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The Outcast Series was developed by Eric Gray. Eric is the Youth Minister at the Creekwood Church of Christ in Mobile, AL. You can follow Eric on Twitter (@eric_the_gray) & Instagram (@ericthegray).

The Outcast Series is a six week series designed to show your students how different Jesus really was. And if we are going to follow an outcast, then we will probably become outcasts too.



OUTCAST SERIES - WEEK 1

OPENING:

Outcast - a person who has been rejected by society or a social group

Share about a time where I felt like an Outcast.

- Give students an opportunity to share a story?

Have students read portions of the birth story and point out what made Jesus an Outcast. Could even break them into groups and assign a text. Then ask them to make a list of odd things it says about Jesus and/or his birth story.

* Matthew 1:18-25

* Matthew 2:1-12

* Matthew 2:13-18

* Luke 1:26-38

* Matthew 2:1-20

* Mathew 2:22-38

WHAT MADE JESUS AN OUTCAST

1) His family situation

- He was born out of wedlock

- His mother claimed she was still a virgin

- His father still married her

- His mother claimed he was the Son of God, the Holy Spirit conceived the child in her womb, he would sit on David's throne forever

- He came from Bethlehem, Nazareth & Galilee (all the wrong places)

- His family was poor

2) He was hated by the government

- Herod tried to kill him

- They lived as fugitives for the first couple years of his life (no wonder he waited 30 years before starting his public ministry)

3) Shepherds and Gentiles announced his birth

- It would be like the Royal Family grabbed some garbage men to hold the press conference outside of the hospital to announce the birth of William & Kate's baby
- By the 2nd century, the story of the wise men had largely been exaggerated. They were presented as princes, then kings. They are given names (Gaspar, Melchior & Balthazar), dressed very well, riding on horses and camels bringing treasures.

THP: From the moment Jesus entered this world to the moment he left it, he was an outcast. And if we are going to follow him, we better be prepared to be outcasts too.

DISCUSSION:

- Girls, how would you feel if you were Mary when the angel told you that you would give birth to the Son of God, yet remain a virgin?
- Guys, how would you react as Mary told you she's going to have a baby but she hasn't cheated on you?
- How do you think the parents in Bethlehem felt when they found out Jesus wasn't killed, but their sons were as such young children?
- Do you think Jesus cried as a baby? Do you think he pitched a fit as a toddler? Do you think he ever was disciplined?

Outcast Series - Week 2

OUTCAST SERIES:

Synopsis - Jesus was different. From the way he entered this world to the way he interacted with people. He was born in chaos, and he lived in drama. Yet the way he treated others showed that he could rise above it. He was an outcast. And it's something we should imitate & embrace.

Week 2 - Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)

- Jesus went right to where Zacchaeus was because he shows us attention even when we haven't shown him any attention
- God will come right to where we are when we show just the smallest amount of effort to get to him.

Zacchaeus - "pure" or "innocent"

Rewrite the story of Zacchaeus to fit the 21st century. Then act it out.

POINTS:

- * One sign of salvation is to go from taker to giver.
- * It's crazy to think that God pays that much attention to us when we haven't paid that much attention to Him.
- * We all fall short and need Jesus.
- * Zacchaeus was willing to go out on a limb to see Jesus.
- * It is impossible for someone to sin themselves beyond the reach of the grace of God.
- * Let's be sycamores. Let's lift others up so they can see Jesus more clearly.
- * Jesus was an outcast because of the people that he hung around (Luke 7:34)

TEXT:

- * Zacchaeus - "pure" or "innocent"

- * "a chief tax collector" means he's moved up in his business. He's like a mob boss.
- * Zacchaeus had plenty of cash and enemies. He was considered a traitor.
- * Zacchaeus was short on stature, character and loyalty.
- * He climbs into the tree to see Jesus. Maybe he heard Jesus allowed Matthew to be one of his followers, a former tax collector. Maybe he's looking for a new beginning. Maybe he just wants to see what all the fuss is about.
- * Thank goodness Jesus is a friend of sinners.

APPLICATION:

There are 3 characters in this story that we can identify with...

- (1) Zacchaeus - do you need to see Jesus and experience his salvation?
- (2) The crowd - do you struggle with being judgmental, not forgiving others?
- (3) The sycamore tree - are you trying to lift up others so they can see Jesus more clearly?

As followers of Jesus, we should (1) love like Jesus & (2) lift others up to see Him.

(1) Love like Jesus

- * "Love Them Like Jesus" by Casting Crowns
- * What are some examples you can think of where Jesus loved others who were considered outcasts?
- * Jesus' own apostles were a bunch of outcasts and rejects.
- * Love, support, encourage, challenge, call
- * Don't condone, enable, criticize, condemn
- * DISCUSS - If Jesus came to your school during lunch, which table do you think he would sit at?
- * DISCUSS - How do you see judgmental attitudes taking place in your world?
- * DISCUSS - What are some ways that you can love like Jesus at your school?

