

5-The Power of One
Pastor Joe Oakley
GFC – 6-4-17

We're in a sermon series entitled Knowing God and Making Him Known.

Today is Pentecost Sunday and I want to remind you that the power of Pentecost – the power of the Holy Spirit – results in the power to witness. Jesus said in Acts 1:8:

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

Today I'm preaching on The Power of One. My main point is this:

1- One person can change history.

Throughout Scripture, we find example after example of the power of one. God used one man named Noah to save mankind from extinction. God used one woman named Esther to save a nation of people. God used one child willing to give up his lunch to feed 5,000 people.

2 Chronicles 16:9 says:

For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.

Don't underestimate the power of one person sold out to God! God can use one person to make a difference and change the world!

Oh sure, Pastor Joe, if you're Noah or Esther or Jesus Christ you can change the world. No, I mean one average person can change the world. An average Sunday school teacher named Edward Kimball helped change the world. Who's Edward Kimball, you ask?

In 1858, Edward Kimball was a Sunday School teacher who took his responsibility to his class seriously. He not only taught; he visited the boys during the week to get to know them. One of them was a young shoe salesman who Edward led to the Lord. That young man gave up his job as a shoe salesman and became an evangelist. His name was D L Moody. He traveled the world preaching the gospel and led tens of thousands of people to the Lord.

In 1879, he preached in England and as a result, a pastor named Fred Meyer came to America. While preaching on a college campus, Fred Meyer led a young YMCA worker to the Lord named J. Wilber Chapman.

Chapman got an ex-baseball player named Billy Sunday to hold a revival in Charlotte NC. It went so well that the local ministers held another revival and brought Mordecai Hamm to town to preach.

In that meeting a young man gave his heart to the Lord. His name? Billy Graham – who has preached to more people and led more people to the Lord than anyone in history.

And it all started with an average Sunday school teacher named Mr. Kimball. That's the power of one. One person used by God can make a huge difference in our world.

That means you can make a difference. There has never been anyone like you and there never will be again. And the things that make you special are no accident or quirk of fate. You have been created by God in order that you might make a difference.

You have within you the power to change the world. But it's not your power – it's the power of God. Joshua 23:10 says:

One man of you shall chase a thousand, for the Lord your God is He who fights for you, as He promised you.

You might not think your part is important, but we've all got to do our part – no matter how small it seems. You don't know the full impact you are having in people's lives.

When Edward Kimball had D.L. Moody in Sunday School – he did not know he was THE D.L. Moody. When you work in children's church – you do not know who those kids will grow up to be. There may be future preachers or presidents in that class!

So many times we look at all the problems in the world and think, "I'm only one person, what can I do?" We get so overwhelmed by everything that we do nothing – but if we would just do something – we could impact everything.

Edward Hale said, "I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do the something that I can do."

God can use you to impact future generations! You may impact one person who is able to impact millions!

I know we look at saints like Paul, who went from an enemy of Christianity to become the foremost spokesman for the gospel and wrote much of the New Testament – and we think we can't make that kind of impact. But Paul would've never become who he was without the influence of others.

2- God can use one act of obedience to impact the world

Acts 9:1-18 tells the story of a man named Saul who hated Christians and wanted them dead until he had an encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus.

Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Then he was blinded by a light from heaven and had an encounter with Jesus Christ that changed his life forever. He became a new man! Saul became the apostle Paul. God told him to go into town and wait for further instructions.

Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." So the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight."

Very little is known about Ananias other than he was a Christian living in Damascus. We know that he was one of the people Paul was on his way to Damascus to persecute. Ananias seems to have a small role in the New Testament. But without that role, Paul's ministry would not have been launched, his promise left unfulfilled and his mission incomplete.

And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.

God didn't ask Ananias to do a risk assessment on witnessing to Saul. God didn't ask him to form a committee to evaluate the wisdom of witnessing to Saul. He just told Ananias to go and Ananias went! He went to Paul and laid hands on him and prayed for him. Immediately Paul was healed and he went on to take the Gospel to the known world and write 2/3s of the New Testament.

We know very little about Ananias, but we know that Ananias changed the world by obeying God and impacting one person. That's how great things are accomplished:

God speaks and someone listens. God commands and someone obeys.

It happened for Moses when God spoke from a burning bush.
It happened to Jeremiah when he was called to be a prophet.

It happened to Joshua when he was called to lead Israel.
 It happened to Jonah when he was called to Nineveh.
 It happened to Abraham when he was called to be the father of faith.
 It happened to the disciples when they were called to leave their nets and become fishers of men.
 It happened to Ananias when he heard the call to pray for Saul.
 And it can happen to you when you hear God and obey!

World change starts with God speaking and is accomplished when people hear and obey.

What I want you to see in the story of Ananias is this:

3- There are some people that only you can reach.

Only you can get through to them. Only you can touch their lives. They need a touch from God and He wants to touch them through you! Only you have the gift, talent or ability that reaches them!

You could argue that if Ananias didn't do it someone else would have - and you may be right. But God called Ananias and Ananias answered and Ananias was used by God to transform the world.

Ananias was not as gifted as Paul, but he didn't let that stop him and He was mightily used by God. You might not think that you are as gifted as others, but that's okay. God can use a small gift to meet the needs of many people. We see that when Jesus fed a crowd of 5,000 with one little boy's lunch.

Many of us get the attitude that the need is so great - what's my little offering going to accomplish? But anytime you serve in Jesus' name, no matter how small, it matters. 1 Corinthians 15:58 says:

Throw yourselves into the work of the Master, confident that nothing you do for Him is a waste of time or effort.

Notice - nothing you do for God is a waste. It all matters, even the little stuff. Why? Because in God's eyes, there is no little service. He said, "Even if you give a cup of cold water in my name to a child, that counts."

