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Personal Evangelism Part 1

“So he (Jesus and His apostles) 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 plot 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, ‘Will you give me a drink?’ (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

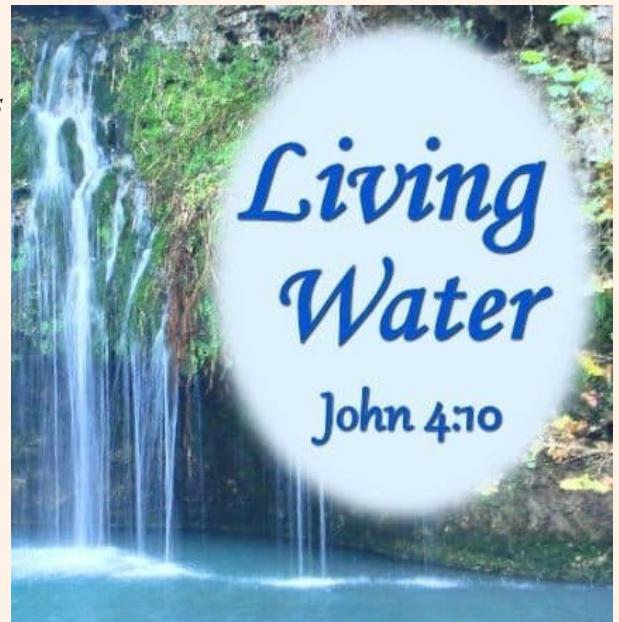
The Samaritan woman said to him, ‘You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?’ (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, ‘If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.’” John 4:3-10

One of the things I love about the Internet, the one thing that has changed my life the most, is that I don’t have to pay people to fix my stuff anymore. Before the Internet if something broke down and I did not know how to fix it, I would have to ask the guy at the hardware store. I would have to ask my friends for advice. How do I fix this? Now if something breaks down, I simply search the Internet for a video of how to fix it. If I can watch someone do it, then I have the confidence to do it. I don’t have to pay somebody anymore.

One part of my Christian service, that I wouldn’t say is broken, but I certainly wouldn’t turn down some help, is in personal evangelism. I’m not confident. I have done my fair share of speaking to people about the Lord, trying to bring people to Jesus. But it’s a struggle for me. When I study with someone and they don’t grow closer to the Lord, I always wonder what did I do wrong? What could I have said differently? Was there something else I could have done? Is there some way I could be more confident?

Think about the videos on the Internet of how to fix things. Now go one step further. What if the greatest person to ever fix that thing could show you how to do it? Would that get your attention? What if the greatest golfer ever showed you how to play golf? What if the greatest chef ever showed you how to cook?

In John chapter 4 Jesus, the greatest personal evangelist there ever was, is teaching a master class about personal evangelism. Here’s how you do it. I want to begin a three-part study about personal evangelism. Jesus will show us what we need to know to tell others about him.



It would be amazing if we could somehow get everybody in Oklahoma County all together at one time to hear the gospel. But Jesus reminds us that most often the way to bring people to the Lord is one soul at a time. We are going to look at 17 things that Jesus shows us about personal evangelism. Don't get scared, it's a three-part study. Jesus will show us how to use the truth to reach the lost.

Number one. Jesus did not let culture close doors to souls. There is an interesting phrase in the Bible as we begin. In John 4:3, Jesus and his apostles are

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in Judea. They are going to travel to Galilee. Now think of the map of Israel; Judea is at the bottom. Galilee is at the top. The Jordan River is on the right-hand side. And Samaria is in the middle. The interesting thing that John writes is that Jesus had to pass through Samaria. If you are reading from the King James Version, it says he must "needs go through Samaria." Technically speaking he did not. We know from studying that most of Israel would not go through Samaria. They would go across the Jordan River and travel on that side rather than step foot in Samaria. Four hundred years before this episode of Jesus and the woman happened, Assyria captured Samaria. The Assyrians carried into captivity anybody they wanted. There were a lot of people left that they didn't want. But then the Assyrians moved into Samaria many of their own people. The Assyrians that moved in and the Jews that were there became one. There was a mixing of the bloodlines. There was mixing of religions. So, later the Jews who returned from captivity find that the Samaritans are no longer pure. They're not pure in bloodline. And they are not pure in religion. They could not stand the Samaritans who had mixed all this up. They refused to have anything to do with them. They would not speak to them. They would not travel through their country. They thought of them as less than human.

So, practically speaking, Jesus did not have to go through Samaria. Most Jews did not. But if Jesus was going to continue his mission, he had to go through Samaria. In Luke 19:10, Jesus tells us exactly why he came to this earth. The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. He did not say that he had come to seek and to save only the Jews that were lost. The Samaritans were lost also. The pagans were lost also. The Gentiles were lost also. And all through Jesus' life we see that he would not close doors that culture so often closed.

