

A Deficiency of Love

Reflections on the Penn State Tragedy

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***Note:** The talk that Tim Henderson delivered on Nov. 10, "A Deficiency of Love," and the abridged version, "Love Notices Wet Hair," are predicated on contrasting the reactions from various parties to the plights of victims two and six, respectively. The comparison made was based on the assumption that the account contained in the Grand Jury Presentment is both true and reasonably complete. Since the talk was given, the media has reported that Assistant Coach Mike McQueary claimed via email that he did indeed intervene to stop the rape he witnessed. Penn State Cru takes no position on these matters as we wait for the justice system to discover the facts of the case. It is likely that in the days ahead, more information from the presentment will come into question. Regardless of what facts are eventually revealed, the principles in this talk remain relevant. Our purpose is to reframe the Penn State tragedy so as to encourage individuals to examine the role that love plays in their own lives; not to assign blame or guilt to any parties involved.*

Well, it's been quite a week. On Monday, Tom and I and the rest of the staff wondered if we should put aside our *One Story* series and give special attention to the Sandusky rape charges. Three days later it seems ridiculous that there was ever any question about that. In fact, rather than wondering if should we talk about it, the question has become "How should we talk about it? Which of the 50 important topics related to this should we address?" So much has happened and more may be yet to come and we can't possibly address it all. I've been asking the Spirit all week to give me wisdom, what do you want me to say? Who should I be speaking to?

You are a diverse crowd. First and foremost I am concerned about those of you for whom this isn't academic. A number of you are experiencing all of this through your own experience of being sexually abused. The pain of those children is your pain, and this reopens wounds that probably never healed for you. This must be such a difficult time for you.

Others of you don't share those scars but are nonetheless incensed by the alleged abuse and cover up.

Others are incensed by the incriminations against your school, your football program, and your coach. This is personal in a way that few people outside the Penn State family understand. There is so much affection and respect for JoePa that the possibility that he did

wrong, or false accusation that he did wrong, or the reality that he has been fired feels incredibly raw.

There are, of course, a stream of divergent and deeply held opinions about what's already happened and what ought to happen next. My purpose tonight isn't to comment or opine about the arrests and firings. Rather I want to try to reframe things for you. I want to help you think about this entire episode in a way that I haven't been hearing too much of.

I think that the Spirit wants me to draw something to your attention and give you a lens through which you can observe what is happening. As I have been paying close attention, thinking nearly constantly about this, and praying for wisdom, one issue has come to mind as the critical issue that I'd like you to wrestle with. Not just as it pertains to the alleged sexual abuse and cover up, but to your entire lives. Episodes like this can create a fog, as we've seen. But they can also bring clarity and perspective. I'm hoping to help usher in some clarity.

In pursuit of that I'd like to read to you a passage from the gospels. It will be familiar to most of you and as we consider it together I hope it will be the lens through which you think about all that is happening.

After we read that, I am going to read to you some excerpts from the Grand Jury Presentment. Some of you may have read it, others perhaps not. I think it is your best source of news on the core events themselves and I encourage you to read it. It is the most dispassionate, researched, clear, detailed, and I think trustworthy record of what is known to have happened.

It is also graphic and disturbing. Some of what I read to you tonight will be troubling, and if you'd like to not hear it, you are welcome to excuse yourself. It may be particularly troubling for those of you who have been abused. I'll warn you before I get there in case you choose not to listen.

I'm sharing it with you because it's pertinent and as a member of the campus community I think you should know what happened. There are so many opinions, and so much conversation. You need to know what is at the core of it all. You can easily find it online if you google "Sandusky Grand Jury Presentment."

Once those are both on the table I'd like to make several observations to you and try to piece everything together.

The passage we are looking at is Luke 10:25-37. Many of you will recognize it as the parable

of the Good Samaritan. Would you please stand with me in honor of the Word of God as I read it to you?

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

"What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

He answered: " Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

"You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. Look after him,' he said, and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

(Luke 10:25-37 NIV)

The story of the good Samaritan is well known. Less well known is that Jesus told it in response to the question, "Who is my neighbor?" Now the context of the question, "Who is my neighbor," is the observation that the greatest commandment, our most fundamental responsibility is to love our neighbors as much as, and in the same manner that, we love

ourselves.

So catch this: Jesus was having a conversation with someone and the observation was made that the greatest commandment is to "Love our neighbors as ourselves." When confronted with that, the man asked, "Who is my neighbor." What he was really asking was, "Whom am I obligated love?"

