

Prostitute becomes Missionary

Recently, Mary went with her church on a trip to the Philippines to reach out to prostitutes. She told the reporter, "I want those women to know there's hope. You can change. There are people out there that really want to help and you've got to ... believe. Just like you went out there and took a chance on the streets, you've got to take a chance on this as well."

Citation: Adapted from Carla Herreria, "Restaurant In Hawaii Offers Fresh Start For Former Prostitutes, Convicts, Others Who Need A Hand," The Huffington Post (2-28-15) © 2015 PreachingToday.com & Christianity Today

The People Around You Shape You

The people around you can shape you in a thousand ways. Sometimes for good. Sometimes not for good. Sometimes they will bring out the royalty in you. Sometimes they can help you become the person you always wanted to be but never could be.

The Three

2 Samuel 23:8-17 NLT

These are the names of David's mightiest warriors. The first was Jashobeam the Hacmonite, who was leader of the Three—the three mightiest warriors among David's men. He once used his spear to kill 800 enemy warriors in a single battle. Next in rank among the Three was Eleazar son of Dodai, a descendant of Ahoah. Once Eleazar and David stood together against the Philistines when the entire Israelite army had fled. He killed Philistines until his hand was too tired to lift his sword, and the LORD gave him a great victory that day. The rest of the army did not return until it was time to collect the plunder! Next in rank was Shammah son of Agee from Harar. One time the Philistines gathered at Lehi and attacked the Israelites in a field full of lentils. The Israelite army fled, but Shammah held his ground in the middle of the field and beat back the Philistines. So the LORD brought about a great victory. Once during the harvest, when David was at the cave of Adullam, the Philistine army was camped in the valley of Rephaim. The Three (who were among the Thirty—an elite group among David's fighting men) went down to meet him there. David was staying in the stronghold at the time, and a Philistine detachment had occupied the town of Bethlehem. David remarked longingly to his men, "Oh, how I would love some of that good water from the well by the gate in Bethlehem." So the Three broke through the Philistine lines, drew some water from the well by the gate in Bethlehem, and brought it back to David. But he refused to drink it. Instead, he poured it out as an offering to the LORD. "The LORD forbid that I should drink this!" he exclaimed. "This water is as precious as the blood of these men who risked their lives to bring it to me." So David did not drink it. These are examples of the exploits of the Three.

Addict Changed into Minister

"That was over 3 years ago," Jud says. "Now he's married, and he and his wife serve faithfully in our homeless ministry every weekend. He has his own business. From ashes, God has raised him up to use him as an instrument." But his involvement in ministry all started with the warm embrace from one of the church's greeters.

Citation: Jud Wilhite, *Uncensored Grace* (Mulnomah, 2008)

The Thirty

2 Samuel 23:18-36 NLT

Abishai son of Zeruiah, the brother of Joab, was the leader of the Thirty. He once used his spear to kill 300 enemy warriors in a single battle. It was by such feats that he became as famous as the Three. Abishai was the most famous of the Thirty and was their commander, though he was not one of the Three. There was also Benaiah son of Jehoiada, a valiant warrior from Kabzeel. He did many heroic deeds, which included killing two champions of Moab. Another time, on a snowy day, he chased a lion down into a pit and killed it. Once, armed only with a club, he killed a great Egyptian warrior who was armed with a spear. Benaiah wrenched the spear from the Egyptian's hand and killed him with it. Deeds like these made Benaiah as famous as the Three mightiest warriors. He was more honored than the other members of the Thirty, though he was not one of the Three. And David made him captain of his bodyguard. Other members of the Thirty included: Asahel, Joab's brother; Elhanan son of Dodo from Bethlehem; Shammah from Harod; Elikai from Harod; Helez from Pelon; Ira son of Ikkesh from Tekoa; Abiezer from Anathoth; Sibbecai from Hushah; Zalmon from Ahoah; Maharai from Netophah; Heled son of Baanah from Netophah; Ithai son of Ribai from Gibeah (in the land of Benjamin); Benaiah from Pirathon; Hurai from Nahale-gaash; Abi-albon from Arabah; Azmaveth from Bahurim; Eliahba from Shaalbon; the sons of Jashen; Jonathan son of Shagee from Harar; Ahiam son of Sharar from Harar; Eliphelet son of Ahasbai from Maacah; Eliam son of Ahithophel from Giloh; Hezro from Carmel; Paarai from Arba; Igal son of Nathan from Zobah; Bani from Gad;

Where did they come from?

