

# HOW TO BE A CHANGE CATALYST

## PART 4 // Full Transcript

Nick Vujcic was born with a rare disorder, tetra-amelia syndrome, which led to him being born without any limbs. During his early years, he struggled with severe depression and loneliness, but then, one day, some friends of his who followed Jesus invited him to church and encouraged him in his faith. Nick started to believe that God had a purpose for his life. Early on, he was struck by John chapter 9, a story about a man born blind, which resonated with him deeply. Now, he's a world-renowned motivational speaker, evangelist, author, spreading hope and resilience through his story. Though, friend ... My lips are ... That's good. Those friends took a chance on including Nick in their life, in the life of the church and in their circles, and that started a journey.

You know what that reminds me of, their inclusion, the fact that they were looking and invited Nick to be a part of what they were doing? That reminds me of the incredible story of the prodigal son. You no doubt know this story. It was a story that Jesus told about a younger brother who went to his father and said, "Hey, Dad, I want your inheritance. I want to leave. In that day, that was like saying, "Dad, I wish you were dead." He leaves, takes half the inheritance and leaves and spends all his money on wild living and ends up at the very bottom in the pit. In fact, he's working with pigs. He's feeding pigs, which, for a 1st century Jew was the lowest of jobs that you could have, but there's this amazing part of the story that I want to pick up on, and I want you and I to pick up on the heart of what Jesus is talking about here. I want you to listen for what the father did here.

So, let's look here in Luke chapter 15, verse 20. If you've got a Bible, flip there now or flip in your phone, and let's listen to this. Listen for really the heart behind the father here. "So, he ..." that's the son, "... returned home to his father, and while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming, filled with love and compassion." What did he do? "He ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him." A couple years ago, I was reading this passage, and something stood out to me that I had never seen before. Have you had that happen in scripture where you've read a story a lot of times, but then something jumps off the page? Well, this happened to me a couple years ago when I was reading this exact passage. The thing that struck me was that Jesus tells the story that the father, in this case, it's the picture of God, that the father as standing, looking to the horizon, and while the son was still a long way off, he ran out to him.

What does that mean for you and me? Well, this is what I think the difference that means. You and I should have an orientation towards inclusion. We should be looking to the horizon. Our church is the kind of place that you can belong before you can believe. Our church is the kind of place where people can come regardless of their background. The father in this story, he was looking to the horizon. Now, I wonder what that looked like. Obviously, this was a story that Jesus told, but go with me for a minute. I wonder if he was sitting on his porch, rocking in a chair, maybe drinking some sweet tea and looking kind of pensively to the horizon and saying, "Someday, my son, I know he'll return," or maybe he was standing up resolutely and was looking passionately. Maybe he was pacing back and forth and looking to the horizon and pleading and saying, "I know my son. He'll come home one day."

Well, whether it is a kind of reflexive or reflective or a purposeful look to the horizon, an intense look to the horizon, the important part was the father anticipated and was ready to move. He anticipated when his son turned back towards him. We want to be the kinds of people that orient our lives, orient our church, orient our community around including those around us, including those people that are turning to the Father. We really should be actively including people in our lives.

One of the interesting things about being a Christian for a while, and I assume if you're on part four that you maybe have followed Jesus for a while, and maybe that's a few months or a few years or maybe even

decades. One of the difficulties is, over time, our social circles get smaller and smaller. You might have had, earlier in this challenge, you maybe had a problem thinking about, who do I know that doesn't know Jesus, that I want to invite to our church? A part of the reason why that is is because our social circles shrink over time.

Well, here in part four, we want to talk about the next level beyond inviting, which you're going to keep doing for weeks, years to come. We've talked about investing, how we should be investing in the relationships around us. We talked about inviting, how you should be inviting people to come to church to come and see what God's done, but this third part is about being inclusive, about saying, "How do I open my life to include people, both who follow Jesus and those who don't?" Well, what could that look like? What would be some ideas you could potentially have to include more people in your life?

There's an interesting study that a sense of belonging and inclusion in a faith community is linked to higher levels of wellbeing and satisfaction, including the people in your life, in the life of our church is better for them. It will increase their wellbeing. It'll increase their satisfaction. So, what we want to challenge you to do is to say, "Hey, how can we include people who do not attend church with the people that we know from church?"

From time to time as a church, we'll do various community service projects. This is a great opportunity for you to invite friends, maybe from work. These are the kinds of things they might see it as a good thing. We know that it's a God thing. From time to time, maybe as a small group, as your life group, as your connect group, the people that you meet with regularly, you might throw a party. Maybe it's July 4th. Sorry, don't say it that way. Cut it to maybe it's a 4th of July party or maybe Labor Day or Christmas. What if on those days, instead of just having people from your small group, you deliberately invited other folks from the neighborhood or everyone brought a couple with them.

It reminds me of a puzzle piece. My wife, she's an incredible woman, and she loves puzzles, and I don't love puzzles. You know why I don't love puzzles? Because I always have this fear that we're going to get down to the very end, and there's going to be one or two pieces left. I'm like, "What about those pieces?" It feels incomplete. Friends, our church feels more complete when we have people in our church that don't follow Jesus. We want your life. We want your church. We want your small group to include people who don't follow Jesus, who we're hoping one day we'll take steps towards that. They may not make the jump to come to a weekend service before they start to know some people who attend our church.

So, here is our challenge for the coming days. We want you to actively try to mix the social circles of your friends from church with your social connections outside of church. So, this could look like having some friends over on Friday night to your house for some chips and a movie. Don't just invite people from church. Invite a few friends maybe from the neighborhood. This could look like, at lunch, at work, don't just go and sit in the break room by yourself. Maybe invite a friend out and say, "Hey, let's go with my other friend, and we're going to go to lunch together," and maybe that other friend happens to be a Christian. Even if they don't attend our church, that would be amazing.

Invest. We're asking you to invest in the relationships around you. Not because they are projects, but because Jesus loves them, and we want to show them the grace that He has for them. Invite. We believe that asking people to come and see, see the good things that God's doing in the life of our church, in your life is important. Include. Looking for ways to invite your social circles to collide actively. That is like the 201-301 level in this whole idea of how to be a change catalyst.

Well, friends, that brings us to the end of this four-part challenge. We hope that this has been helpful for you. Listen, but this really isn't the end. It's just the beginning. We want you to continue to invest in relationships with people around you. Continue to invite them. We only invited one of your four people. Let's look for ways in

the coming weeks where you could invite the rest of those people and then including people in the relationships with the people you know at church. People can belong before they believe, but they only do that when we take steps to include them. Thanks so much, friends. We are so honored that you want to be a change catalyst. Reach out to us here at the church. Let us know how we can help you. Thanks, friends.