Is that clear? It's really important. So the command is "Love your neighbor as yourself." And the response is, "Okay, but, who qualifies as a neighbor? Are we talking next door neighbor? The whole street? How far do I have to take this? Whom exactly am I obligated to love?"

You with me? He is asking a question about obligation. Whom am I obligated to love?

At Penn State we have been asking questions about obligation all week. Who is obligated to report what to whom? Who is legally obligated to report sexual abuse of a child, and to whom must they report it? Who is morally obligated to report sexual abuse of a child, and to whom must they report it? Is there a difference between moral obligation and legal obligation?

We're going to come back to the question Jesus was asked in a few minutes. "Who is my neighbor?" "Whom am I obligated to love?" When we do we're going to see that while that's an important question, it's not the most important question. And when we look closely we'll see that it's not actually the question that Jesus answers. More on that when we get there. Let that simmer.

Let's look at the Grand Jury Presentment. This is where it gets graphic in case you'd like to excuse yourself. This is the official report filed by the Grand Jury who investigated Sandusky's alleged abuse. It details the stories of 8 alleged victims of Sandusky's. We're going to look at two of them, They are identified as Victim 2 and Victim 6 in the presentment. I'm just going to read it to you as it's written.

Victim 2

As the graduate assistant entered the locker room doors, he was surprised to find the lights and showers on. He then heard rhythmic, slapping sounds. He believed the sounds to be those of sexual activity. As the graduate assistant put the sneakers in his locker, he looked into the shower. He saw a naked boy, Victim 2, whose age he estimated to be ten years old, with his hands up against the wall, being subjected to anal intercourse by a naked Sandusky. The graduate assistant was shocked but noticed that both Victim 2 and Sandusky saw him. The graduate assistant left immediately, distraught.

Pause there. Don't answer out loud, just think to yourself, What would you do if you were the grad assistant? Try to imagine what it's like to see that. What emotions fill you? Shock, disgust, fear, empathy, anger, confusion? This isn't a random person doing the unimaginable. It is a man you admire, a man who coached in your program for years raping a ten-year old boy. Ask yourself, what would you do? Would you flee, would you intervene, would you call the police, would you call your parents or your boss? You may not know what you would do, who plans for that sort of thing? Maybe ask, what do you wish you would do?

Notice, by the way, that the boy saw him. The boy saw a big, huge guy who could- who could-rescue him.

Here's what the grad assistant did do: Went straight to his office, called his dad to ask for advice, then went to his dad's house.

The next morning, a Saturday, the graduate assistant telephoned Paterno and went to Paterno's home, where he reported what he had seen.

Joseph V. Paterno testified to receiving the graduate assistant's report at his home on a Saturday morning. Paterno testified that the graduate assistant was very upset. Paterno called Tim Curley ("Curley"), Penn State Athletic Director and Paterno's immediate supervisor, to his home the very next day, a Sunday, and reported to him that the graduate assistant had seen Jerry Sandusky in the Lasch Building showers fondling or doing something of a sexual nature to a young boy."

Approximately one and a half weeks later, the graduate assistant was called to a meeting with Penn State Athletic Director Curley and Senior Vice President for Finance and Business Gary Schultz ("Schultz"). The graduate assistant reported to Curley and Schultz that he had witnessed what he believed to be Sandusky having anal sex with a boy in the Lasch Building showers. Curley and Schultz assured the graduate assistant that they would look in to it and determine what further action they would take. Paterno was not present for this meeting.

The graduate assistant heard back from Curley a couple of weeks later. He was told that Sandusky's keys to the locker room were taken away and that the incident had been reported to the Second Mile. The graduate assistant was never questioned by University Police and no other entity conducted an investigation.

All the incriminations for university officials surround this chain of events. It's about this chain that Curley and Schultz are being charged with perjury, and it's about this that Paterno and Spanier have been fired. The question everyone is asking is, "Were they obligated to do more?" In particular, were they obligated to call the police? When the graduate assistant saw with his own eyes, the rape of a ten-year old boy, was he obligated to intervene?

Those are some of the questions about victim two.

Let's move on to victim six. This is also troubling, but not as graphic as victim 2.

Victim 6

Sandusky had befriended victim 6 through the Second Mile and one evening took him on campus to work out and spend time together.

