

UNEDITED DRAFT

Well, today is our final weekend for a four part series called "Engage." In this series, God has called us to get off the sidelines and get into play for the kingdom of God. So today we'll be looking at one more way God wants us to engage.

To begin, I want to ask you a question:

How does a church grow? Specifically, how does it happen that unchurched people would come to join a church and the church would grow? There isn't necessarily a right or wrong answer to this question. In the strictest sense, the church grows when the Word of God works in the heart of a person. That person is convicted of their sin, and they turn to Jesus for his forgiveness. When someone who wasn't connected to Jesus connects to Jesus, the church grows.

But how is this connection made? God has chosen to work through you and me. God has given us the task of going and inviting people to meet Jesus, to connect to him, and become life-long followers. Engage: By inviting people to come, see Jesus.

Jesus was traveling from Judea in the south back north to Galilee. The most direct route was through Samaria. And it says, "Jesus had to go through Samaria." He didn't have to because it was the only way. The truth is most Jews avoided Samaria and they went around it. We've talked about this history relatively recently so I won't go through it all again now. Suffice it to say that the Samaritans didn't like the Jews and the Jews didn't like the Samaritans. They were different racially, culturally, and perhaps most importantly religiously. So the Jews would avoid traveling through Samaria. But not Jesus. He *had to* go through Samaria. And the reason he had to we'll see in a moment.

Traveling through Samaria, Jesus came to a town called Sychar. It was about noon. He and his disciples were tired and hungry. So the disciples headed into town to buy food while Jesus stayed by a well. While he was waiting there a Samaritan woman walked up to draw water from the well. And Jesus says "Will you give me a drink?"

Now some things may have escaped your attention, but they're important. 1) The woman was alone and she was coming to the well in heat of the day. That's odd. As we will soon see, this woman did not enjoy a good reputation in town. This woman was married, divorce and remarried... 5 times! And she was currently living with a man she was not married to. In our culture today that's even unusual to be married five times. In those days it was almost unheard of. I would imagine because of her reputation, she didn't go out to the well with other women as would have been the custom. Most would go out in the morning or evening. But she goes out alone... in the middle of the day... apparently to avoid contact with other women who probably gossiped about her and talked about her.

So because she was a Samaritan, Jesus should not have been talking to her. Because she was a woman, Jesus should not have been talking to her. (It was considered inappropriate for a rabbi to talk to a woman in public. And because of her reputation, Jesus should not have been talking to her. This was someone that everyone in the Jesus' world would have said, "Just look the other way, Jesus. Don't make eye contact. Let her get her water and she'll be on her way.")

But Jesus purposely engages her in conversation. "**Will you give me a drink?**" Notice that she doesn't answer his question. Instead she points out what I just told you: "**You are a Jew and I**

am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” 10 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 (a spring) water.”

Jesus is not asking for a drink because he wants water. Jesus asked for a drink because he wanted to give living water. He’s turning the conversation toward the spiritual.

11 “Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?”

I suspect this woman knew that Jesus was steering this conversation. I don’t think she was stupid.

12 Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?”

You see, she knew Jesus is suggesting that he is great in that he can give living water.

13 Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

Jesus is gently, politely, lovingly leading this woman to a truth that will give her life forever with God. He wants her to trust in him. He will satisfy her thirst. But first she must recognize that she has a thirst.

15 The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”

She knows Jesus is steering this toward the spiritual. She pushes back and tries to keep it on the purely physical. It would be nice not to have to come back for water all the time.

Then Jesus does something that seems extremely insensitive. We modern day Americans are not nearly so confrontational and direct with people. But Jesus was:

16 He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.”

17 “I have no husband,” she replied.

Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband. 18 The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.”

Whoa! Where did that come from? If we put this in a video to teach people how to lead someone to faith, we would probably put it in as a bad example. “You see how confrontational this man is? Almost rude in directly pointing out her past sins. That’s a sure fire way to turn someone away.” But since it’s Jesus we can’t question his approach, can we? And we’ll see shortly why he did it.

19 “Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet.

So she acknowledges he knows things that he shouldn’t know. But then she does something interesting. She tries to deflect the conversation, make it much less personal. She starts arguing about religion, and the differences in Jewish religious beliefs and Samaritan. Jesus allows the brief tangent. But he gets her back on task quickly: **“Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. 24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.”**

25 The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”

This statement almost seems dismissive. I wonder if as she says this she’s reaching toward the water jugs, picking them up. “Yeah, some day this will all get sorted out . We Samaritans

believe like you Jews that a promised one, the Christ, is coming. He'll set this all straight. So... have a nice day." But Jesus momentarily stops her in her tracks when he says:

"I who speak to you am he."

The one speaking to her was the promised Savior... the Messiah... the Christ. You see, Jesus had been leading her to try to understand the true depth of her spiritual thirst. If you don't know you're thirsty, you won't take a drink. If a person doesn't recognize their spiritual thirst, they will refuse the refreshing water of life who is Jesus.

I want to pause there. Until you have experienced true spiritual thirst, and have had it quenched, you're not really in a position to invite anyone to Jesus.

We Americans are masters at not acknowledging our deep spiritual thirst. Every human being feels it by nature, but most human being try to quench that thirst with things that do not satisfy.

People feel that thirst, so they get into a **relationship** and think this will quench their thirst. But it doesn't, so they get into another and another. And they seek thing from the relationship and do things in the relationship to quench a thirst that no human relationship can satisfy. And so relationship after relationship fails.

Others, feeling the deep spiritual thirst, try to satisfy it by their job or career. They climb the corporate ladder with ferocity only to find that their thirst is not satisfied. Or they jump from job to job because they're not finding that satisfaction they're sure must be there.

