Becoming a Gift: What It Means to Truly Represent Christ

There is a question worth sitting with, one that cuts through the noise of religious activity and gets to the heart of what it truly means to follow Jesus: Are the people around you better because you are there?

Not better because you handed them a tract or invited them to a service. Better because they encountered something genuine in you — something that pointed them toward the living God. That is the kind of Christianity that changes the world, and it is the kind that costs something.

The Problem With Pretense

Before anything else, there is the matter of authenticity. The world is not short on people who claim to follow Christ on Sunday and live as though He doesn't exist the rest of the week. That kind of faith doesn't just fail to attract people to Jesus — it actively pushes them away! People are not ultimately searching for a great church. They are searching for something real. They are searching for Jesus.

To represent Him well, His people have to be genuine. That means being a community where the wheels can come off, where someone can say "I need help" without being met with a polished smile and a hollow "everything happens for a reason." Coming to Jesus does not mean life suddenly becomes easy. It means you no longer face it alone. There is a profound difference, and the world needs to see it lived out honestly.

A counterfeit life produces artificial results. The challenge is not to perform Christianity but to let the actual life of Jesus be visible in the way we live, the way we love, and the way we treat the people in front of us.

Compassion Over Results

One of the most striking aspects of Jesus' ministry is how rarely it went according to plan — His plan, anyway. He was constantly interrupted. He was on His way somewhere and someone fell at His feet. He was surrounded by a crowd pressing in on every side and one desperate woman pushed through to touch the edge of His garment. The Gospels are full of these moments, and what they reveal is that Jesus was never driven by results. He was moved by people.

In Luke 8, beginning at verse 40, we find Jesus returning to a waiting crowd. A synagogue leader named Jairus falls at His feet, begging Him to come heal his dying daughter. Without fanfare, Jesus simply goes. On the way, a woman who had suffered from bleeding for twelve years — considered ceremonially unclean, socially isolated, likely rejected by nearly everyone around her for over a decade — pushes through the crowd to touch the hem of His garment. What she did took extraordinary courage. In her religious culture, her actions could have meant death. But twelve years of suffering had brought her to the end of herself, and desperation had become greater than fear.

She touches Him. Immediately, she is healed. And Jesus, rather than ignoring her or moving on, stops. He calls her out — not to shame her, but to restore her. He calls her "daughter." In a single word, He silences every religious voice that had spent years telling her she was less than. The physical healing was only part of what she needed. What Jesus gave her was wholeness.

That’s the heart we’re called to carry. Not a heart that measures success in numbers or programs or full seats, but a heart genuinely broken for the people in front of us. When the church ministers from real compassion rather than result-driven motivation, it positions itself for God to move freely.

Ambassadors, Not Recruiters

There is a crucial distinction between sharing faith because you are supposed to and sharing faith because it truly matters to you where people spend eternity. The Apostle Paul captures this in 2 Corinthians 5, verse 14,

where he writes that the love of Christ compels us — and later, in verse 20, that we are Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. The message is not "come to church and clean yourself up." The message is that every human being has been separated from their Creator by sin, and Jesus came to reconcile that relationship at an incomprehensible cost to Himself.

In Romans 9, verses 1 through 3, Paul declares that he has great sorrow and unceasing anguish in his heart for his people who have not yet received Christ. He goes so far as to say he could wish himself cut off from Christ if it meant his people would be saved. That is not religious obligation. That is a heart wrecked by love for lost souls!

Does our heart break for those who do not yet know Him? Not just quietly, in private moments, but enough to live openly and speak honestly and let our lives be a consistent, visible witness to the hope we carry?

A Net, Not a Fishing Pole

The church does not exist so that the city can be a gift to it. The church exists to be a gift to the city. There is a significant difference between a community that gathers for its own comfort and a community that scatters for the sake of others. God has not given us our neighborhoods, workplaces, and cities for our benefit. He has placed us there so that those places can be changed because we are in them.

This means welcoming all kinds of people — not just those we naturally prefer or those who look and think like us. The Kingdom of God is not a fishing pole, carefully selecting one type of catch. It is a net, drawing in all nations, all backgrounds, all struggles, all stories. The love described in 1 John 4, verses 7 through 11, is not selective. It is sacrificial. It is not based on whether someone deserves it. It is modeled after a God who loved us before we ever turned toward Him.

The Question That Remains

Matthew 5, verse 14 calls believers the light of the world — a city on a hill that cannot be hidden. That light does not shine through flawless performance or religious achievement. It shines through genuine Christlikeness, through forgiveness extended before it is asked for, through compassion offered to the person everyone else has written off.

The question is not whether we attend church or know the right answers. The question is whether the people around us are better because we are there. Whether our neighborhoods, workplaces, and communities are different because we exist in them. That is the life we have been called to — not a life of doing things for God, but a life of doing things with Him, by His power, for His glory, with everything we have.