

Hey everybody! I love the way you guys show up every weekend at all of our campuses and give God the worship that He so deserves. Amen? We love Him so much and we are going to continue to worship Him right now as we worship Him through His Word. I want to encourage you to go ahead and take a seat. If you are a guest with us for the first time today, I want to welcome you. My name is Rick and I serve as the Lead Pastor here. I'm real excited because I'm going to bring a message today that I actually brought first to our volunteers a few weeks back at one of our rallies. I like to run things by volunteers first sometimes, and we did that. Today I'm excited to come back and unpack that message to the entire Christ Fellowship family, kind of in an expanded version. So if you have your Bibles with you, go ahead and open them to John, chapter four. Just so you know, we are in a study of the gospel of John that we started last Easter, and we have come from one, two, three, and chapter four. We have kind of been in chapter four for awhile, but it just seems like God has so much in a small economy of words that He can say to us. So we are looking at this really in depth. But we started a series in John four last week called "Rhythm", a heart that beats for God. We are going to continue that this week: So John chapter four in your Bibles. I want to begin by reading a section of the text. You can look at the screen and follow with your eyes as I read it.

John 4:28 says "Then leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people: 'Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did. (30) They came out of the town and made their way toward Him. (39) Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in Him because of the woman's testimony.'" Stop right there. I'll come back and unpack all of that. For now, I want to start by sharing this with you. Since moving to Miami over eighteen and a half years ago, I have become a fan of the Miami Heat. Folks, if you were here back in 2013, you know the Heat had a chance to do something amazing. Because they had the chance, they had the opportunity to repeat as back to back national champions; something that had never been done in Miami history. So this was history in the making.

In fact, if you were sort of tapped in to the thrill of those days, you may recall that there was a rally cry, and the rally cry was this; it was "Witness History". There were signs like that and tee shirts like that, challenging us fans to witness history. In fact, this is a picture of LeBron, James, on the front and on the back it says, "Witness History". Christ Fellowship, scores of people did just that. Thousands of people packed into the Triple A arena and witnessed all of those games. Millions of people sat in front of their TV and witnessed all of those wins, one of which was won with a jump shot right at the last split second. So it was amazing, and again, millions of people, millions of fans, got to witness history. Check this out, because this man did not merely witness history. This man and his team mates actually made history, and they made history by being in the game. They made history by being in the fight to win for our city, Miami. Again folks, millions of people witnessed history, but few people actually made history.

Now, let me turn a corner and draw an analogy to that, because many people, if not most people, spend their lives witnessing history. By that I mean, they just sort of watch history happening around them. They just sort of witness history as it happens. I suppose that is okay for a lot of people, but I've got to tell you folks, it is not okay with me. I also don't think it is okay with you. In fact, I think a lot of you have come to Christ Fellowship because you want to make history in this city. In fact, I think a lot of you have joined up with this church because you know this church has a vision to alter the course of history in this city. So, here is my proposition. This is what I want you to get today. This is so critical for us at this point

in our church life. We have the chance to make history, not on a sports scale, but on a God scale. Folks, we have a chance to make history not on a temporary scale, like winning a championship in 2013. No. We have the opportunity, we have the chance like few other churches have to make history on an everlasting scale. Christ Fellowship, we have the opportunity, we have a chance, to alter the course of the spiritual history of this city.

This has been the history of Miami for decades. Here is the history. For decade after decade Satan has gated our city with the gates of hell. Jesus talks about the gates of hell. Gates are designed to keep something out, and Satan has so gated our city to the point that he has managed for decades to quarantine the gospel out of Miami; to the point that pastors have been running, and fleeing from this city to the point that now, ninety percent of the people of this city claim no personal relationship with God. None. Folks, decade after decade the churches in this city have witnessed this happening around us. They have sat back and witnessed the spiritual takeover of our city. Christ Fellowship, what I love so much about you, what endears you to my heart, is that you have made a formal commitment, not to witness history in this city, but to make history in this city; not to witness history in this city, but to change the spiritual history of this city.

Now, if you are new with us, you might be saying, "What do you mean, change the course of history in this city? What do you mean by that and how could that ever happen?" Well, we are going to find out today as we go back to John, chapter four. I want to give you two thoughts about how we can change the course of history, spiritually, in Miami. Number one: To change Miami we have to value what God values. Let me say that again. To change Miami, we have to value what God values. You say, "Well, Rick, what does God value?" God values people. With that in mind, listen to verse one. Let's read this narrative again.

John writes: "When Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John, although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. So, he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee. Now, he had to go through Samaria, so he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the spot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her.