(2) Lift others up to see Jesus

* DISCUSS - How can we lift others up to see Jesus?

* If we want to lift others up, we must fight the temptation to be judgmental or "holier-than-thou".

* "The church is a hospital for sinners, not a museum for saints."

* When people see Jesus, when they experience his unconditional love, they are never the same.

Outcast Series - Week 3

Text: John 4

THP: Just like the Samaritan woman, we are all thirsty and only Jesus can quench it.

OPENING:

- Pour each student a glass of ice water. Encourage them to drink it throughout class.
- Point of illustration: You can't really appreciate water until you are dying of thirst.

TEXT:

>> Read John 4:1-26

The Origin & History of the Samaritans

- We need to go all the way back to 1 Kings. After Solomon reigned, the kingdom became divided. The 2 southern tribes, known as Judah, followed Rehoboam and remained in Jerusalem. The 10 northern tribes, known as Israel, followed Jeroboam, and moved away from Jerusalem to Samaria to establish their own nation.
- Read 1 Kings 12:25-33
- Here's what's important about this area... (1) God first appeared to Abraham here and promised to give him this land, (2) This is where Abraham first built an altar to the Lord, (3) This is the land that Jacob gave to Joseph, where he also built an altar and apparently dug a well and his bones were buried after the Israelites left Egypt and settled there, (4) where Joshua assembled the people in Joshua 24 and told them to choose that day whom they were going to serve.
- When the 10 northern tribes were carried away into Assyrian captivity in 722 B.C., the king of Assyria sent people from all over the world that they had conquered and taken captive to live there, to intermarry, and they established a mixed religion. So they were considered a "mixed breed", or mud bloods for Harry Potter fans.
- Samaritans weren't allowed to help rebuild the temple during the time of Nehemiah.

- They only accepted the first 5 books of the Bible, none of the prophets or wisdom writings.
- They built their own temple on Mount Gerizim, which they insisted Moses said was the place where God's people were supposed to worship. They swapped out "Gerizim" for "Ebal" in Deuteronomy 27:4. Although it is interesting to note that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all worshipped in this region, and on this mountain.
- Samaria was a place of refuge for all of Judea's criminals.

DISCUSS: Why do you think it was a big deal for Jesus to talk to a Samaritan woman?

DISCUSS: Why do you think she came to draw water alone at noon?

(1) Jesus humbles himself

>> Read John 4:3-9

- He gets on her level.
- He continues to be an outcast as he talks to people others didn't think he should talk to.

(2) Jesus uses common elements to show spiritual needs.

>> Read John 4:10-15

- It's amazing how Jesus could use simple, common things to dig into someone's heart and show them the grace of God.
- The conversation centers around the well. The woman reminds Jesus that Jacob dug this well. Jesus then talks about spiritual water, and is trying to help this woman dig the well in her heart so she can taste the living water.
- "Living water" denotes springs, fountains, or running streams, in opposition to dead and stagnant water. So what he offers will move in your life and change you.

(3) Jesus loves this woman where she is, and calls her to rise above through his grace.

>> Read John 4:16-19

- His statement "Go call your husband" is the first step in digging the well into her soul. He strikes deep in her heart.
- Verse 18... The stroke goes deeper. It lays bare the secrets of all those years over which she thought the veil of the past had for ever been drawn.

The bright days of joy and dark days of sin; the heart's promises made and broken; the sad days of death, which five times over had robbed her of a husband; or, rose than death, the sin which had severed the sacred bonds; the shame of the present shameless life -- all these are at least hidden from a stranger. But his words pierce to the inmost thoughts, and prove Him to know all the acts of her life.

APPLICATION:

(1) We are all thirsty. We are all the woman at the well.

- We are like travelers alone in the desert. (show pic)
- We try to quench our thirst in a lot of different ways and with a lot of different things.
- DISCUSS: What are some different ways and things that people try to satisfy their spiritual thirst?
- When you get to the end of the rope, and nothing will satisfy, when you taste the living water of Jesus, all you want to do is get more of it.

(2) We are all searching for Acceptance, Belonging and Connection.

- You can see it in this woman's life...She longed to be accepted by a man, but she never found one to stay with. She longed for belonging, yet she's drawing water by herself.
- We will do anything to find acceptance, belonging and connection. It's why teens (and adults) do things they know they shouldn't to try to impress a group of people. It's why we dress a certain way, change the kind of music we like, etc.
- The church should be the one place where people can be themselves and find acceptance, belonging and connection. Because that's what Jesus offers us.
- As God's people, that's what we should be offering to others. Everyone who comes into this room is looking for those 3 things, and we should be doing everything we can to meet their needs.