Then Sandusky began wrestling with Victim 6, who was much smaller than Sandusky. Then Sandusky said they needed to shower, even though Victim 6 was not sweaty. Victim 6 felt awkward and tried to go to a shower some distance away from Sandusky but Sandusky called him over, saying he had already warmed up a shower for the boy. While in the shower, Sandusky approached the boy, grabbed him around the waist and said "I'm going to squeeze your guts out." Sandusky lathered up the boy, soaping his back because, he said, the boy would not be able to reach it. Sandusky bear-hugged the boy from behind, holding the boy's back against his chest. Then he picked him up and put him under the showerhead to rinse soap out of his hair.

Victim 6 testified that the entire shower episode felt very awkward. No one else was around when this occurred. Looking back on it as an adult, Victim 6 says Sandusky's behavior towards him as an 11 year old boy was very inappropriate.

Okay, so that's what happened. Not as absolutely awful, but still pretty bad.

Now, here's what happened when the boy got home:

When Victim 6 was dropped off at home, his hair was wet and his mother immediately questioned him about this and was upset to learn the boy had showered with Sandusky. She reported the incident to University Police who investigated."

Detective Schreffler testified that he and State College Police Department Detective Ralph Ralston, with the consent of the mother of Victim 6, eavesdropped on two conversations the mother of Victim 6 had with Sandusky on May 13, 1998 and May 19, 1998.

The mother of Victim 6 confronted Sandusky about showering with her son, the effect it had on her son, whether Sandusky had sexual feelings when he hugged her naked son in the shower and where Victim 6's buttocks were when Sandusky hugged him. Sandusky said he had showered with other boys and Victim 6's mother tried to make Sandusky promise never to shower with a boy again but he would not. She asked him if his "private parts" touched Victim 6 when he bear-hugged him. Sandusky replied, "I don't think so maybe."

At the conclusion of the second conversation, after Sandusky was told he could not see Victim 6 anymore, Sandusky said, "I understand. I was wrong. I wish I could get forgiveness. I know I won't get it from you. I wish I were dead."

That's a stronger response don't you think? This mom immediately calls the police, cooperates in a wiretap, confronts Sandusky to his face, interrogates him about the details, confronts him about the effect he had on her son, forbids him to see her son again, and rebukes him, telling him never to shower with another boy again.

Now that that's all on the table, let's get to the heart of what I want you to consider.

Why was her response so much stronger than that of the grad assistant?

Was it because she has more power, more authority?

No. In the first instance there were some very powerful people involved. But in this, just a mom. If her son was in Second Mile she probably was a single mom, maybe not very wealthy or connected to influence.

Was it because there was a graver offense?

No. In the first instance there was actual rape. In this one there was just outrageously inappropriate activity in a shower.

Was it because the mom had more evidence to go on?

No. In the first instance the witness saw the rape as it was occurring. In this all the mom had to go on was wet hair. Wet hair. That's it. But it was enough.

She sees the wet hair. "Sweetie, why is your hair wet?" "Well, I took a shower with Mr.

Sandusky." "You took a shower with Mr. Sandusky? He was in the shower with you? Sweetheart, were you naked in the shower? Was Mr. Sandusky naked? Honey, did Mr. Sandusky touch you? Could you please point to where he touched you?"

In the first instance the witness calls his boss the next morning and reports what he saw as he was obligated to do.

In this one the mom calls the police immediately, confronts Sandusky and chases this down.

Why? Now's your chance to actually answer. What was present here, but missing there?

Love. This mom loved her son. She is a momma bear and her cub is in danger. She loves her little boy and, moved to outrage by wet hair, she moves aggressively. She wasn't fulfilling a legal obligation and she wasn't fulfilling a moral obligation. Obligation wasn't the issue.

She was loving her son.

Guys, I want to suggest to you that what we've seen on campus this week, at multiple levels in the organization, and maybe in our own hearts as well, is a deficiency of love.

Who should be fired? Who should be in jail? I don't know. The cops and judges and the Board of Trustees- that's their job. But do you think that if the witnesses, coaches and administrators had loved the boys who were being raped, they'd be quibbling about obligations? Love compels action. Love moves to protect.

I've heard of students questioning what this means about the value of their degree, or the future of the football program. Really? You're young. As I'd had conversations with many I've realized that your moral compasses are still being built. You're still filling in the blank spaces about what's right and wrong in different situations. But can I just poke you a little bit? Those questions should be way down your list. If it was your little brother, your son being raped in a shower by a 50 year old man, would those questions even occur to you?