Stop right there. If you have been here over the past three or four or five weeks, you know that this girl who came to the well, this woman who showed up at the well was a very broken human being, because she had been divorced five different times. That means five different men had proposed to her. Five different men had walked her down the aisle, and five different men had walked away from her. Now she was nothing but the gossip of the town of Sychar. To the people of Sychar, she was a reject. To the people of Sychar, she was worthless. To the people of Sychar, she was a throw away. But to Jesus, Jesus looked deep beneath her broken exterior. Jesus saw a soul. Jesus saw a human being made in the image of God. Jesus saw a woman made in the very likeness of God. Jesus saw a human being with great, great value, so much value to Him that He would walk all the way from Judea, miles, all the way down to Samaria, and to the town of Sychar, just to reach out to her. So much did He value her that He would inexorably lay down His life for her on the cross, just like He did for you.

You see folks, the point is, that's the value of people to God. I've said this to you before, but it is so important. You have never looked into the eyes of any human being that did not value deeply to God. Let me say that again. You have never come eyeball to eyeball with a single human being, I don't care if they are rich or desperately poor. I don't care if you are educated, uneducated, it doesn't matter. You have never made eye contact with a single human being that did not matter, that did not have weight value to God. Christ Fellowship, I'm telling you, any church that aims to reach this city has to value the people, every one of them. Others looked at this girl in Sychar and they saw her as worthless. They saw her as a throw away. But Jesus saw her as a human being with great value, so much value that to Him she was worth keeping. To Him she was worth something.

Let me give you an image of this. When I was a kid I used to collect baseball cards. I would keep them in a shoebox. But from the time I was about six years old until I was about thirteen, I amassed a substantial collection of baseball cards. In fact, I had twelve shoeboxes full of baseball cards. I had all the Yankees, all the Orioles, all the Dodgers. I had all the Detroit Tigers. I had all the Minnesota Twins. I had all the Red Sox; all the White Sox. I had all the 1963 Yankee team; multiple cards of them. I had Joe Pepitone; I had Bobby Richardson; I had Tony Kubek; I had Cleat Boyer, going around the infield. I had Yogi Berra; I had Elston Howard; I had Whitey Ford. I had Mickey Mantle. I had multiple Mickey Mantle cards. I think I had Mickey Mantle's rookie cards. I had Roger Maris. I had Tom Tresh. I had Hector Lopez; thousands of these cards. However, when I got about fourteen, I stopped collecting baseball cards, because I lost my passion for them. In fact, when I was sixteen, we moved from this apartment complex that I had grown up in. I'll never forget. When we were packing things up in this truck to move, I looked up on the shelf where the twelve boxes of baseball cards were sitting, all stacked up on that shelf: Mickey, Roger, Hector, Whitey, Cleat, and Yogi. Thousands of them. I looked up there at that shelf and I decided to leave them behind. I decided not to save them. I decided to just leave them there.

You say, "Rick, why would you do that? Because I thought they were worthless. I thought they were valueless. I continued to believe that until about twenty years later when I saw a Mickey Mantle card like I had, I recognized it, that was worth twenty six thousand dollars. I nearly got sick when I saw that. But folks, like so many people, I just didn't realize the value of Mickey, and Roger, and Whitey, and Yogi, and Elston, and Joe, and Tony Kubek. I just didn't recognize the value of them. So, I didn't save them. Now, let me tell you a far greater tragedy than not recognizing the value of a baseball card. A far greater tragedy is when a church does not recognize the value of people in this city. Everybody, every human being in this city, has infinite worth and value to God. God want us to value people. God wants us to value people. Listen to verse 28. "Then leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town." She went back to her town. She went back to Sychar. And she said to the people." You say, "Meaning what?" Meaning, folks, this girl's heart had jumped into rhythm with Jesus' heart, to the point that she now cared about what He cared about. She now valued what Jesus valued; namely, she valued the people of Sychar.

Christ Fellowship, let me tell you. This is what I love so much about you. God values the people of this city and so do you. I mean when pastors had abandoned this city and headed north and left this city, you stuck with this city. I'll never forget: when I first got here, I met with a group of pastors from the denomination which we are a part of, and they said, Rick, you need to know that the denomination has

basically drawn a line at Broward County, and they have given up on Miami. You never gave up on Miami. When people were fleeing to the Carolinas, and Georgia, and Tennessee, and abandoning this paradise, you didn't. You stuck with it. You have loved this city. You have cared for this city. You have served this city, and you have valued the people of this city. You have started a movement of God, and folks, it is beginning to change the history of this city. You are beginning to alter the course of history in this city.

