



TRANSFORMED

DEVOTIONS CONNECTING TEENS TO CHRIST

While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" And immediately the leprosy left him.

Luke 5:12-13

Compassionate Leadership

You know who they are, but you wish you didn't. You see them, but you wish they weren't there. You pass them, and you try not to make eye contact. You know who they are, and you hope they know you. You see them, and you hope they see you. You pass them, and you pray their eye catches yours. What's the difference? One group has been declared out. The other group has been declared in.

Have you ever stopped to think who or what gets to determine who is in which group and why? As if there exists an ultimate authority determining every individual's worth: in or out, winner or loser. The bigger question: why, for reasons unknown, does everyone obey that authority by avoiding the losers and sheepishly following the winners?

There's really only one authority to make such a determination. Jesus himself. In fact, Jesus says we're all in a group that he should want nothing to do with. *All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23). Yet, he loved us, pursued us, reached out to us and made us his. He died on the cross and took away everything that made us undesirable to him. He washed away all our repulsive sinfulness in the waters of Holy Baptism. He went out of his way to love the unlovable.

That unconditional love for the world showed up in Jesus' ministry in many ways. In Luke 5, Jesus stopped everything to help a man the rest of the world declared to be an outcast, someone to avoid, someone for someone else to care about.

May Jesus' perfect love for an imperfect world and his love and concern for you move you to reach out to people, especially those who have been ostracized and who are hurting. And again, you know who they are. Take the lead. Step up. Reach out. Model a Christ-like compassion. Not only will you make someone's day, but you will also glorify God and be an example of compassionate leadership with which Jesus first reached out to you.

PRAYER:

Dear Jesus, you loved me when there was nothing in me or about me to love. Thank you for reaching out to me in your life and death for me. Thank you for bringing me into your family through baptism. Thank you for your unconditional love for all people. May your acts of love and compassion for me remind me to see my value in your eyes and move me to reach out to all people, especially those who are lonely and hurting. Amen.