

Week Two: *We Get Near*
John 4 (selected verses)

Spend FIFTEEN - Day One

1. Read John 4:1-9 and answer the following questions:
 - a. Why did Jesus leave the area?
 - b. Where was He going?
 - c. Why did He take that route?
 - d. What assumption did the Pharisees make about Jesus?
2. Do you ever go out of your way to avoid something or someone? Why do you do it? (Example: you avoid a crime-ridden area on your commute, or take the back exit from your work to avoid coworkers)
3. Why did most Jews in Jesus' day avoid Samaria? (See verse 9)
4. In verse 4, the Bible says that Jesus had to go through Samaria. Since most Jews in Jesus' day successfully avoided the area by going around it, what other reasons might Jesus have that compelled Him to go through Samaria?
5. As we will see as our study this week progresses, Jesus was a man on a mission. He had business in Samaria. When you think about the areas you sometimes avoid, is it possible that God could have work for you in those places? What might that be in your case?
6. Close your FIFTEEN in prayer. Ask God to help you be open to hearing Him speak to you this week as we continue to reflect on what it means to get near.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Two

7. Read John 4:7-9. For what two reasons was the woman surprised that Jesus asked her for a drink?
8. On what basis did the woman make this judgment about Jesus? Was it a reasonable assumption for her to make about Jesus?
9. When people meet you, is there anything about you that might cause them to make an assumption about you? Do you feel as though their assumption is justified? Why or why not?
10. If someone makes an assumption about you, how do you typically react?

11. How did the woman respond to Jesus' request for water?
12. How might understanding Jesus' motive have helped this woman understand who Jesus was?
13. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Confess those times where you have wrongly made assumptions about others, then ask God to help you to remember to ask questions before making assumptions of others.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Three

14. Look again at John 4:7-9. In your opinion, what is the woman's tone toward Jesus? Does the woman seem afraid of Jesus, angry, insulted, embarrassed, or something else? Explain your answer.
15. Continue reading John 4:10-15. Does the nature of their ongoing conversation suggest to you anything about what their attitude toward each other might have been?
16. How important is tone when you are asking someone for a favor? How about when someone asks you for a favor?
17. It's pretty hard to judge tone from this portion of the narrative, but Jesus and this woman somehow felt comfortable enough to continue talking. What does it take for you to feel comfortable when talking to a stranger? Does it come naturally to you or do you avoid such situations?
18. How can you display a tone of openness and friendliness when you engage someone who does not know you?
19. Close your FIFTEEN by asking God to help you to always speak in a manner that allows others to feel comfortable talking to you.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Four

20. Read John 4:9-26. How did the fact that Jesus knew all about her secrets, yet was a stranger to her, impact the woman?
21. Jesus' knowledge of her was truly miraculous and evidence of God's divine nature. The way we often know secrets about each other is through gossip. How does that change the value of knowing other's secrets?
22. Have you ever brought a friend to church, and because of what you knew about him or her, you listened to the service from their perspective? How did that influence how you felt about what was experienced in worship?

23. When you think about that experience, what could be done better to make that person feel included?
24. Was there anything you could have done differently to prepare your friend?
25. An old saying goes something like this: “Before you judge a man, walk a mile in his shoes.” How can you do this better as a person, not just as a Christian?
26. Close your FIFTEEN in prayer. Ask God to help you to be more empathetic to the situations of others.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Five

27. Read John 4:27-42. How did the disciples react when they returned and found Jesus with the woman?
28. For once in their lives, none of the disciples voiced the questions they were thinking. Why do you suppose they remained quiet?
29. We can't know for sure their reasons for their seemingly sudden restraint. How would you have reacted in their place? Would you have been able to restrain yourself or would you want answers from Jesus?
30. It's possible that the disciples were so stunned by Jesus' behavior that they remained quiet, or it's possible that this behavior was so rare to them they did not even know how to hold a conversation with a woman, much less a foreign one, in public. If we are being truly honest, is there anyone that you would feel uncomfortable talking to, especially in public? What about them would make you uncomfortable?
31. Heineken Beer produced an ad about getting near people that are different from us. Search #OpenYourWorld on YouTube or use this link. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=etIqIn7vT4w> The pairs in this ad bonded over a shared project, but they also had meaningful conversations. What steps could you take to get to know people with whom you are uncomfortable?
32. How can you have more meaningful conversations with them?
33. End your FIFTEEN by confessing any reluctance you may feel in getting close to people. Then close your FIFTEEN by asking God to help you cross divides as Jesus has modeled for us.