Satan has used his power to see to it that culture is one of the things that keeps us from reaching the lost, and so often these things do not matter. Sometimes it's economics. We don't need you rich people coming and telling us poor folk that we are lost. Sometimes it's education. I've got three college degrees, and you didn't even finish high school. I don't need you to tell me what to do. Sometimes it's racial. We don't associate with people because their skin is another color. Things that do not matter can keep us apart. Satan wants us to be in these tiny little boxes so that we do not talk to people from other tiny boxes. But Je-

They thought of them as less than human.

Jesus reminds us that we cannot let culture keep us from reaching the lost. When we have an opportunity to reach someone with the gospel, we need to follow Jesus' example. We need to look at people the way God looks at people. God looks at people's hearts. But we look at what we can see on the outside of someone. I know we all look different. I know we are all different economically. I know we are all different educationally. And we can see that. But if we are going to follow Jesus' example, we do not let that stop us from spreading the truth. Do not let culture stop you.

Number two. Jesus did not let fatigue stop him. Jesus stopped at this well because he was tired. Verse six tells us he was weary from his journey. Traveling in the first century was no joke. You wake up in the morning, you start walking, and you keep walking all day -- as far as you can get. The next day, you do that all over again. It's cold at night. It's hot during the day. Comforts are hard to come by. Traveling long distances can wear anybody out. When they come to this well, Jesus is tired. He needs to rest for a while. And while he's

Jesus did not let fatigue stop him.

resting, he sees an opportunity. In Galatians 6:9, God tells us as Christians to not grow weary in well doing. In today's world as we tried to spread the gospel, it doesn't take long to see that culture is against us. It seems like this world has moved so far away from God that they don't even recognize the truth when you show it to them. Things taught by God in the Bible are so foreign to them. Maybe we are tired sometimes because in the past we haven't had a lot of success. It seems like we are just not getting anywhere. I'm tired of that. Fatigue can set in. When we run into enough dead ends, we don't feel like we can keep going. But Satan would like nothing more than for us to stop. Just because we're tired, don't be weary in well doing. I know it's bad grammar, but there's nothing more "well doing" than trying to reach the lost with the truth. There are going to be times when we're tired. There are times when it seems like we don't have any momentum. But we must, we must keep going.

Number three. Jesus started with a normal conversation. As this woman comes to the well, Jesus doesn't start with a random Bible question. He doesn't start some Bible trivia game to find out what she knows. In verse seven Jesus simply says, "Give me a drink." A normal conversation. They are at a water well. She is drawing water. It would

have been common for someone who had nothing to draw water to ask for a drink. Can I have a cup of water? He's not making a strong demand of her. He's tired. He's thirsty. He doesn't have anything to draw water. Could I have a cup of water? A very normal conversation. The best way to get a Bible study is not to ask for a Bible study. And we know why. It can be frightening when someone you don't know starts to say, "THE END IS COMING! ARE YOU READY?" You shy away from people like that.

We might appreciate their sincerity. But we get away from people like that. We need to begin with normal things. Water at a well. People need to feel a little more comfortable with us. They need to feel like they know us a little bit. That will open doors to other conversations. Keep in mind that when we deal with people, we are seeking a Bible study that will lead to their conversion. We must be kind. We must be friendly. And we need to remember the end. The salvation of their soul. That will not happen if we start off harshly. It will not happen either if we just jump in with Bible questions. If we begin with normal conversation, I'm thirsty, too. I like sports, too. I like shopping, too. Normal things. People will look at you differently. They will be more comfortable. Jesus knew that.

Jesus started with a normal conversation.

Number four. Jesus chose an appropriate time. Jesus knew that this woman would be at this place at this time. We can't know that. We are not going to know that if I go to this place at this particular time, this person will be ready to hear the gospel. Jesus knew that but we can't. The Bible does not tell us that Jesus went there because she was there. Verse eight tells us that the disciples had gone to buy bread. They went to get lunch. That's important. Let's be honest. Religion. Salvation. Those topics are very personal. If this woman,

who still does not know that she is talking to Jesus, begins to be asked about sin in her life and salvation, and there are twelve apostles looking over his shoulder, is she going to open up at all? She's going to grab her water and run if she thinks about the water at all.

Jesus chose an appropriate time.

So, this is a man and a woman alone. Some people would say that is not good. They are by a public water well. Anybody that needs water comes here. We do need to be careful about where we are, and who we are with. But look at how appropriately Jesus does this. When we are trying to get a Bible study, we get to know people in public places. Restaurants. Ballgames. Shopping. Work. School. But it's very difficult to have a true deep Bible study in the middle of Cracker Barrel. There's too much noise. There are too many distractions, and my biscuits and gravy are getting cold. If you are in public and people begin to see the wrong in their life, they probably are not going to say something in public. We get to know people publicly. And then when it is time to open the Scriptures, we need to go where it can be us and the Bible. Our homes. Somewhere private. Maybe the church building. No distractions. A place where the Bible can be opened and be appropriate in those situations. Husband and wife together. If you are a single person, take someone with you so that there will be no question of impropriety. A safe place where very specific, deep questions can be considered with the word of God.

