

GROUNDED IN GRACE

MISSIONAL LIVING: BECOMING A BROKEN HEALER IN A WOUNDED WORLD PT 2

Called to Move Toward Cut Strings

About 10 years ago, I was at a training seminar learning new techniques of counseling. The trainer asked for a volunteer to stand in the middle of the room to represent Dawn. He began to read through different events of Dawn's real-life story. As he read her story, he would ask other volunteers to stand up and hold a piece of string to represent different people who entered her story. Once that person exited, he would cut the string. After about 30 minutes, Dawn held about 100 or so cut strings which were lying on the floor in front of us. Then he stated, "This is Dawn or any other resident who walks through your door. They are people of wounded hearts and destroyed stories. They are people of cut strings."

Seeing the Wounds of Cut Strings

As we enter this familiar story, we must view the "cut strings" of this woman. For once we understand where this woman is in her story and who she is in her culture, then we will catch a greater glimpse of the incredible drama that is about to unfold. So, let's take a look at the "cut strings" of this woman's heart.

1. Hated: This woman was hated because she came from a mixed race. In II Kings 17:3-6, we read the back story of this group. In summary, a group of poor Israelites from the Northern Kingdom were left in the land after being defeated by Assyrians. These people intermarried with foreigners and became a mixed race of Jewish and Assyrian heritage. The Jewish people thought of them as unclean, outcasts and not to be associated with because they were not of pure race.

2. Separated: The Jewish people hated them so much that they were not only despised but separated. The Samaritans had their own place of worship, their own temples. They were never welcomed in Jerusalem.

3. Lower- She was born a woman. In that culture, women were looked down upon as second-rate or second-class citizens.

4. Lonely: If you read the story, you pick up on a detail not spoken but very well understood. The woman walked alone. She had no friends to walk with her. There are no conversations. There is no one to help with the cisterns. She walks alone in silence.

5. Cast Out: She had five husbands. In those days, only a man could divorce his wife. So she had been kicked to the curb. She was used and tossed out not just once but five times! Think about the damage to her soul.

6. Wounded: Now, she is living with a man who is not her husband. There is a pattern of pain and woundedness. Not only that but could you hear the sneers on the streets and the gossip about her soul? "Is this number six or seven?"

Do you see the wounded, disorganized and incredibly lonely soul that is waiting at the well?

Here at the well, she walks with all her ugliness, her despair and her pain. These are the “cut strings” of her story. If we are going to be missional in our living, we need to see the cut strings of people. We need to understand the power of brokenness, the destruction of discrimination and the utter helplessness of the souls who walk through the doors of our churches. We not only need to see “cut strings” of others but of our hearts as well. Our churches are made up of wounded people. Our small groups are made up of painful events that have managed to rule and rein our lives without reprieve. Or maybe like this woman, you are walking alone. You are searching for water, seeking to be loved and wondering if you will find a place to lay your weary head. For wherever there is pain, there is also a closed door. Living missionally is opening up that door and allowing God to heal our hearts. Living missionally allows us to experience the wounded soul of another and find some healing for our souls as well. But how do we get there?

Moving into a Forgotten Land

If we look at the beginning of chapter four, we see several dynamics in play. Some of these are apparent on the surface and others need to be understood from a distance. Let’s set the scene. The Religious leaders had squashed one potential uprising by imprisoning John the Baptist (Mark 6:17-20). However, now they hear of Jesus and his group baptizing people into another kingdom. This brought much resentment.

1. Crisis

As William Hendrikson points out, “this resentment, in the natural course of events, would lead to a premature crisis. Now the Lord knew that for every event in his life there was an appointed time in God’s decree.” So to avert a potential crisis, Jesus left Judea. Sometimes God leads us into a forgotten land by averting a potential crisis and calls us out of our situation like in this case. Other times, he brings us into crisis so that He can move us into forgotten lands like Joseph, Moses and Paul. In whatever ways, God moves us from our comfort zones in order to move us beyond ourselves into new territories.

2. Commission

I pondered the next verse (4) for many days. “Now, he (Jesus) had to go through Samaria. . .” Why did Jesus have to go through Samaria? Geographically, he was in Judea (South). He wanted to go to Galilee (North) and Samaria was in the middle, so it just made sense. However, culturally, because the Jews hated Samaritans and wanted no association with them; they often walked around by the river Jordan. Instead, Jesus walks right through and breaks barriers others have built. However, I think there is even a greater purpose. Revelation 7:9 states that there will be a “great multitude from every nation, tribe, people and language.” Jesus was modeling the great commission. He reached out to a people group who will be represented in heaven.

Beloved, we have a mission to reach out to people who are pushed aside. Living missionally is reaching beyond barriers that others have built, seeing the needs that others don’t see and walking with the wounded. In order to do this, there are barriers in our hearts that need to be crossed, busted and destroyed. There are preferences, prejudices and pride that need to be broken into and exposed by the light of the Savior’s love.

3. Calling

Jesus went to Samaria because he had a calling to engage in a conversation with this lonely woman. It was not a mistake or accident that they met at the well. It was not just good timing that Jesus was alone. (For his disciples had gone into the city.) It was all part of God’s sovereign plan. Jesus saw the woman. He wondered into her life and (as we will see) had a gentle but transforming dialogue which changed many lives. Living missionally is watching God work amid circumstance. It is being available to open our mouths when necessary or better yet closing them as a stranger opens their soul. It is seeing opportunities to make an impact by a note, a smile or taking a risk that may hurt in the end. It is a calling to live beyond our fear and into our faith because we are loved! *Steve*

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