Let me tell you something. If we are going to push back the gates of hell dominating this city, and start a movement of God that is going to transform lives in this city, we have to go beyond just valuing the people of this city. Here is what we've got to do next. To change Miami, we have to invite people. Listen to verse 28: "Then leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people: So she goes back to her Miami and she said to the people there, 'Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. (30) They came out from the town and made their way toward him.'" Folks, that is how you transform a city, by inviting people to Christ, by inviting them to Him, to see Him. Look at what happens in verse 39. Research indicates that eighty percent of the people who are invited to church will come to church; who are invited to Christ would actually show up. She said, "come, see a man." Listen to verse 39: "Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him, because of her testimony." I love that.

History tells us that this woman actually started a movement of God in Sychar that transformed that city. You see, history also tells us that Sychar was a city that was notoriously away from God, notoriously far from God.. Kind of like Miami. Miami is pervasively lost. Sychar was pervasively lost, but Jesus left Judea, walked miles down to Samaria, went into the town of Sychar and reached out to one girl, and drew this one girl to himself. However, Jesus' vision was far more reaching than this one girl, because Jesus knew that if this girl's heart could jump into rhythm with his, and begin to value people like He valued people, Jesus knew that Sychar could be changed, and Christ Fellowship, that is exactly what happened. Sychar was a transformed city. I'm telling you, I believe that is what is happening in Miami. Christ Fellowship is a fellowship of people whose hearts are beating into rhythm with God's, and we are seeing a movement of God that is beginning to change this city; that is beginning to create a spiritual awakening in this city. But folks, if we are going to keep this little bit of God moving, we are going to keep the momentum that we have going, here is what we've got to do.

We have to bring people to the wells. We've got to bring people to the wells. Listen to verse 28: "Then leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people.-Watch what she says. - 'Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did.'" Watch her strategy. She says, "Could this be the Messiah?" Don't you love her strategy? She knew Jesus was the Messiah. But she knew, with her standing in the community, she couldn't go into town and say, "Hey everybody, I've found the Messiah. Follow me." That wouldn't work. So she put it in the form of a question. 'Hey, I found this man who told me everything about me. Do you think this could be the Messiah?' Can't you see, all the men in the city: "Come on, we'll go out there and check him out. We'll find out." A very strategic girl, and she gets the whole town to come out. Watch this: "They came out of the town and made their way toward him." I love her strategy. Her strategy was simply to go into town – she didn't know what to say but her strategy was this. She knew if she could just get these people back to the well, Jesus was at the well and

if she could get them to the well, they could meet Him just like she did. Her strategy was just getting them to the well.

Christ Fellowship, here is what I want you to get. Every Christ Fellowship campus is a well. Every Christ Fellowship campus is a well. I love what you have been doing for so long. You've been bringing people to the well, to the campuses. Why? Because you know that if you can get them there, they are going to hear about Jesus. They are going to hear that God loves them, that God has a plan for their life; that God values them. You know they are going to hear that. You have just been so faithful at inviting people to the wells. But here is what I want to challenge you to do. I want to challenge you to elevate your inviting. I also want to challenge you to do this: Use the invite cards. Folks, this is such a simple tool, but we are amazed every week at the stories we hear; how powerful it is. To hand one of these to anybody, anybody who has two sets of eyes, or even have eyes. They are human beings. They are drawing a breath. If they can fog a window, you give them one of these invite cards and invite them to Christ Fellowship, because we are finding it so powerful. We hear all kinds of stories. I'll just give you one, recently.

This is a young man named Brandon. Here is a quick version of Brandon's life story: He was a football player in high school. He was ranked as a number three running back to be drafted by colleges, a great future ahead of him. But like what can happen to a lot of teenagers, he fell in with the wrong crowd. He ended up as a part of a gang in Miami, and he was arrested for armed robbery and assault with a deadly weapon. So he went to jail. He did time. He became a heavy drinker. He got on drugs. He ended up in detox centers. So his life was just spiraling downhill. Until one day he went into a Publix supermarket on Miami Beach, and he ran into an old friend that he knew in high school: Rhonda. Rhonda attends our Christ Fellowship, Miami Beach Campus. Do you know what Rhonda did? Rhonda gave him an invite card, and she invited him to Christ Fellowship. Brandon came to Christ Fellowship; heard the gospel; gave his life to Christ, and has since been completely transformed, and is following Christ. He is a part of our small groups. Here he is (a picture of him) being baptized on Miami Beach. We ought to celebrate that, shouldn't we, what God is doing in the lives of people simply by folks like you, like Rhonda: handing somebody an invite card, and completely transforming their life; getting them to a well.