(3) For the living water to flow, God must break through our hard hearts.

- Jesus didn't sugarcoat it. He asked the woman about her marriage situation.
- We get uncomfortable when the light begins to shine on our darkness.

- In order for God to dig the well in our heart, he must first deal with what makes us uncomfortable.
- So what's Jesus asking at your well? What vulnerability is he asking you about?
- But remember, Jesus loves you where you are. But he loves you too much to leave you there.
- Jesus inspires us to change. When we taste the living water, we can't imagine living like we did before.
- VIDEO: "God's Chisel" by The Skit Guys

CHALLENGE:

(1) Show someone acceptance, belonging & connection in the name of Jesus. Then watch them taste the living water and be inspired to change because of Jesus.

- Love people where they are, and introduce them to Jesus.
- Jesus inspires us to change.
- Look at the Samaritan woman and Zacchaeus. Upon meeting Jesus, they were never the same.
- That's what happens when you taste living water.
- Read Psalm 63:1-3
- Read Psalm 42:1-2

OUTCAST SERIES - WEEK 4

Text: Luke 7:11-17

THP: When you live with the mindset that death is not final, you're going to be an outcast.

Text: Luke 7:11-17

- A weeping woman, who had already suffered the tragedy of her husband's death, is now following the funeral procession of her only son, trudging to the place where a fresh grave has been dug in the ground, right beside the place where her husband's body lay. Carried on a pallet in front of her is her son's lifeless body, cold, still and white, a child who once walked, laughed and held her hand. She has no other children of her own to comfort her, but her relatives and neighbors are walking with her, weeping out loud, sympathetic to her adversity, but helpless to do anything to reverse her misfortune. Many are wondering why God would allow their friend to face such anguish, and at the same time, secretly thankful that they are not wearing her shoes. Her future looks bleak with no husband or son to support her. How could things be worse?

- Can you imagine how much this woman must be hurting?!

- There was a large crowd following this widow but I'm sure she felt all alone. No one was hurting like her.

- Many would have assumed this woman had done something wrong because she had lost her husband and her son.

- "his heart went out to her" isn't a good description of what Jesus felt. This was gut-wrenching compassion. His stomach was in knots. Ever had that kind of compassion before? Where your heart breaks for someone else? You feel sick because of someone else's grief and pain?

Jesus does the 3 things that you're not supposed to do at a funeral...

1) Stop the funeral

2) Touch the body

- "They must have marveled, that One who was known as a teacher should touch that which most Rabbis would have avoided as bringing pollution..."

3) Tell the family "don't cry"

DISCUSS: What do you guys take away from this story?

What does this mean for a 15-18 year old?

- There's no reason to fear death because of what Jesus has done for you.

What does this mean for a 12-14 year old?

- When you experience hurt, God knows. He cares. He's there.

What can students do to apply this lesson?

-

POINTS:

(1) Jesus hurts when we hurt (Luke 7:13)

- Just because you can't "feel" him doesn't mean he isn't there.

- It's okay to ask God "why did this happen" or "why didn't you do something".

- Psalm 34:18 "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."

- DISCUSS: Since Jesus doesn't intervene like this today, does it mean that he doesn't care?

(2) Death is not final, it's just a passing.

- Hebrews 2:14-15

- DISCUSSION: With a show of hands, how many of you are afraid to die?

Why is that a fear that most of us face?

- God doesn't want you to live fearing something that he destroyed.

- "It is a poor thing to fear that which is inevitable" (Tertullian)

(3) With this mindset, nothing can touch us.

- Look at the life of Paul...you couldn't touch the guy.

- Philippians 1:12-14, 20-26

- Philippians 1:21 should be our motto...the quote for our life. Like those senior quotes.

- 2 Corinthians 11:23-30

- Romans 8:35-39

- Think about the freedom that comes from living this way.

- I don't want to live as though today could be my last. I just want to live

_____****

- DISCUSS: What do you think would change about you if you didn't live with the fear of death?

- DISCUSS: What is different about those that live as "more than conquerors"?

APPLICATION:

(1) If you're hurting, pray. Read God's word. Spend time with God. Be real with Him. Ask him those tough questions. Allow God to heal your broken heart.

(2) Pray this each day... "For today, to me, to live is Christ. And to die is gain."

Outcast Series - Week 5

Week 5 - Touching the Untouchable (Luke 5:12-16)

TEXT:

>> Read Luke 5:12-16

- Luke makes sure to add that this leper was "cleansed", not healed. It's a medical term. Something a doctor would notice.