Others try to satisfy the thirst by trying to accumulate earthly wealth and possessions. Yet the more they get the more unsatisfied they realize they are.

In all these cases we try to satisfy the spiritual thirst with something that cannot satisfy it. If you are thirsty, sand is not what you need to quench your thirst. It doesn't matter the grain size or quantity of the sand, it's not the right substance to satisfy your thirst.

Jesus directly confronted the woman with her sin so she would grasp how desperately she needed the water of life. Jesus confronts you in the same way. Where is the sin in your life? Do you have a habit that is hurting you or others? Where do you defend yourself? Deflect a conversation? What would you be embarrassed about if others found out? Jesus is exposing your sin. He wants you to know real thirst.

For then he can give you the true living water your soul truly craves. Jesus is the one who alone can satisfy your thirst. Because you are spiritually parched, Jesus became spiritually parched when he took your sin and guilt from you and nailed to the cross with him. Remember how Jesus said on the cross, "I thirst?" He wasn't just physically thirsty, he was spiritually parched as he bore your sins and mine. He died and paid our sin debt in full. We know it's completely paid because he rose on the third day. Filled with spiritual life, Jesus now pours out that water of life in you and in me and it wells up for eternal life.

When you have drunk deeply from the water of life and been refreshed by those waters, you desire to share that water. And that's what this woman did.

Just as Jesus said, "I who speak to you am he." The disciples came back. They didn't understand why Jesus would be talking to a Samaritan woman. But the woman doesn't even notice the disdainful look on their faces.

28 Then, leaving her water jar, [the impact Jesus made on her was tremendous if she forgot her water jar. That was the whole reason she came to the well. Perhaps it's also symbolic that now she has drunk the water of life, and she doesn't need that water jug anymore.] **the woman went back to**

the town and said to the people, 29 “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?” 30 They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

She couldn't help but talk about Jesus! Now understand that this was a woman who would have had almost no influence in town. She was marginalized, shunned, gossiped about... no one typically listened to her. She was a woman with a very bad reputation.

When they she said, **Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did.**” They could have responded, “Well, yeah... EVERYONE knows everything you did. Your reputation precedes you. Everyone in town knows everything you did. It's not like it's a secret. But that's not how they responded. There must have been an urgency in her voice. Something convincing in the way she spoke. She had discovered someone that changed her life, and she wanted them to discover the same person. So she led them out to Jesus and made their way toward them.

Meanwhile, Jesus was having a conversation with his disciples about doing the will of his Father, and how the harvest of souls was ripe and ready.

Then in verse 39 it says, **“39 Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, “He told me everything I ever did.” 40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. 41 And because of his words many more became believers. 42 They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.”**

The woman, who was marginalized in her town and had practically no influence and no voice... was the reason that many in that Samaritan town came to know Jesus, the water of life. Because her thirst was quenched, she could not keep quiet and was compelled to share with others what she had discovered about Jesus.

Friends, you know what it's like to be spiritually thirsty. You know what it's like to have that thirst quenched by Jesus. So here's the main point for this last message in our engage series. Engage... by inviting others to come and see Jesus.

Who do you invite? Everyone. Anyone! If Jesus “had to” travel to Samaria just to talk to a sinful, Samaritan woman at a well, don't you think he desires the salvation of all? Who do you know that you can invite to come and see Jesus?

What? What do you say? I get push back with this all the time from people who claim they don't know how to talk about what they believe. You don't need to be eloquent, or know what to say. You just need to be able to help someone recognize their thirst, and lead them to Jesus to have it quenched. The woman didn't teach much of anything about Jesus. All she said, “He knows everything about me, and I think he could be the Christ.” She led them to where they could hear more about Jesus. Jesus' Words took over from there and the people believed. So just invite!

So I need you to invite people. Not so that we have more people. We're not all about increasing Good Shepherd's membership. We're about connecting people to Jesus. And I know for a fact that can happen with the Word of God we preach and teach at this church.

So... when is the last time you invited someone? Don't be afraid to invite! What's the worst that can happen? They will say “no.” Or “I'm too busy.” That's no big deal. You can handle that. But here's the thing. You would be surprised at how many people would accept your offer to go to church if you just invited them. They may be waiting for you to invite them. You go with them, sit with them, help them through the service. Talk about it afterwards. Encourage them to take next steps like going through our starting point class called Basic Bible Christianity. I know you have at

least as much influence as the woman at the well. And probably you have much more... and certainly more than you realize. You have a thirst that's been quenched. There are people all around you dying of thirst. They desperately need Jesus, the water of life. Give them the drink they so desperately need!

So you know this week's challenge, don't you? Within the next 2 weeks, invite someone to church with you. Yes, with you. You need to walk them in the door and sit with them and help them feel comfortable. Love other people enough that you would help quench their deep spiritual church with Jesus Christ. Keep it simple, just ask them to "come, see Jesus!"

This is the end of our Engage series. God is calling us to be active in his church, active in our service to him. We've talked about not just hearing God's Word but putting it into **practice**, and how this happens when we spend time together regularly in **circles** to build each other up. We've talked about engaging by honoring God with our first and our best in **offerings**. We talked about **servicing** and volunteering in the church as we love one another and strengthen the body of Christ. And today we've talked now about **inviting** someone to come, see Jesus.

It's my prayer that we take these messages to heart, and that each and every individual member of Good Shepherd would renew their efforts to ENGAGE. As we do we will fulfill our church's vision of "Connecting people to Christ" to God's glory. Amen.