But don't miss this. You need to know this as well. You are a well. I don't have to tell you that there are times in life when you just can't get somebody to a Christ Fellowship well. Right? There are going to be times when that won't work. But that's okay, because you are a well. You have the water of life flowing through your veins. You have the gospel, the great news, in your heart, and you can bring somebody to Jesus. I'll give you an example of a situation like that. A few months back I was on a flight from London to Miami. I had been over speaking to missionaries over there and I was on a flight back to Miami. On this flight, Rhonda and I were together, but a long story, we ended up getting separated from each other and weren't able to sit side by side. So I ended up over in the corner of this big plane: Two rows, myself and a young lady. Her name was Manwella. She was forty-three years old, and she was from Rome. So we are going to fly all the way from London to Miami. Long flight! So I sat down and started a conversation with her. "Hey, Manwella, what are you coming to Miami for? Are you going to Miami Beach?" Yes. Going to Miami Beach. "What for?" Well, I'm thinking about divorcing my husband. We've been married and we're not getting along. I think I'm going to leave him. I'm meeting up with some

friends over there. We are going to party for ten days, and when I get done with that, I'm probably going to leave him.

So I sat and I listened to that story. After a few moments – I never told her I was a pastor. I just listened. You can't do that. Nobody wants to talk to you when you say that. So I didn't say that. So, anyway, I listened to her for a while. Then I said, "Manwella, do you go to church anywhere?" She said, "What?" I said, "Do you go to church anywhere?" She looked like I had uncorked something. She said, "I hate church. I despise religion." And she just took off on religion, and church, and all of this stuff. I listened to that for a few moments and then I just said, "Well Maam, I'll just tell you this. God loves you." She got deathly silent. "And He cares about you. He loves you so much that He wants you with Him forever." Folks, telling somebody that God loves them is such a simple statement. That's all I said. "God loves you and cares about you." It is such a simple statement, but it is so over-powering. She began – tears began to stream down her face. She started telling me: She said, "Rick, I've tried to find God in my life. I went to church. I tried. I was a seeker. I tried to find Him but it just didn't make sense to me. She said it was just senseless to me, and I just haven't been back." I said, "Manwella, God has a plan. He has a plan to have a personal relationship with you. I told her just like I tell you. He doesn't want to have religion. He wants to have a relationship with you.

Folks, I keep one of these in my wallet and I pull it out. We gave some of these to you a while back and we will give them to you again. But it is just a guide on how to lead somebody to Christ. I just pull this out, and right on the front, I said, "Manwello, I'm going to show you what the Bible says. Right on the front it just says, "God loves you and created you to know Him personally." That is why God made you. He brought you into this world, not to have religion with you, but to have a personal relationship with you." On the bottom it says, "For God so loved the world." Here is the problem, Manwella. Sin separates us from God. I said, "You are a sinner. I am a sinner, and our sin separates us from God." Romans 3:23. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." I said, "Have you ever felt that barrier between you and God?" She said, "Yes". That is what sin does. It puts up a barrier between us and God. I said, "Not only that, but sin leads to eternal death." I said, "God loves you. God wants you to live forever, but your sins will kill you and bring on eternal death. It will bring you death in hell, the second death." And I described it to her. The Bible says, "The wages of sin is death." But here is the good news. Christ came to die for our sins.

I said, "That's all the bad news, but here is the good news." Romans 5:8. "But God commended his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." I was able to say, "Manwella, God loves you so much that He was willing to sacrifice His own self. Jesus died in your place. Here is what you have to do to be saved. It is so simple. How to have eternal life: Romans 10:13 "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." I said, "Manwella, all you have to do is open the door of your life, open the door of your heart and call on him and He will give you everlasting life" I said, "Would you like to do that?" She said, "Yes, I would."

I sort of leaned over and said, "I'm going to pray a prayer, and you pray this prayer quietly in your heart. I will lead you in the prayer." She said, "Okay." I said, "Pray this prayer." 'Dear heavenly Father,' I led that young lady to Christ right there on that plane. I became a well, and my point is, just these little

cards can help you to become a well. Folks, this is inviting people to come to Christ. This is how we can transform not only lives, but we can change the course of history in a city. We are wells. Christ Fellowship is a well. You are a well. Say, "I am a well". I am a well. It's because you have the water of life in you.