STORY ABOUT MARY REED

Almost every age has had its social outcasts, people barred from normal society whether through physical illness or national origin. One person who stepped across these barriers in India was pioneer missionary Mary Reed. Already working in India, Mary visited a leper colony and was deeply moved by the people's plight. Later Mary contracted leprosy herself and went to work with the lepers, eager to tell them that she knew firsthand their pain and trauma. She became head of the leper colony she had visited, and in the years following many were saved and a church built. Mary retired at the age of eighty-four after many years of faithful service to these social outcasts.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL ABOUT LEPERS?

- "For many centuries, leprosy was considered a curse of God, often associated with sin. It did not kill, but neither did it seem to end. Instead, it lingered for years, causing the tissues to degenerate and deforming the body."

- It's not so much a skin disease as it is a disease of the nervous system because the bacterium attacks the nerves.

- Patients experience disfigurement of skin and bones, twisting of limbs, curling of fingers to form a claw hand, facial changes including thickening of outer ear and collapsing of the nose.

- Loss of pain sensation due to extensive nerve damage. For instance, patients can pick up a cup of boiling water without flinching. Many end up injuring themselves or unaware of injury caused by something else. Some

had fingers eaten by rats while they were sleeping because they had no idea it was happening.

- Lepers were banished from family and neighbors. Had to shout "unclean" when walking through a crowd.

APPLICATION:

(1) We are like the leper. We are covered in sin. And Jesus entered our world to cleanse us too.

- Sin starts out small but spreads.
- Sin kills our feelings.
- Sin separates us from God and others.

(2) The leper shows us what it means to be "poor in spirit". It's essential for us to find cleansing from sin.

- Sometimes we downplay our sin. We call them mistakes. But they aren't mistakes. They are sins. They are stains we can't remove. They are marks we can't erase.

- In order for a leper to be considered "clean" again, he had to show himself to the priest to prove the leprosy was gone, and then be washed. Just like baptism.

- Continual exposure to leprosy, and sin, increase your chances of catching it or relapsing.

(3) Leprosy teaches us that pain is a valuable gift.

- It's a survival mechanism.
- Lets us know something is wrong.
- Pain may be God's megaphone to get our attention that something is seriously wrong and we should run to the One who created us.

(4) If Jesus loved the lepers, we should too.

- John 17:15-19
- Romans 12:2

Outcast Series - Week 6

Topic: Bite Me

Text: John 6:22-71

CONTEXT:

The day before, Jesus fed the 5,000 with the loaves of bread and two fish. The people ate well that day. They are hungry again, and want Jesus to give them some more bread. Jesus is looking for deeper commitment. He wants to satisfy their spiritual hunger, not their physical hunger.

TEXT:

Jesus is having the DTR (define the relationship) talk with them.

- You hang out a lot, maybe go on a few dates. Flirt with one another all the time. But now it's time to find out if the other person is ready to get serious.
- You've dated for six years, you're both working full-time. You graduated college two years ago. You're thinking it's time for marriage. It's time to find out what the other person is thinking.

The crowd wants to treat Jesus as a friend with benefits. Jesus wants them to be totally committed.

It must have been some good bread because it's all they can think about (verse 30-31).

Jesus used common objects and occurrences to relay to his audience a greater need that they had. This is what he's doing with the bread. He wants them to know that just like they are physically hungry, they have an even greater spiritual hunger. And he alone can satisfy it.

Think about and discuss all of the different ways people try to satisfy the hunger in their life...

His conversation with this crowd was very similar to his conversation with the woman at the well in John 4.

OPENING THOUGHTS:

Why do we get into relationships?

- Because we want something from that person
- Because the relationship improves our status
- Because we are lonely or feel pressure to be in a relationship
- Because they are eye-candy

Why do we stay in relationships?

- It comes down to the source of our commitment.

I've heard it said, "Anyone can get married. But it takes work to stay married."

In John 6, Jesus has the DTR talk with his crowd of followers. Have you ever had that talk?

APPLICATION:

Are you committed to Jesus, or will you walk away one day too?

70% of students leave their faith after high school.

- Why?
- It's got to come down to commitment. To relationship.
- It comes down to taking Jesus into every part of your life, not just your Sundays and Wednesdays.
- Jesus is Lord of all in your life, or Lord of none in your life. He's never Lord of some.

HOW WILL YOU ANSWER THE QUESTION, "ARE YOU ALSO GOING TO LEAVE?"

- For you Seniors, you will answer the question your first weekend at college.
- For you high schoolers, you will answer the question the first time you're invited to a party, or when you're alone with your b/f or g/f.

- You answer that question by how much you pay attention and participate in worship and Bible class.
- You answer that question by what you look at on your phone and iPads.

The main question is this... Is Jesus enough for you? Does He satisfy the hunger in your life?

- It's a question every wife has for her husband, and every husband has for his wife.
- Am I everything you've ever wanted?

We all need Peter's attitude... "Lord, where else are we gonna go?"