

Session 4



When Well-Meaning People Interrupt Your Plans

THE POINT

God-ordained interruptions call for a sensitive heart.

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Peter Greig was on his way to his home in England as he hurried through Chicago's O'Hare Airport. He soon learned that the Iceland volcano had grounded all flights. Peter asked God how He wanted him to use this interruption and his thoughts flew to his friend Joe, 150 miles away in Madison, Wisconsin. "Hey, I'm in Chicago," he emailed. "Can I come crash on your couch?"

What Peter didn't know was that Joe had just received terrible news, and not half-an-hour before, Joe's wife had asked, "Who do you wish you had on your couch right now?"

"I wish Pete was on my couch," Joe answered, "but I know that's crazy." Within hours of Joe's stated longing, Peter was sitting on his couch.¹

Sometimes, God interrupts our lives with people in ways that feel like an answer to prayer. In our passage, Jesus was surrounded by people, but He took time for two desperate people. He responded with such spiritual sensitivity and power that it changed them.

QUESTION 1:

Who's a friend who has an open invitation to crash on your couch anytime?

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

LUKE 8:40-42

⁴⁰ When Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him. ⁴¹ Just then, a man named Jairus came. He was a leader of the synagogue. He fell down at Jesus's feet and pleaded with him to come to his house, ⁴² because he had an only daughter about twelve years old, and she was dying. While he was going, the crowds were nearly crushing him.

In Luke 8, Jesus was going from town to town, preaching and teaching about the kingdom of God, reclaiming what demons had stolen, and bending the laws of nature to reverse the effects of sin's curse.

In verse 40, Jesus had just crossed the Sea of Galilee, docking in Capernaum. As soon as He stepped ashore, He was swept up into the current of human sin and need once more. Pressing through the throngs of people was one of the most prominent men in the community. Jairus was a synagogue leader who was responsible for overseeing the teaching and worship in Sabbath gatherings.

Since the synagogue was the spiritual and social center of life in a Jewish community, the townspeople would have recognized Jairus. What was he doing? Was he going to debate Jesus?

Jesus had been a firebrand for Judaism, and was likely held in contempt by Jairus's contemporaries. He was a threat to their standing among the people, constantly calling their teaching and character into question. What would the other rabbis think?

But Jesus had been impossible for Jairus to write off. Capernaum had been His home base for ministry, so many of Jesus's miracles and teachings were done on its streets. That gave Jairus access to eyewitness accounts and stories about Jesus. All of them showcased:

- His compassion for people
- His authoritative teaching
- The miracles He performed
- The rumors about who He was

What if it was all true? What if Jesus really was so much more than just another rabbi?

Jairus must have known that what he was about to do would be risky. But on this day, he wasn't coming as a synagogue ruler; he was coming as a father, desperate for a miracle for his twelve-year-old daughter who was dying. As he fell to the ground at Jesus's feet, Jairus came to the only One who could heal her. He begged Jesus to come to his house.

Now, shift your attention to Jesus.

Jesus's mission had a time limit, making His every action purposeful. He contended with opposition everywhere He went. He faced the headwinds of increasing hatred from religious leaders. He bore the stress of being popular. The crowd always wanted something from Him. He felt weary from the pace of ministry.

Yet, we see no trace of impatience or irritation with Jairus or anyone else in need. Jesus never allowed pressures to squeeze an unloving or selfish word or deed out of Him or make Him callous toward people and their needs. Instead, He stopped, listened, and graciously responded to each need in appropriate ways.

When we consider how intentional Jesus was in His desire to please His Father in all things, what can we learn from Him about serving others when we're hard pressed?

- People matter to God.
- God brings people across our path to engage us in His purposes.
- Like Christ, we must put others' needs ahead of our own (Philippians 2:3-4).
- Walking in the Spirit keeps us ready to offer appropriate ministry that meets needs.

QUESTION 2:

What do you appreciate about Jairus's encounter with Jesus?

LUKE 8:43-48

⁴³ A woman suffering from bleeding for twelve years, who had spent all she had on doctors and yet could not be healed by any, ⁴⁴ approached from behind and touched the end of his robe. Instantly her bleeding stopped. ⁴⁵ "Who touched me?" Jesus asked. When they all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds are hemming you in and pressing against you." ⁴⁶ "Someone did touch me," said Jesus. "I know that power has gone out from me." ⁴⁷ When the woman saw that she was discovered, she came trembling and fell down before him. In the presence of all the people, she declared the reason she had touched him and how she was instantly healed. ⁴⁸ "Daughter," he said to her, "your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

Concealed in the human traffic jam surrounding Jesus was a woman whose very presence violated the Mosaic law. We don't know why she was hemorrhaging, but her blood loss kept her physically weak and ceremonially unclean (Leviticus 15), costing her dearly.

- She missed every family get-together.
 - She was never invited over by friends.
 - She couldn't touch anyone without defiling them.
 - She was required to announce her "unclean" status when near people.
- She couldn't worship God with His people.

- She had drained her financial resources on physicians, undergoing painful procedures that only made matters worse (Mark 5:26).

See her lingering on the fringe of the crowd? For years, this woman had been told to keep her distance. Can you imagine how emotionally starved and lonely it must have been to be an “untouchable”? How broken and destitute she must have felt.