In Acts 18, Aquilla and Priscilla meet a man named Apollos. He was preaching powerfully. But he was incorrect. He was preaching about John the Baptist. He didn't know about Jesus. He was preaching powerfully but not accurately. This couple, Aquilla and Priscilla, did not stand up in a public service and yell at him that he was wrong.

He would have been completely embarrassed. Acts 18:26 says that they took him aside and taught him the way of God more accurately. That is compassion, but it is also appropriate. Apollos did not need to be shamed publicly. He needed to be taught -- Privately. We need a place where we can open the Bible and learn.

Next, Jesus did not let potentially offensive statements stop him. I don't know how to read the question this woman asked Jesus in verse nine. I know what the words say. But I don't know the tone of her voice. It is possible she was just surprised that Jesus would speak to her. But it is also possible that this question is asked because this woman is prejudiced also. How is it that you, a Jew, ask me, a woman of Samaria, for water?

Jesus did not let potentially offensive statements stop him.

Maybe she was just surprised. But maybe she's got some prejudice. Because the very next phrase from God is, for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. The Bible doesn't say it, but the feeling was mutual. For centuries, the Samaritans have been looked down on. They have been called names and mistreated in terrible ways. And they are sick of it. This is all they have ever known. So how is it that you, a Jew, ask me for water? What would we have done? Sometimes we might be very defensive. Look, I know what I'm trying to do. I am just doing the right thing here. I am concerned about your eternal life. I'm doing this because I have a good heart.

As we deal with people with whom we are trying to share the gospel, this is going to happen. They will say things, or they will ask things that are upsetting to us. Sometimes they are outright offensive to us. How we respond is going to make all the difference. Let me give you some examples that I have heard personally. Yeah, I knew you would try to study with me, after all, you're one of

those church of Christ people who think you're the only ones going to heaven. Or, I have seen your church of Christ services on TV. You are the ones who don't believe in music. Maybe one of the hardest ones occurred years ago when I studied with a church of Christ guy, and he told me I was going to hell. If we wear our feelings on our sleeve and get upset, we are going to be hurt and aggressive. And you can stop right there. Proverbs 15:1 says that a soft answer turns away wrath. The word soft means tender or delicate. A tender delicate answer turns away wrath. But a harsh answer stirs up trouble.

Think about Paul. Paul went to the city of Athens. He walked around all day looking at their idols. Taking it all in. When he got the chance to speak to the people on Mars Hill, he could have said, you pagan idolaters are going to burn. But what did Paul really say? Men of Athens, I perceive in every way that you are very religious. He's got their attention, and they are ready to listen. Because of his tender, delicate answer. Is there a time for boldness? Yes, there is. But when we are trying to win a soul, it is not the first sentence. It is also not the time for boldness when someone says something upsetting to us. Jesus knew there was something bigger here than answering the question the woman asked him. We need to pray for wisdom in these situations, when to be tender and delicate and when to be bold.

Number six. Jesus offered something better than what she had. It is beautifully done the way Jesus turns the conversation in verse ten. He turns the conversation away from physical, actual water to what he said was living water. If you knew who was talking to you, you would ask him, and he would give you living water. At this point this woman has no idea what living water means. Jesus does not expect her to know what that means. She might not know what that means for quite some time. But Jesus says something that piques her in-

terest. Living water? That is better than actual water. I must come to draw actual water every day. Living water?

The point is, yes, we need to help people with actual physical needs. In Matthew 25 Jesus told us we will be judged by our efforts to help those who are thirsty and hungry and sick and in prison. We will be judged on what we did or did not do for these people. We absolutely need to help them. But to what end? Our elders might decide to buy an entire city block. All of us might quit our jobs and spend our days building houses to give to those who are homeless. We would be doing a good thing. We would have our names in the paper. We would feel really good about ourselves. But if we never offer them Jesus, what have we really done? We will not as a congregation build more houses than Habitat for Humanity. There are a lot of organizations around that will give away more food and more clothes than we ever could. But listen to this. There is only one organization on this earth that has been charged with spreading the truth. Only one organization that can offer the hope of heaven. That is the church that Jesus died for. That's us. And that's it. We offer something better than free housing and free food and free clothing or anything else this world can offer. No one else has been told by God to go and make disciples of all nations. We have been told that.

Jesus offered something better than what she had.

