

Becoming God's Catalyst For Changed Lives – Part 1

John 4

Introduction:

1. This chapter contains an incredible story about Jesus Christ and demonstrates the compassion of our Savior as He reaches out to help one lone lady who needed help. She was an immoral, socially-unacceptable Samaritan woman. (Read the story.)
2. Last week we learned that God's heart and desire is not for us to simply be a church that exists for ourselves, but to be a church that exists for others. Philippians 2:4
3. This is the heart of Christ. Christ desired to do whatever it took to reach people and change lives for God's glory. This lady placed her faith in Christ, and it led to a revival in her city, with multitudes trusting in Christ. It all started because Jesus simply cared.
 - Imagine caring for a sinful, down-and-out, immoral soul, someone that the world deemed a lost cause, and that person coming to faith in Christ. And then, Christ working in and through that person brings about revival to all of Daytona Beach. That is what happened here in our text. Jesus was the catalyst, the trigger mechanism that brought it all about.
4. You can be God's catalyst for changed lives. If saved, Christ lives in you.
 - Webster's defines catalyst as a "person that quickly causes change or action."
 - God can use you. How? Our Savior provides us a great model. What a text!

First, by a willingness to lay aside tradition.

1. In His encounter with the woman at the well, Jesus shattered many Jewish customs:
 - First, as a Jew, He traveled through Samaria (vs. 3-4); this was unusual.
 - Second, He spoke to a woman in public (vs. 7); this was unheard of.
 - Third, He spoke to a Samaritan woman; this was a double no-no. The Jews traditionally despised the Samaritans and would not address them.
 - Fourth, He asked her to give Him a drink of her water; using her cup, He would become ceremonially unclean according to their tradition (vs. 6-7).
2. This shocked the woman at the well (vs. 9), but Jesus' actions led to a spiritual discussion that changed her life (vs. 14-15) and many other lives (vs. 39).
3. Here is the point: Jesus was not afraid to oppose tradition. Jesus was willing to change and break from the established mold. He wasn't worried about the fact that "It's never been done this way before." He never asked, "What will my disciples think?" vs. 27
4. Jesus did this sort of thing all the time, and it always made the Pharisees angry. This is one of the reasons the Pharisees hated Him so much. Here are some questions that Jesus was faced with:

- “Why do you dine with low-life people that are sinners and tax-collectors?”
 - “Why do the Pharisees fast, and your disciples don’t?”
 - “Why don’t your disciples ceremonially clean their hands before eating?”
 - “Why are you plucking corn on this day? This isn’t the right day!”
 - “Are you going to heal that needy man on the Sabbath Day?”
 - “Don’t you know you aren’t supposed to do these things?” “Oh yeah, who says?” The Pharisees respond, “We do! Our tradition says so. This is the way we have always done it.”
5. Jesus never disobeyed God’s commands, but He was not one bit hesitant to change from the way things had always been done before – tradition. Jesus did not break any divine laws; He broke man-made tradition and man-made rules. There is a difference. Man-made religion is all about traditions.
 6. The Pharisees cherished their traditions; they placed their traditions on the same level as God’s Word. Mark 7:7-9
 - Do you think they gave up any of their traditions to reach a soul for God – a Samaritan soul? Their attitude was “You conform to us and our way of doing things.”
 7. How do Jesus’ actions apply to us? What can we learn? People who are unwilling to change will never be God’s catalyst for changed lives. They will live and die unto themselves, having very little impact. Jesus was a catalyst for life change; He was willing to change and break from the status quo.
 8. But I’m afraid many times churches’ attitudes are very similar to the Pharisees. Too often we have circled our wagons, built walls around our communities of faith, and invited people in only if they are willing to become like us. And I am not talking about biblical doctrine – I am talking about our cherished traditions.
 9. Many times we create churches for us, and we are unwilling to change or be inconvenienced to reach others. This is the antithesis, the complete opposite, of the heart of Christ, as demonstrated here in our text.
 - I know that change is difficult for some people, but we live in a changing world. It is a world of continuous, rapid, dynamic change. Think about how things have changed since you were a child. We like some of the changes (A/C, indoor plumbing, and stores to get milk and eggs, electric stove, computers, cell phones, TV in every home, cars, etc.).
 - But for some odd reason, many Christians have a problem carrying this over to their church life. They don’t want to go back to 1940 and live that way again, but they want the church to stay just the way it is with no changes.
 - As a result, many churches are dying and failing to reach people with the gospel. They aren’t reaching young people, and they aren’t reaching the next generation. Why? “We shall not be moved!”
 10. It is so Christ-like when we are willing to change to meet the needs of others. I’m not talking about changing the message, watering down sound doctrine, or diluting the gospel!

11. I am talking about being willing to change our methods, our traditions, or our preferences in order to share with people the life-changing message of Jesus Christ.
12. In 1 Corinthians 9:20-23, the apostle Paul was like Christ; he was consumed with reaching people with the life-changing message of the gospel. May your attitude be “Hey, if it means I have to lay aside some of my preferences or rights, so be it.”

In Conclusion:

1. Jesus was a catalyst for changed lives. Most people would have walked right by this woman at the well and never thought twice about her. They would have seen a woman, a Samaritan, or an immoral, shady character.
2. Jesus saw a soul in need of deliverance. Jesus saw a soul worth saving.
3. But in order to reach her, Jesus had to break from some established traditions. He was willing. Are you willing?