



Francis & the Experience that Changed Everything

The story:

Francis of Assisi was born into wealth, the son of a proud merchant and a gentle mother. He loved parties, songs, and dreams of knighthood. He went to war, was captured, and came home broken. His old life suddenly felt empty.

One day, riding outside Assisi, Francis saw a person afflicted with leprosy on the roadside. The sight and stench filled him with horror. All his life he had avoided people like this: people on the margins, untouchable, unwanted. But something in him shifted. He got down off his horse, walked toward the man, and embraced him. He even kissed the leper's diseased face.

In that moment, what had once been bitter became sweet. Francis discovered a new freedom: by touching what he once feared, he touched Christ himself. That embrace broke open his heart and revealed God's immense, all-inclusive love. Years later, near death, Francis said it was this encounter that changed everything. One simple act of compassion, an embrace of the outcast, turned him from a seeker of glory into a servant of God.

Reflection:

- Francis admitted that the very sight of a leper once filled him with horror. Who are the “lepers” in your own ministry - the people you instinctively avoid, fear, or struggle to welcome? What would it take to move from recoil to embrace?
- Francis discovered that what was once “bitter” became “sweet” when he overcame his fear. Are there areas, in your life or ministry that you need to step into, endure discomfort, and trust positive change will happen?