Mark’s account tells us that she had heard the reports about Jesus (5:27). He was doing impossible things. Some said He was the Messiah. Her hope was reborn as faith in Jesus gripped her heart. Now, that faith would move her to action. Word of Jesus’s approach raced ahead of Him. She quickly formed a plan: get close, touch His garment, get away, and, hopefully, remain unnoticed. No need to draw unwanted attention to her unclean status.

Her pulse must have quickened as she stepped into the crowd. When Jesus passed by, she reached out and touched the edge of His robe. Two things happened in that moment. She was healed instantly. Mark adds that “she sensed in her body that she was healed of her affliction” (5:29). Her long ordeal was over. She was whole. Jairus’s emergency was put on hold as Jesus asked, “Who touched Me?” (v. 45). Jesus’s disciples were confounded by the question—noting the crowd. But Jesus was calm and determined to identify the person. Why did He insist on knowing who touched Him?

- **Jesus wanted to express His compassion directly to this woman.**

When the woman realized she couldn’t hide, “she came trembling and fell down before Him” (v. 47), telling “the whole truth” (Mark 5:33)

to Jesus and the crowd. How would Jesus respond to her? How would the crowd react to her disobedience of the law?

Jesus called her “daughter,” a term of family status. She was welcomed to the family. She was seen, affirmed in her faith, and restored.

- **Jesus wanted to focus on her faith in three ways.**

1. Jesus wanted to dispel any idea that her healing came because she touched His clothes: “Your faith has saved you.”
2. He wanted to relieve her of any misgivings that “she had stolen this healing from Jesus” without His permission.
3. Jesus didn’t want her faith to be anonymous. Faith in Christ isn’t meant to be private. It must be publicly declared (Romans 10:9-11).

- **Jesus wanted her healing to reflect His saving purpose.**

This woman had lived with her illness for a long time, leaving her hopeless. Her faith in Jesus, expressed in the simple act of reaching out to touch His cloak, transferred her uncleanness and alienation to Him, while He made her clean and welcomed her. It was a beautiful picture of why Jesus came: taking our sin and shame upon Himself, giving us His righteousness.

QUESTION 3:

How can we determine when an interruption is a God-given opportunity to serve?

Engage

WHEN PEOPLE INTERRUPT

Choose one of the following images that represent a challenge you face when people interrupt your everyday life. Then write a prayer asking God to prepare your heart for similar situations.



My Prayer:

LUKE 8:49-50,54-56

⁴⁹ While he was still speaking, someone came from the synagogue leader's house and said, "Your daughter is dead. Don't bother the teacher anymore." ⁵⁰ When Jesus heard it, he answered him, "Don't be afraid. Only believe, and she will be saved." . . . ⁵⁴ So he took her by the hand and called out, "Child, get up!" ⁵⁵ Her spirit returned, and she got up at once. Then he gave orders that she be given something to eat. ⁵⁶ Her parents were astounded, but he instructed them to tell no one what had happened.

QUESTION 4:

How can we remain focused on our mission yet open to God's interruptions?

What do you think was going on with Jairus as he watched Jesus and the woman? Exasperation that they had stopped. Aggravation that Jesus was searching for someone. Exhilaration at the healing power and love of Jesus.

That's when it happened. Jairus's worst fears as a father were realized. Jesus and the woman were still speaking when a messenger arrived with the terrible news. Everyone overhearing this news drew the same conclusion. Death was the period at the end of the sentence. Jairus was too shocked to speak. Jesus wasn't. He said something to Jairus that would collide with the hopelessness he felt: "Don't be afraid. Only believe, and she will be saved" (v. 50).

Now, think about this: Jairus had just witnessed Jesus's healing power and heard this woman explain that she had been hemorrhaging for twelve years. She had been sick for as long as his daughter had been alive. She trusted Jesus and was made whole. Jairus had come

to Jesus, believing He could heal his daughter. In that moment, Jairus went all in with Jesus. Jairus turned toward home with Jesus. Jesus corrected the perspective of the mourners about death, which they found laughable. Jesus was delusional, as far as they were concerned. But He knew something they didn't. What happened next is mind-blowing.

- He tenderly took the dead girl's hand, which was a defiling act for a Jew, but Jesus was about to remove any uncleanness.
- He said something this girl would have heard almost every morning when her parents awakened her. "Child, get up!"

When the One who is resurrection and the life says, "Get up," to the dead, they get up. It's that simple. The astonished disciples and overjoyed parents were awestruck by this truth about Jesus: *He can raise the dead as easily as we wake our children for breakfast.*

QUESTION 5:

When have you seen or heard of God working in a situation that seemed hopeless?

LIVE IT OUT

God-ordained interruptions call for a sensitive heart. Choose one of the following applications:

- **Become radically people-oriented.** Create a list of people you know who are facing some type of personal crisis (physical, spiritual, emotional, relational). Pray that Jesus will go out of His way to meet their need and make God's love real to them.
- **Receive a heart transplant.** Ask God to give you a heart of compassion for people who are hurting and are desperately in need of what only Jesus can provide.
- **When you're afraid, trust Him.** Receive Jesus's word, "Don't be afraid. Only believe." Reflect on the following verses (Psalm 23:4; Psalm 56:3; and Hebrews 13:5b-6), and trust Him when fear grips your heart when you face the unknown. Know that He is near to you right now.



1. Pete Greig, *How to Pray: A Simple Guide for Normal People* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2019), 151–152.