I have a ten-year old son. I don't often see my kids naked, I just don't have occasion to. But curiously on Monday night I was in my sons' room when they were getting ready for bed and I saw Max naked. He's a little guy. He is a fragile, vulnerable, easily exploited little guy. You don't have kids yet, so this part of your world hasn't come online, but I couldn't help but imagine Max pressed against a shower wall. And there is no one there who loves him. There's someone there. Someone who abuses him. And there's someone there who sees him, and whom he sees, and then footsteps.

Do you know what you are doing when you are ten years old pressed against a shower wall getting raped? You're hoping that someone comes to your rescue. And he does. Some 6'4" 280 pound guy turns the corner and you see him and he sees you, and he walks away, and hope turns to despair.

There's no one there who loves him.

I want to suggest to you that **the shame engulfing Penn State is a deficiency of love.** Loving God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and loving our neighbors as much as, and in the same manner that, we love ourselves, is the chief responsibility of our life.

Come back with me to Luke 10.

Jesus was asked the question, "Who is my neighbor?" "Whom am I obligated to love?" And then he tells his famous story:

A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead.

A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side.

So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. Look after him, he said, and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.

Then Jesus asks his own question. It's similar to the question he was asked, but with a very important change. He asks, "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

In the question, "Who is my neighbor?" The neighbor is the obligation. What must I do to fulfill my obligation to my neighbor? What have I gotta do? How far does this go? The neighbor is the one who needs to be loved.

But as Jesus reframes it, the neighbor is not the one who needs to be loved. It's the one who does the loving. "Who was a neighbor to the man who fell into distress?"

Do you see? "Who is my neighbor?" is the wrong question.

The right question is "Am I a neighbor?"

It's not "Who must I love?" It's "Am I one who loves?"

Do I move with the same urgency and thoroughness toward another person's distress that I move towards my own?

For the mom the answer was yes. She saw wet hair and she chased it because she loves her son. You can answer for yourself if the same can be said of anyone else in the entire chain.

I hope you'll ask it about yourself as well. When you do that, if you answer it with any honesty, the answer will be no. No, not even close. There is no one on the planet that you love half as much as you love yourself. Which is why you need a savior.

Friends, the chief responsibility of your life is to love others as you love yourself. But you don't. And neither do I.

Jesus Christ is the only one to walk the earth who fulfilled that. He is the Good Samaritan. Jesus is the one who moves toward the broken and binds them up. He is the one who pays whatever it costs to heal their wounds. He is the great lover. He said, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." And then he did that.

He loved radically, gave himself away. Not just figuratively, but literally. He laid down his life as a sacrifice on the cross to protect us from the punishment our sins deserve. He loves you just as much as he loves himself.

To the extent that this penetrates your heart it will transform you and make you love better. It will give you not just the affection of love, but the courage of love. A love that moves to protect. That moves into danger. A love that doesn't measure obligation, but that suffers so that the beloved won't.

One last thought: **Don't deflect the shame of what has happened and is happening here at Penn State. Let it into your heart. Grieve. Mourn.** We are Penn State. If we will accept the glory of that we must also accept the shame. This is a shameful moment. Embrace it. Let

shame do its work. People are eager to get past this; to restore Penn State Pride. Don't rush this.

Let shame produce softness and repentance in your heart. Perhaps God will give you the grace to see in other's failure to love, your own failure to love, so you can confess it to him, and be cleansed, and experiencing his love, become a better lover. We love because he loved us first.

Jeremiah 31 says, God will turn mourning into gladness. But first we have to mourn.

He'll give comfort and joy instead of sorrow. But first there must be sorrow.

We do a poor job loving our neighbors. Which suggests perhaps we do a poor job of delighting in his love for us.

Here's what I am praying for.

- First, that we won't miss this, but that God will pour out on us a Spirit of mourning. Just to be clear, not a mourning for ourselves because we lost our coach. A mourning over sin and our deficiency of love.
- That the mourning won't just be limited to Cru but that it will spread throughout the entire campus.
- And that as we experience his grace, he'll turn that mourning into gladness.
- And as we delight in his love, we will be transformed into neighbors who love well.

I want to invite you to grieve. Come down front and grieve together:

Grieve your own abuse if you've been victimized.

Grieve for the kids who fell into the hands of Sandusky.

Grieve your own lovelessness, or other sin.

Grieve anything else God puts on your heart.