

A Theological Reflection on Care & Social Care

The Salvation Army's missional statement is to 'Love God and Love Others'. Therefore there will be times when we are called to help and protect those in our care. In this reflection we will consider scriptural truths that lead us as an organisation to reach out and serve those of an older generation in our care, considering the term 'duty of care'. We hope this reflection will help you consider your place in this world and your personal response to caring for those in your community.

What does the Bible say about the care of others?

'Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.'

Galatians 6:2

This is a reminder not to shy away from those dealing with problems and complexities, but to stand with those who need our help and support.

'Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act.'

Proverbs 3:27

God may often place someone in our path who needs help. Through discernment and wisdom, God will empower us to give the right support.

'The King will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."' *Matthew 25:40*

Serving others with practical, spiritual and emotional guidance can be difficult at times, but we are reminded that in serving others we are serving Christ.

Scripture is quite clear on the subject of 'care for others' and the requirement that as followers of Christ we follow his example in the way we interact, support and care for each other.



'We come into this world totally dependent on the love, care and protection of others. We go through a phase of life when other people are dependent on us and most of us will go out of this world totally dependent on the love and care of others. And this is not an evil, destructive reality. It is part of the design; part of the physical nature God has given us.'

John Stott

(John Stott, *The Radical Disciple*
(Nottingham: IVP, 2010))

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Dependency upon another person can be very difficult, however, not only for the person who is needing help but also for the one who is called upon to support and offer the care required. Jesus himself was often found healing people who needed his powerful touch to restore them back to health again. Our Christian response may not be one of a physical healing, but there may be times when we are called upon to 'bridge the gap' between the person in need and the help required. Supporting people in their time of need does bring healing and allows us to follow the calling of Christ: *'As I have loved you, so you must love one another'* (John 13:34).



Therefore a reflection upon care on the outset appears very clear from a biblical perspective – we simply 'care' and assert our power to protect and look after those in need. But what does this look like from a practical point of view?

To acknowledge a care for a person's 'whole-life wellbeing' is required; to consider the person's spiritual, physical and emotional needs. We need to ask ourselves what kind of care is required and what will be our response. In many ways it may feel 'easier' to fulfil the requirements of caring for someone spiritually, offering prayer and a biblical perspective for that person's heart and soul. However, it may be slightly more complicated to respond to a person's physical, emotional and mental health needs.

Scripture encourages us to *'be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love'* (Ephesians 4:2). So offering Christian care and support starts right there, in a humble, gentle, patient manner, bearing with the other person and remembering their value as a human being and their rights to choice. If we find ourselves in a situation where difficult conversations need to take place, we do this in love. If we need the support and guidance of other professionals, perhaps with a view to social care being required, this is again done as followers of Christ in loving, respectful manner understanding our limitations but ready to fight for the rights of others.

We don't always have the answers. We won't be the ones to set up 'care packages' as this is not within our remit or our capability from a personal care point of view.

However, what we can do is offer a 'package of care' that reminds the person that they are seen and valued and they are a child of God no matter what damage or deterioration may be occurring in their bodies or minds.

A 'duty of care' to keep someone safe will fall upon social services, but our own duty of care is to love unwaveringly, to do our best in all circumstances, to put another's needs above our own and to support everyone involved, including the person needing help and the family and friends surrounding them.

In the words of Mother Teresa, *'Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love.'* We are not called to solve every problem for another person; we are simply called to action and do what we can in the love of Christ.