christ, but also gives that same love to others.

Maybe 2021 is the year to let go of the hurts, to cease the grudge, to forgive those who've hurt you, to reconcile broken relationships and to live in the power and freedom of the Gospel, which is powerfully demonstrated through unconditional love that has been given to us in Christ so that we can give it to others!

I started the message today by describing the refreshment of the drinking taps at the end of the footy game and the invigorating feeling of the water being poured over our heads when we desperately needed it.

How can we have that same effect on those around us?

How can those rivers of water flow from within us?

By listening to people's stories

By speaking words that build

By loving unconditionally

Those who refresh others will be refreshed.

May 2021 be a year of great refreshment for each of us, as we refresh those around us.