

Jesus' Method of Evangelism – John 4

We will examine Jesus' method of evangelism while encountering the Samaritan woman at the well. My goal is to provide insight to help us fulfill our mission of "seeking, saving, and equipping the lost." Yesterday, at our church annual retreat Larry Krause spoke about the need for Christians to be *seekers*, *teachers*, and *keepers*. All of us can do 2 of 3 irrespective of our skill level with scripture. While we may not all be teachers, we can all *seek* the lost, as we see people living aimless, empty lives devoid of hope, by letting them know about Jesus and what He has done for us and *is* doing for us! And we can all be *keepers* by providing encouraging words with actions behind them to other Christians. We must never give up on people. How do you feel when someone falls away? How do you feel about the lost that are perishing? If I am honest with you, I can easily get caught up on myself, my family, and the members I do see. We are called to reach beyond our immediate circle of influence, or another way of saying it is talking to people that stretch us beyond our comfort zone.

In the segregated south in the 1940s a twelve-year-old black boy was taught New Testament Christianity by a 40-year-old white man. He also taught this boy several math skills to help him excel in school. This boy obeyed the gospel soon after and later would become an accountant when most people he knew were working in steel mills and factories. This man would bless others in his family with the gospel because one man dared to go against the "Jim Crow Laws," which were the social norms of his day. This little boy in the story is my father. I owe a lot to this man for the heritage of faith that me and my family enjoy.

We can read of the Master Teacher daring to go against social norms of His day to spread the gospel. Such examples are as follows:

Jesus Went Where Others Would Not Go - Samaria! (Jn 4:4-6) - He went through the despised province of Samaria, He taught daily in the temples (Lk 19:47), He taught in the villages (Mk 6:6), He taught by the seashore to people who just wanted food (Mk 6:34), He taught in people's -outcast's - homes (Lk 19:1-10)

To travel from Judea to Galilee a person had two choices: to go straight through Samaria or go across the Jordan and up through Perea. Most Jews went the latter way because of the storied history between the two groups that went all the way back to the Assyrian Exile. Many scholars see verse 4, "He had to pass through Samaria," either one of two ways: some say because it was the most convenient way; while some believe it was because He needed to spread the gospel to the Samaritans. I believe His need to pass through Samaria was the latter.

Jesus stopped and rested at Sychar; a small village close to the capital. He stayed at a well called "Jacob's Well" in order to get a drink of water. He sent his apostles into town to secure food; perhaps this was also a teaching moment. Perhaps the "Jewish" apostles were already being influenced by Jesus because normally Jews did not eat food that was produced or handled by Samaritans. According to multiple historians, the Rabbis' ancient teachings taught, "Let no Israelite eat one mouthful of anything that is a Samaritan's; for if he eats but a little mouthful, it is as if he ate swine's flesh."

Jesus has nothing to draw water from the well with so would need to ask for help from someone that did. He ignored the obvious barriers to engage the woman at the well. Jesus breaks traditional protocol. *First*, He was a Jew speaking with a Samaritan. Ordinarily the two groups had no dealings together. *Secondly*, men in Jewish society usually avoided women in order to prevent even the appearance of impropriety. Jesus requested that a Samaritan give Him a drink of water from her vessel; the Jews considered Samaritans unclean so to drink from her vessel would have made Him ceremonially unclean.

Jesus saw the Samaritan woman as one made in the image of God.

He came to seek and save the lost; she was lost! She had 5 husbands and the man she was living with at the time of the conversation was not her husband. Jesus used a physical need such as thirsting for water to lead into a spiritual discussion of quenching her spiritual desert.

Romans 1:16, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes to the Jew first then to the Gentile.”

Matthew 16:26 claims the concept, “one soul is worth the whole world.”

All people need physical water to survive. Like air, mankind cannot survive without water for very long. Humans also have a need for spiritual water, because we are more than just flesh, we are spirit too. Jesus got the Samaritan woman's attention by saying that He could offer her living water.

The Samaritan woman did not understand what Jesus meant by Spiritual water. She asked how He could provide water without something to draw it with. It reminds me of Nicodemus (in Chapter 3 of John), his response on being born again. Jesus explains He is not speaking of water that temporarily satisfies one's physical thirst, but a water that removes guilt, shame and sin, and leads to eternal life.

The Samaritan woman thinks carnally about the water, if she can get this water, she presumes she won't have need to come to the well anymore. Like the Samaritan woman many Christians have made the mistake of thinking prosperity, good health, and living on Easy Street in general, is a benefit of Christianity, but this is not the case at all but according to Philippians 4:7 & 13 that state in part, “the peace of God which surpasses all understanding ... will allow us to face the challenges of life knowing we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.”

Jesus offers living water that gives eternal life to everyone.

A small boy from Chicago was taken to the hospital with a broken leg. He was one of 7 children and food was not always plentiful hence his hunger was rarely satisfied. His family was so poor that even a glass of milk had to be shared. They each would mark with fingers how far each could drink.

During his stay at the hospital the nurse brought him a large glass of milk. The boy asked wishfully, “How much can I drink?” The nurse realized the situation and said, “As much as you desire.”

How thirsty are we for living water? How much have you made it a priority to provide living water to others so that they will never thirst again?

My concluding thoughts on Evangelism are these:

- Be willing to go where others may not go. Be willing to let others help us where we have need. Extend your influence beyond your immediate circle of influence. The scripture said Jesus had to go there; I believe he was compelled to go the Jews' enemies to seek the lost like God commanded Jonah to go to Nineveh, to His people's ruthless oppressors. The gospel isn't just for people we like to be around.
- Offer people something they do not possess but *should* want. The gospel is like a spring of water that never runs dry leading to eternal life.
- Have the “Come and see” attitude of the Samaritan woman! John 4:29 notes that she wanted to others to come and see Jesus whom she perceived ‘might be the Messiah,’ because Jesus told her everything she had ever done. And the others came to Jesus because of her

testimony (verse 39). We later read that in verse 42 after imploring Jesus to stay with them for two days, that the people had believed in Him (first, because of the woman's testimony, and then after they had heard for themselves). They believed Jesus was the savior of the world.

If you have thirst for that living water - whether you have need to be clothed with Christ through baptism or you have fallen back into the habit of sin - come forward now so we help and pray with you as we stand and sing the song of invitation.