Where did these valiant warriors come from? How did David recruit these mighty men?

Least Likely List

1 Samuel 22:1-2 MSG

So David got away and escaped to the Cave of Adullam. When his brothers and others associated with his family heard where he was, they came down and joined him. Not only that, but all who were down on their luck came around—losers and vagrants and misfits of all sorts. David became their leader. There were about four hundred in all. Not only that, but all who were down on their luck came around—losers and vagrants and misfits of all sorts. David became their leader. There were about four hundred in all.

Sermon in a Sentence:

Recognizing royalty in others brings out the best in you.

Who would have thought?

The next Jonathan Edwards might be the man driving in front of you with the Darwin Fish bumper decal. The next Charles Wesley might be a [woman hating], profanity-spewing hip-hop artist right now. The next Billy Graham might be passed out drunk in a fraternity house right now. The next Charles Spurgeon might be making posters for a Gay Pride March right now. The next Mother Teresa might be managing an abortion clinic right now.

Citation: Russell Moore, "The Next Billy Graham Might Be Drunk Right Now," Moore to the Point blog (1-2-12)

A New Point of View

We tend to see people in categories and groups. We seem to be hardwired to trust those most like us. Why do we feel kinship towards some groups of people and aversion towards others? Why do we sort everything into groups, or kinds of things or events? The answer is that we are “hardwired” to associate in categories. ... Our nervous system is predisposed to organize perceptions into groups. This is at the core of one of the fundamentals of humanity: We mostly think in terms of [US] vs. THEM....

Citation: <http://brauertraining.com/blog/tribal-mentality-in-the-21st-century> But God wants us to look at people the way Jesus does. We are all lost sheep in need of the Good Shepherd. We are all rebels and enemies of the King of kings in need of pardon and mercy. Jesus longs to fill our hearts, the core of who we are, with his love. Then we will begin to see everyone as part of our tribe. We will see the royal potential in each other.

How can we break free?

In order to recognize the royalty in others, you need to acknowledge that we all start in the same boat. Then we must ask the Holy Spirit to fill us with Jesus’ love until we are compelled to invite others to turn back to God.

To the Church in Ephesus

Ephesians 2:1-6 MSG

It wasn't so long ago that you were mired in that old stagnant life of sin. You let the world, which doesn't know the first thing about living, tell you how to live. You filled your lungs with polluted unbelief, and then exhaled disobedience. We all did it, all of us doing what we felt like doing, when we felt like doing it, all of us in the same boat. It's a wonder God didn't lose his temper and do away with the whole lot of us. Instead, immense in mercy and with an incredible love, he embraced us. He took our sin-dead lives and made us alive in Christ. He did all this on his own, with no help from us! Then he picked us up and set us down in highest heaven in company with Jesus, our Messiah. You let the world, which doesn't know the first thing about living, tell you how to live. You filled your lungs with polluted unbelief, and then exhaled disobedience. We all did it, all of us doing what we felt like doing, when we felt like doing it, all of us in the same boat. It's a wonder God didn't lose his temper and do away with the whole lot of us. Instead, immense in mercy and with an incredible love, he embraced us. He took our sin-dead lives and made us alive in Christ. He did all this on his own, with no help from us! Then he picked us up and set us down in highest heaven in company with Jesus, our Messiah.

To the Christians in Corinth

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 NLT

Don't you realize that those who do wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality, or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or are abusive, or cheat people—none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God. Some of you were once like that. But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Second Letter to Corinthians

2 Corinthians 5:14-20 NIV

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

What will you do?

Will you join me in asking God to rewire our minds? Let's pray that he replaces the US vs. THEM mentality with his welcoming love and transforming grace.