That is the first six points in this study. As we close let me ask you, where are you going? I don't mean are you going to heaven or not. Where are you going today? Some of us might go out to eat. Some of us might have some work to finish. Some of us might be headed for a ballgame. It's a good day to go shopping. The 2020 census showed that there are just under 800,000 people in Oklahoma

County. Some of us live in Canadian County. That's another 155,000 people. If you're from McLean County that's another 42,000 people. And each one of these people was created by God, in his image, and he loves them dearly, more than we can understand. And we are the ones that have

been told to bring them to him. Their eternal destiny depends on it. It's overwhelming. Where do we even start? One person at a time.

Rick Crooks
Oklahoma City, OK

Shining As Lights

“Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.” Philippians 2:14-16

We never know who may be watching us or what effect our lives have on others. I was sitting next to one of my Mexican brethren in Moroleon, Mexico recently and he was telling me about some brothers and sisters from the U.S.A. who visited Mexico some 25 years ago. At the time of this visit, the Mexican brother was only 16 years old; he is in his early 40's now and has a family. He was impressed by the fact that many older, retired Americans were among those who visited his country. He told me that this really made an impression on him. He was inspired by these older saints who traveled so far and endured some hardships and inconveniences in order to visit him and others in Mexico. This young man is now preaching in Mexico.

I was very interested in the story that he told. I feel fairly safe in saying that those older, retired saints who traveled by bus to Mexico many years ago probably never knew the kind of impact they were having. In fact, many of them may have returned home and wondered if the trip was worth the time, energy and effort. I'm sure they enjoyed the trip, and were happy to meet all the brothers and sisters in Mexico. However, I really doubt that many of

them realized the kind of impression they were making on this 16-year-old Mexican boy. They may never have dreamed that over 25 years later this young boy, now grown to manhood, would still be telling about how inspired he was by their faith and commitment to the Lord.

He was inspired by these older saints who traveled so far and endured some hardships and inconveniences in order to visit him and others in Mexico.

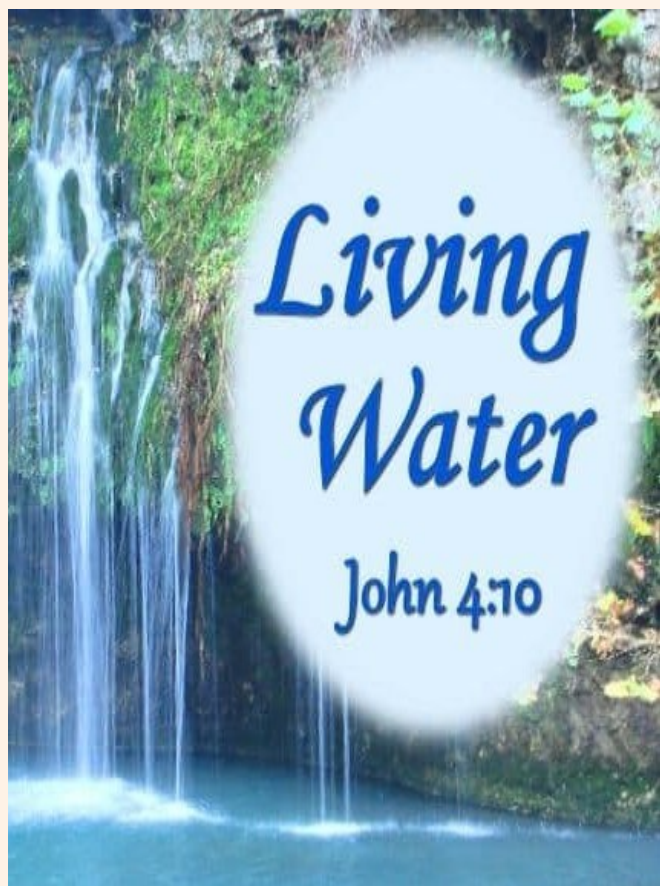
There was a time when the army of Israel was cowered before the insults of a giant named Goliath. Then a young shepherd boy named David heard the challenge of Goliath and went out to meet him. David prevailed over Goliath with a sling and a stone. But it wasn't just Goliath who fell that day: "...And when the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. Now the men of Israel and Judah arose and shouted, and pursued the Philistines as far as the entrance of the valley and to the gates of Ekron. And the wounded of the Philistines fell along the road to Shaaraim, even as far as Gath and Ekron" (1 Samuel 17:51-52). No matter how old or how young you are, you have the power to inspire others when they watch your faith in God at work. Let your light shine everywhere you go.

“And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia

who believe. For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything.”

L Scott Gage

Vita E, May 4, 2010



Before Jesus sent the 70 out and later chose the 12 who would go out and evangelize — he prayed (Luke 6:12).

Before the Apostles began their great ministry of evangelism beginning in Jerusalem — they were gathered together in prayer (Acts 1:12-14).



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