

# Random Acts of Goodness

I was about 5 or 6 years old and was running and slipped in some water and cracked my head on a concrete step and of course it was late at night. I remember my dad telling me that he called the Doctor who said to bring me over and when we got there the Doctor was obviously what dad called a little tipsy. But he was able to put stiches in and I was fine. Several years later, I was now in Junior High, and we were playing baseball during PE. A classmate hit the ball and threw his bat and the bat hit me in the head. This time I didn't need stiches but I had a big "goose egg." Both times, I was told that someone made the comment now that's going to leave a mark. And they may have at least for a short period of time.

Today we're beginning a new series that I'm calling "Make Your Mark." It's about learning to live our lives in such a way that we leave a legacy for the people that come after us. It's about us making a mark in our world, by impacting people for Jesus Christ. It's a continuation or a follow-up to what we have focused on so far this year.

Steve Jobs, Apple's visionary leader, often used the phrase, "Let's make a dent in the universe." Now, of course, he was talking about making a mark in the technology universe. What we'll be talking about in this series is living a life that leaves a mark on the world around us.

This series will focus on several purposes or goals that we need to adopt in order to reach our full potential as followers of Christ. These purposes or goals will allow us to impact people for Jesus Christ. They will all be found in the book of Acts and will be seen in the lives of the leaders of the early church.

There's a reason why the church, started with a handful of discouraged men and women, become a global force for good and for God. It had nothing to do with political power, monetary resources or military strength; it had everything to do with the unstoppable force that's the result of a life changed by Jesus Christ.

During the next several weeks we will focus on these purposes or goals and I will challenge all of us to adopt them as our own. We'll also discover how we as a church, can take on these values and put them into practice as we reach out to our community.

When Jesus was still on the earth, He told the disciples what His life was about. And, then of course, we saw it in his actions.

**Luke 19:10 "For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost." NLT**

**John 10:10 "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." NIV**

That's what Jesus' life was all about. That's how He made His mark, so to speak. Jesus came to seek out those whose lives have been wrecked by sin, and to save them, and to fill their lives with meaning and purpose and, in His words, fullness. And that's why we're here today. This is a room that has many people who once were lost but now are found, who once were sinking deep in sin but have since been saved by His grace.

Today we're going to focus on something the Apostle Peter said about Jesus, something that should impact each one of us today and will introduce for us the concept of these messages.

Shortly after the death and resurrection of Jesus, Peter was invited to a man's house to talk to him about the Christian faith. This man's name was Cornelius; he was a soldier in the Roman army. He was not a Jew, but he was what was considered a "God-fearing" person, meaning that he followed the moral code of the Jewish, but not the dietary and sacrificial code.

So, he was a good person: the Bible says that he was generous to the poor and prayed to God regularly. Then one day he had a vision in which an angel told him, in effect, "Your good deeds have not gone unnoticed, and if you really want to know what life in God is all about, you need to talk to a man named Peter."

Cornelius then sent for Peter, Peter came to his house, he told him all about Jesus. He preached a short sermon to him, and that day Cornelius was saved, baptized, and filled with the Holy Spirit. He went from being merely a God-fearing Gentile to being a Spirit-filled follower of Jesus Christ. You can read about this event in Acts 10.

Today, I want to focus on a verse in this account, on a phrase that Peter said to Cornelius about Jesus. He summarized the life of Jesus in a simple, but powerful way, that should challenge us to want to live the same way.

**Acts 10:34-38** “Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism<sup>35</sup> but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.<sup>36</sup> You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.<sup>37</sup> You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached—<sup>38</sup> how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.” NIV

If that's a way to summarize the life of Jesus, then it should also summarize the lives of us, his followers that we, too, go around doing good.

Now, before we spend a few minutes focusing on that verse to setup what we want to accomplish in this series about making our mark, let me very quickly talk about the validity of going around and doing good.

### **#1: The Good Deed Diary**

### **#2: Boy Scouts and Good Turns**

### **#3: Wesley's Three General Rules**

**Discussion: For John Wesley the way that we can leave our mark is to do no harm, do good and stay in love with God. How do those simple rules fit into 2016 in our lives?**

In the final few minutes of this message I want us to look again at today's text, and I want us to look at three phrases that are essential to living a life that allows us to make a mark on our world.

**Acts 10:38** “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.” NIV

In this verse we see that, in order to live a life that allows us to leave a mark on our world we need to allow these truths to impact our lives.

### **Truth #1: Make Your Mark through the Power of the Holy Spirit**

**Acts 10:38** “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power.” NIV

In the coming weeks we'll be talking quite a bit about the Holy Spirit's work in our lives. What we see again and again in the book of Acts is that the Holy Spirit is our power source. Jesus himself said this...

**Acts 1:8** “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you...” NIV

Being filled with the Holy Spirit empowers us to do things that we weren't able to do before. Things like to show compassion that doesn't come naturally, to be courageous when once we might have been full of fear, to be bold when before we were timid, to be generous when it's in your nature to be selfish. The Holy Spirit anoints us with power to do the work of God.

When a church or an individual makes it their mission to go around doing good, we soon discover that it is impossible without the power of the Holy Spirit. We need the anointing of the Holy Spirit on our lives.

## **Truth #2: Make Your Mark through Spiritual Battles**

**Acts 10:38 “...and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil...” NIV**

When we commit to going around doing good at every opportunity, we're going to find ourselves in some situations sometimes that only God can get us through, those are the spiritual battles that I'm describing.

Going around doing good requires the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives and it will lead us into some spiritual battles for people's souls that will require that we are “on top” so that the enemy can be defeated in other people's lives.

## **Truth #3: Make Your Mark through God's Presence in your Life**

**Acts 10:38 “...because God was with him.” NIV**

When we walk with God, it's impossible not to want to do good. A natural result of God's presence in our lives is that we want to be a blessing to others.

**Application: Do we want to make a mark on our world? If so, then we need the Holy Spirit and we need God's presence in our lives. What will you do this week to make your mark on our world?**