

Turn Your Passion Into Purpose

Pastor Chris, Pastor Tracy and I agreed to speak this month on our passions. You need to know Pastor Chris as a pastor and his passions. You are new to Pastor Tracy and would like to know her passions. And me, I would think you know me, but I am jumping on the band wagon too.

First of all you know that I am not a pastor, but a certified lay minister. I am laity, like the majority of you in the congregation. As a certified lay speaker (which is a requirement prior to becoming a certified lay minister) I can give messages at any church. I delight in giving a message different from your typical pastor's sermon, like a substitute teacher.

When I started down this path of giving messages (I reserve the term of sermons for pastors), I went to God in prayer. What can I speak of that people will want to hear? And I heard something similar to what my earthly father told me about finding out what to study in college. Find something you that you love and follow your passion. This, Father God, is how I turned my passion into purpose, by telling stories of the Bible.

Most of you know that I am a storyteller. I love to tell the stories of the Bible, usually from the viewpoint of a woman (my best perspective) and try to let you see and feel how one person in the Bible responds to God.

I am happiest when I can say, let me tell you a story... This is my passion, turned into a purpose for God.

In telling a story I hope that you will find out for yourself:

- † What was the event about?
- † What were the people in this story thinking about and feeling?
- † What happened and why did it happen that way?
- † How is God found in the story?

Stories help us to use our imagination. When we listen and wonder, we are like the people who listened to the parables or stories of Jesus, and through the words, it is the Holy Spirit speaking in these stories that helps us to hear what it is God is saying, to each individual.

I have told of stories of many women of the Bible, Bathsheba, Tabitha, the persistent widow, Hagar, the foolish bridesmaid, Salome (mother of James and John), the Canaanite woman to name some. You see, learning the story and telling the story, well this is my passion. Learning how these women relate to God shows me that I have, and you have, similarities to these fleshed out stories of women of the Bible. I love sharing my passion of these women and their relationship with God the father, Jesus the son, and sometimes with the Holy Spirit. The purpose is to bring these people to life before you and let you learn about them.

Today, I am giving a new story I haven't told before. Of course, this excites me, this is my passion, to tell of a woman who tugs at my heart, to find out her interaction with Jesus. Let us hear what the Bible has to say of this woman, and of the character of our Lord, Jesus.

From the Passion translation (of course it has to be the Passion translation) of the Bible I read: **Luke 13:10-17 The Passion Translation**

Jesus Heals on the Sabbath Day

¹⁰ One Sabbath day, while Jesus was teaching in the synagogue, ¹¹ he encountered a seriously handicapped woman. She was crippled and had been doubled over for eighteen years. Her condition was caused by a demonic spirit of bondage that had left her unable to stand up straight. ¹²⁻¹³ When Jesus saw her condition, he called her to him and gently laid his hands on her. Then he said, "Dear woman, you are free. I release you forever from this crippling spirit." Instantly she stood straight and tall and overflowed with glorious praise to God!

¹⁴ The Jewish leader who was in charge of the synagogue was infuriated over Jesus healing on the Sabbath day. "Six days you are to work," he shouted angrily to the crowd. "On those days you should come here for healing, but not on the seventh day!"

¹⁵ The Lord replied, "You hypocrites! Don't you care for your animals on the Sabbath, untying your ox or donkey from the stall and leading it away to water? ¹⁶ If you do this for your animals, what's

wrong with allowing this beloved daughter of Abraham, who has been bound by Satan for eighteen long years, to be untied and set free on a Sabbath day?"

¹⁷ When they heard this, his critics were completely humiliated. But the crowds shouted with joy over the glorious things Jesus was doing among them.

So, I am going to ask you to use your holy imagination. And **this is my passion, saying, let me tell you a story...**

You will need to imagine that I am that woman who has been crippled for eighteen years with a spinal deformity that left my body twisted.

Your doctors may today say I suffered from acute arthritis.
I could not straighten my body, so I could not look upwards or forwards.
The people around me believed the reason I was crippled was because
of an evil spirit or demon.

These words hurt me, emotionally and mentally,
so not only was my body suffering, but all of me.

As it was, I could see only the dirt at my feet.
Just as many people can see only the bad side of things.
I could not look up and see the possibilities before me.
I could not see the smiles on people's faces.
I could not see the sky. I could only look downwards to the dirt.
Not only did it hurt, but the knowledge that I would never get rid of this pain and suffering, and
the fear that it could get worse, was more than I could bear any longer.

Now I had heard of the healing powers of Jesus.
Who wouldn't want the healing powers of this Jesus?