All service matters. You see the fact is with our limited perspective, we can't see how our small acts have big consequences, but they do!

Years ago two teenage boys went to a church service that was so packed out they couldn't find any seats. So they turned around and decided to leave. But one usher said, "Come on, guys. I'll find you a seat." And that usher personally escorted them down to the center and found them two seats. That night both of those boys accepted Christ and became Christians.

One of them was Billy Graham who has now led millions of people to Christ. Do you think that usher is going to get any credit in heaven? I'll say! We have no idea of the significance of small acts.

So never belittle the little because it's all important. Real servants do every task with equal dedication because they know it all matters – whether it's seen or unseen.

You might not think you have much to give. But if you give God what you have to give, He will multiply it to meet needs you could never have met on your own.

You might think God can't use you until you get to a certain place in life. But if you let God use you where you are, He will take you farther than you ever could have gone alone.

You might think God can't use you now, you need to wait. But if you let God use who you are right now, He will make you someone you could never be on your own.

You might think you don't have much to offer – but God uses what you can do to accomplish what you could never do alone. That means you need to do what Ananias did:

4- Those who overcome excuses are the ones God uses!

Ananias actually had more than excuses – he had legitimate reasons to be concerned.

Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name." But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."

Now – Ananias had a tough choice when God told him to go to Saul of Tarsus – the man Christians were hiding from. I can hear him now – “Uh, excuse me Lord? Did you say Saul Garza? He lives right down the street and I've been telling him about Jesus – I'd be glad to go tell him again.”

“Or – did you mean Saul Jarvis? He just moved to town and I haven't had a chance to witness to him yet. How about I go there?”
But God says – “NO – I said Saul of Tarsus.”

And I can hear Ananias say, “But God – you do realize that Saul of Tarsus is a man on a mission. He came to town to kill Christians – which means he's here to kill me!”

But God says, “I know who he is. And I’m sending you to pray for him. I’m going to use you to change him so I can use him to change the world!”
And God can do the same thing through you!

Now I believe there are legitimate reasons and seasons when we should need a break from ministry.

There are times when we’ve been burned out and need to rest.

There are times when we’ve been hurt and need to heal.

There are times we’ve fallen into sin and need restoration.

There are times we’re new to a church and need to take it slow.

I understand all that.

But some people turn those seasons into lifetimes of doing nothing.

That’s not the plan of God, because He created all of us to be ministers. When I say the word “minister” most people think of a pastor. But the Bible says every believer is a minister. All women are ministers. All men are ministers. All children, all older people, if we’re believers, we’re all saved to serve Jesus Christ.

And one of the ways we show our love for God is by loving others! Hebrews 6:10 says:

God is not unjust. He will not forget how hard you have worked for Him and how you have shown your love to Him by caring for other believers.

We love God by loving others. We give to God when we give to others.

I know you feel inadequate – because in ourselves we are all inadequate! But 2 Corinthians 3:5-6 says:

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant.

You might think you’re too weak, but when you are weak, God is strong.

You might think you aren’t smart enough, but God uses the foolish to confound the wise.

You might think you’re too young, but God says don’t let anyone despise your youth.

You might think you’re too old, but God says gray hair is a crown of glory.

I make no apology in saying to you that one of the most important things you’ll ever do with your life is to reach others for Jesus Christ. It’s far more important than your career, your hobbies, or anything else you can think of!

The good news is that God not only saved, He gave us a model for life. Jesus came to earth in the form of a man and said “This is how you do it.” And Jesus said in Matthew 20:28

For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give His life as a ransom for many.

“Yes Pastor, but I’m not Jesus. I’m not perfect.” I know that... and God knows that. He does not expect you to be perfect and He does not expect you to wait for perfect conditions. In fact, Ecclesiastes 11:4 says:

If you wait for perfect conditions, you will never get anything done.

People who make a difference do the best they can with what they have for Jesus Christ today. They don’t wait. So – what are you waiting on?

Let me let you in on a secret - there are always more needs to be met in a church than people willing to get up off their seat and say, “Here I am, send me.” Most of us say – Here I am, send him.

And there are always more people that need to hear about Jesus than people who are willing to tell them! I’m challenging you to take the next step today and allow God to use you to make a difference!

We see the power of one all through the Bible.

A giant named Goliath held the entire army of Israel at bay until one shepherd boy named David came along. And one man with faith in God defeated the giant and routed the enemy. That’s the power of one!

One man named Haman was on the verge of killing all the Jewish people until a woman named Esther came along. She risked her life and saved all of her people. That’s the power of one!

One day God looked down on His creation and people were so evil that God decided to destroy them all. But one man named Noah found grace in the sight of God. He obeyed God and built a boat by faith when it had never rained before. Thank God for that one man! Without him, none of us would be here today! That’s the power of one!

And thank God that one day, one man named Jesus shed His blood on a cross and that blood paid the price for every sin ever committed by anyone! One life paid the ransom for every person ever caught up in sin.

So I challenge you today to overcome your excuses and make a difference. So many people in the Bible had excuses:

Abraham was old
Jacob was insecure
Joseph was abused
Gideon was poor

Timothy was young
Leah was unattractive
Moses stuttered
Rahab was immoral

David had an affair Jonah ran from God
Jeremiah was depressed Elijah was suicidal
Martha worried Thomas had doubts
Peter was hot-tempered
Naomi was a widow with no visible means of support
The Samaritan woman had several failed marriages
Zacchaeus was unpopular because he cheated people.

But what was the common denominator among these people?
They quit making excuses and God did great things through them.

And if you quit making excuses, God can do great things through you!
You can share your faith with other people!
You can reach people for Jesus that no one else can!

I know you can do it because God promised to help you do it.
You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you!
So, today I challenge you to stop making excuses and start making a difference!