

## **Becoming God's Catalyst For Changed Lives – Part 2**

### **John 4**

#### **Introduction:**

1. Last week, we began studying John 4, focusing on Christ's encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well.
2. The past few weeks, we have seen from God's Word that God's heart and desire is not for us to simply be a church that exists for us, but to be a church that exists to glorify Him and serve others. Philippians 2:4
3. This was and is the heart of Christ. Christ desired to reach people, changing lives for God's glory.
4. We learned that a "catalyst" is a "person that quickly causes change or action."
5. You can be God's catalyst for changed lives. If saved, Christ lives in you.
  - God can use you.
  - How? Our Savior provides us a great model.

#### **First, by a willingness to lay aside tradition.**

#### **Second, by a willingness to lay aside prejudice. vs. 1-5**

1. The Samaritans were a mixed race. They intermarried with the Assyrians centuries before. They were hated by the Jews because of their cultural mixing and because they had their own version of God's Word and their own temple on Mount Gerizim.
  - This group had their own brand of religion – a mixture of "Jehovah" worship and paganism.
  - To put it bluntly, the Jews looked at the Samaritans as a bunch of "half-breed" heathens, not worthy to be in their presence.
2. Samaria was positioned between Judea and Galilee (reference map), and because of Jewish prejudices toward the Samaritan people, they frequently would travel to the east, cross over the Jordan, and thus skirt the Samaritan territory.
  - Samaria was not considered part of the Holy Land; it was seen as a strip of "foreign country" separating Judea from Galilee.
  - They so hated the Samaritans that they didn't even want to pass through their land. Do you think people ever have those same attitudes today?
3. The Lord, however, did not hesitate to go through Samaritan territory. Do you know why Christ was such a catalyst for changed lives? He didn't know prejudice. He thought that any soul was worth saving. It didn't matter their religion, nationality, or skin color; it just didn't matter.
4. Our human tendency is to judge others because of stereotypes, customs, or prejudices. But Jesus treats people as souls, accepting all with love and compassion.
5. Be honest with yourself. Do you dismiss certain people as lost causes, or do you see them as valuable in their own right, worthy of knowing about the gospel of Jesus Christ?
  - When was the last time you reached out to somebody who was different? (A girl or guy visibly struggling or physically different from us, whether it is biological

or voluntary – tattoos, piercings, etc.) We tend to gravitate to people who are just like us. This goes back to the message a couple of weeks ago about cliques.

- Remember the definition of a clique? It is “a narrow exclusive circle or group of persons.” Yes, kids and teens are bad about this, but where do you think they learn it from? They learn it from their parents and adults.
  - Jesus had His group of 12 disciples and comrades that He was very close to, but He didn’t allow it to become a clique like the Pharisees. Jesus was extremely unprejudiced. He loved everybody. He loved all different sorts and kinds of people (Samaritans, Syro-Phoenicians, Romans, soldiers, diseased people, handicapped, demon possessed, crazy lunatics, children, publicans, prostitutes, extortionists, etc.).
- Just look at the mix of men that composed His twelve: foul-mouthed fishermen to shady tax collectors to traitors. At one point, He sends forth 120 disciples. Jesus was welcoming of all people; He was about breaking down barriers, not putting up walls of separation.
6. Those who become God’s catalyst for changed lives are like Jesus; they are not afraid to leave their comfort zone and reach out in love to those who seem different.  
1 Thessalonians 3:12
7. There is a great illustration of this in Mark 1:40-42: Jesus is approached by a leper. Lepers were outcasts of society. It was the ultimate uncleanness for a Jew. If you had leprosy, it meant a life of isolation and loneliness. People were prejudiced against those with leprosy.
- Are there outcasts that live in our society today? Those who are all alone with nobody to visit them in a nursing home, those with addictions, homeless, those with life-threatening diseases and nobody to help them, those who are mentally challenged, teens in juvenile delinquent centers, those with physical handicaps that feel all alone, children who don’t fit in at school for whatever reason.
  - Some feel like outcasts because of physical, sexual, or mental abuse. My point is that many feel like this leper, cut off from society, with nobody who wants to be around them.
  - This is where the church, the body of Christ comes in. When you are God’s catalyst for changed lives, you not only welcome outcasts, you make them feel truly loved.
8. Jesus loved this leper and took action when nobody else would. But this guy approached Jesus because he felt there was something different about Him. People come here and think, “I wonder if those people at CrossRoads are different; I wonder if they will welcome me and love me.”
- Just as this man came to Jesus, people come to us. Jesus didn’t turn His back or walk by him or ignore him, nor can we. Look at verse 41, it says that Christ was “*moved with compassion.*” That means there was some depth of feeling towards this man. Ten times in the gospels we are told that Jesus had compassion on people around Him.
  - Does it ever occur to us that people are in our midst (at church, work, and neighborhood) that are deeply wounded and suffering? They feel isolated and all alone – outcasts. It is so easy **not** to care. It is so easy to get callous toward people. Oftentimes, we go into our shell and ignore it all. But Jesus didn’t do this. He did not allow His heart to get callous.

9. This is why I love to see new ministries start in our church. Do you know what ministry is? It is something that **helps people**.
  - Somebody says, “Let’s start a new committee.” Not very exciting because committees discuss; ministries act!
  - Why do people start new ministries or get involved in ministry? Compassion moves them. Jude 22
10. I love verse 41 where it says, “*Jesus put forth his hand and touched him.*” This is amazing and was not what culture typically did. Typically, people would run the other way if a leper was coming.
  - But Jesus didn’t avoid him, run away, or avoid eye contact with him; He put forth His hand and touched him.
  - Jesus has ascended into heaven and sent back His Spirit to dwell in those who believe on Him. Now, if Jesus is going to touch those who need healing (a lonely sinful woman at a well, an isolated leper, etc.), He will do it through us – His body, His church.
  - We are Jesus’ hands of compassion. We are His hands of love in a world that is crying for someone to care. Jesus’ touch of compassion comes through us, through our touch, through our love, and through our caring.
  - When you come to church, your prayer should be, “Lord Jesus touch someone through me today. Show compassion to someone through me.”
11. To put it simply, Jesus didn’t know prejudice, and that is why He was such a catalyst for changed lives. **Illustration:** Luke 14:16-23. God made a supper and the respectable in society wouldn’t come – too busy. The Lord said, “You’re focusing on the wrong people, go out quickly...”

### **In Conclusion:**

1. Maybe there is somebody right in your immediate or extended family who is somewhat of an outcast. They are shunned for some reason or looked down upon. Maybe they have messed up; maybe they are in some sort of sinful lifestyle or bondage.
  - This doesn’t mean that Christ doesn’t love them. He wants nothing more than to save and forgive them and make them part of His family. It doesn’t mean that Christ cannot change their life.
2. God wants to use you to be a conduit to express God’s love and concern for their soul. You can pray for them and love them and be God’s catalyst to see their life radically changed by the grace of God. All are worthy because all are unworthy; therefore, nobody is a lost cause.