So, when I heard Jesus was speaking at the synagogue in town, I knew I had to go.
I had to get out and do something about this problem.
I just had to get to that synagogue. If Jesus could not heal me, well
I would be no worse off than I was before today.

So, I got up, even though it hurt, and started to get ready to go to the synagogue.
Normally I did not leave the house much because of how much it hurt to walk around.

But today I made my way toward the synagogue.
Being crippled, this walk would take much longer than anticipated.

"I am going to be late, but it is okay.
I have heard that just seeing this man brings healing to one's soul."
I continued walking until I saw the doors to the synagogue.
My heart skipped a beat, and I was filled with determination.
When I finally got inside, I had to push through the crowd.
'I have to see him,' I thought. 'I know that if I just see him.....'

So, I pushed through until I could see a small group of men standing behind the speaker.
'It's Him!!!' I cried out before realizing I was speaking aloud.

As I said this, Jesus immediately noticed me,
a woman who was hunched over and could not stand up straight.

Jesus called me over into the center of the synagogue,
from the side where I had been standing.

Now this was an unusual thing for a male religious leader of Jesus' time to do.
Women usually stayed in the side area of the synagogue, sitting on benches in rows against the wall.

Jesus walked across and led me to the center of the room.
He put his hands on me.

“Dear woman, you are free. I release you forever from this crippling spirit.”

Immediately I was able to straighten my body. Hallelujah!

Suddenly I could look upwards and see forwards.
It was not just my body that was healed, but my soul as well.
How wonderful it was to look up and first see the face of Jesus!
My immediate response was to praise Jesus.

In looking back to that wonderful day,
I learned I received more than physical healing.
I was seen by God, as a daughter of Abraham.
I was released from the spell of Satan.
I was given a new life on a Sabbath!

I realize our Lord was chastised for doing this on a holy day,
But what better day to foil the work of Satan?
What better day to show the power of God almighty?

I still praise Jesus for the ability to see me, beyond the rules of the leaders of the church.
I praise Jesus for his compassion.
I praise Jesus for the healing.
I praise Jesus.

Shouldn't we all do that?
Say with me, **We praise you Lord Jesus.**

There are lessons this crippled woman has taught me, that I can share with you, as not only story telling is my passion, but explaining the story...

- The story inspires us to mentally straighten ourselves to a standing position, where we can see upwards to God for inspiration.
- This story of the crippled woman illustrates to us that our eyes need to be always on Jesus. I had a friend that explained to me that Jews will bow their heads afraid to see God, but we Christians look upwards to see the love in the eyes of Jesus.
- Jesus teaches that rules, (such as the observance of the Sabbath) should be treated with respect, but they should not be like a straitjacket either.
- What would Jesus do, what would he say, if Jesus were with us now, with our problems now, if we were standing in front of Him as the crippled woman did? Would he, does he, have compassion on us?
- This is what I determined,
 - Whatever He would have done or said we, as His followers, we must do the same.

- Jesus had a message that was not bound with rules and regulations, judgements and condemnations.
- He brought life and freedom to others.
- Jesus longed to embrace His own, whether they were crippled in mind or body. Jesus healed; His arms embraced others.
- Jesus comes to bring His healing to us today, to release us restore us, feed and provide for us, so that we, healed and restored can bring life to others.
- We have been given so much, and much is expected of us.

And the total of my passion turned into purpose –

We all have passions,
 And we turn that passion into purpose, without the restraints of the Sabbath,
 age, or mindsets.
 Do you want to teach a child about the wonders of God? Then lead a Sunday School class.
 If you want to provide hospitality, then help serve the meals.
 If you want to provide compassion for those hurt by the injustices of the world, help with JAVA.
 Do you want to lead by serving? Then find a mission who needs your help.
 If you want to sing the praises of God, then sing.
 If you want to welcome in the name of God, greet at the door and show love.
 Your passion is there, maybe out in front of you,
 Or tucked within, waiting to be searched out.
 But we all have these passions, these abilities, and desires.

Sit with the Lord, ask for guidance.
 Listen to the still, small voice of guidance.
 Turn your passion into purposeful outlets to serve the Lord.

Let us make every day a Sabbath, a holy day;
 not pursuing merely our own interests and having only our own agendas;
 but let us straighten up to our full stature and be guided in all ways by our Savior's example in
 everything we do, and in whatever comes our way.
 Let God help you discover what your passion is and utilize it for the glory of God.
 May it be so, today, and every day.
 Amen.