



# Sermon Growth Guide

**August 29, 2021**

**Belong – Risk Being Known**

**John 4:13-19**

**Key Verse:** John 4:13

“Jesus answered, ‘Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again ...’”

**Big Idea:** God wants you to Risk Being Known.

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## Foundations

Welcome to week 2 of our **Belong** series. Our hearts cry out for true belonging. This week we learn that true belonging costs something; true belonging takes honest vulnerability and a commitment to stick it out with a close community.

We’re back in John 4 this week, with “the woman at the well.” Until now the woman was living in town, hiding in plain sight from the whole community. Jesus enters and makes her an offer, “whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst.”

What is Jesus really getting at here? The inside—Jesus offers you and me something that satisfies us and transforms us on the inside, “living water.” Jesus offers us Himself, the Holy Spirit living in us, filling us with God-life every moment we abide in Him.

No more canceling what we don’t like around us, no more counterattacking every time someone confronts us, and no more deflecting everything that feels uncomfortable. Instead, we’re invited into real Kingdom community where we **Risk Being Known**.

Pray that God will guide and guard your Life Group, growing you each this week by God’s Living Water into an even purer reflection of the beloved Son.

## Understanding God’s Word

Host a discussion getting at what Jesus really means in verses 13 and 14.

Putting yourself in the shoes of the woman, read verses 17 and 18. How do you feel when someone digs into your heart for your good?

## Applying God’s Word

There is a great nobility to the woman’s response. Jesus already knows her heart. Jesus knows she will stand her ground and allow herself to **Risk Being Known** in this Kingdom moment. Jesus frees her from a life in the shadows. What about you? Are you willing to Risk Being Known? Host a discussion with one another about the barriers to Kingdom community in your life. What step can you take this week in allowing yourself to be known and loved by those God has placed in your life?

## Witnessing God’s Word

Later in the gospel of John, we are told that, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another,” (John 13:35). The people of God ought to be known as the healthiest community in town. We are known. We serve and allow ourselves to be served. We love. How can you as a Life Group even more press into Kingdom community for the sake of displaying the majesty of Christ?

**Risk Being Known.** Did you know that what people post on social media is not actually a fully accurate assessment of how life is going for them? It's true. The carefully curated pic. The angle. The filter. The cute, bubbly caption. People are posting their highlights. People want to share the best of things. Of course, we do! Where it hurts us is when we forget we are scanning other peoples' highlight reels while we are living our own true life. Social media is making billions creating the world's very best technological platform for something you and I and the rest of the world have been doing since the beginning of time: faking it! We all have masks we wear, fronts we put on, a persona we want everyone to see that hides the parts of our lives we think we should be ashamed of. We are all faking it. M. Scott Peck called it "The People of the Lie." Brennan Manning called it the "Imposter." The Enneagram people call it "being a three," being more interested in appearances than realities. Faking it.

Social Scientist Brene Brown talks about "true belonging." Loneliness is killing us. We need true belonging. Her stats on loneliness say that living with air pollution increases your odds of dying early by 5 percent, obesity 20 percent, excessive drinking 30 percent, but living with loneliness increases the odds of dying early by 45 percent. People in her research express wanting to be part of something, true community, true belonging, but not at the expense of losing authenticity or pretending to be something you're not. We want true belonging. It doesn't come, she says, until we drop our false-fronts, until we stop "armoring up" with defense mechanisms and protective shields, and we show up and hang in there and walk out of our bunkers. "Ideological bunkers protect us from everything except loneliness and disconnection... True belonging has no bunkers. We have to step out from behind the barricades of self-preservation and brave the wild." It gets lonely behind that mask.

What does it take to put down the masks and be real? **Risk Being Known.**

Last week we met Jesus and the Samaritan Woman at Jacob's Well. She wasn't just alone; she was lonely. She had defensive, self-protective mechanisms to manage her loneliness and to keep others away. She was hiding in plain sight. She went to the well at noon, in the heat of the sun, to avoid social contact. She was sarcastic and sharp with strangers, to avoid real connection. Jesus warned her, didn't He, that it wasn't going to work. Here's where we pick up, "Jesus answered, 'Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again'" (John 4:13). Everybody who drinks that winds up thirsty. Everybody who tries that winds up hurting more. Everybody who copes like that winds up more lonesome than before. "But whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:14). Something





internal can happen. You've been trying to slake the thirst with something from the outside; but with Jesus, something inside can change.

Now comes the truly frightening moment. Isn't it scary when someone knows more about you than you know about them? Jesus knows more than she has revealed. Jesus says, need water? Let me connect you to a direct line, an artesian spring of cool, clear water. She says, sure! Hook me up! "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'" (John 4:15). This is getting fun! Then, verse 16: "He told her, 'Go, call your husband and come back'" (John 4:16). Thud! Not a lot of extra words in her reply. No sarcastic comeback, just "I have no husband." That's something Jesus already knew. And there's more he knows. "'I have no husband,' she replied. Jesus said to her, 'You are right when you say you have no husband. 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'" (John 4:17-18). Five husbands is a lot. And to be called out on her current situation is a shock. You wouldn't be the first to speculate that this is what kept her from friends, kept her from kibbitzing around the well, kept her coming out at noon to draw water when no one is around. She hides what makes her feel ashamed.

What do you do when you get confronted? What do you do when you get called out, challenged or exposed? The big thing right now is to "cancel." Just cancel that voice, that person, that long friendship, that relative. Cancelled. Erased. Removed. Blocked. People do this under the premise of mental health. It isn't healthy for me to hear something I disagree with. Jesus comes off very aggressive in this model. There is more than micro-aggression here. But it is *for* her, not *against* her, that Jesus says what he says.

What happens when you turn off every opposing voice in your life? I heard an old Tim Keller sermon when he mentioned a Star Trek episode about a guy named Harry Mudd. I went back and watched it. Mudd was stranded on a distant planet, but with hundreds of beautiful female androids who did whatever he wanted. "Oh, you are so smart, Lord Mudd. You are so right, Lord Mudd. You are absolutely correct, Lord Mudd. What can I do for you, Lord Mudd?" You might think that sounds like paradise, but he was trying to escape. It was driving him crazy. He also had one android created to look like his wife. When that one came on, she lit into him. "Harry, where have you been? Have you been drinking? I told you..." then Harry would turn it off. "I told you, you, you..." You just turn off the unpleasant things. You just cancel the awkward or uncomfortable or challenging. Harry Mudd was on the verge of insanity. We can't actually live that way. If you never hear anything you disagree with, you will never



learn a thing, never correct any viewpoint you have, never truly understand yourself or the world. You will be stuck, frozen in the exact state in which you decided to react with cancelling. This isn't just about the younger generation either. We all do this. We create a bell jar where we only hear what we like, we sit in an echo-chamber where every news source and opinion is something we already agree with, only with added outrage. Fear the echo-chamber. It is nowhere to grow.

We cancel, but sometimes we counterattack. You know, flight-or-fight reflex. Some choose fight! "Oh yeah, well what about you, buddy? I don't see your wife and happy family around here! What are you doing lingering around this well ordering drinks from women you don't know?" Fire back, guns blazing! Man the torpedoes! She didn't do that either, did she? We cancel, we counterattack, or, third, we deflect. "How about those Broncos?" That's usually what I do, to be honest. For me, it

always takes a minute to even know I'm under attack. I always feel a step behind. So my diplomatic, people-pleasing pastor voice takes over. "I hate you and you are ruining everything I love!" "Oh, sorry. Thanks for the feedback." Then on the way home it occurs to me—"Hey, that guy was really digging into me!" That's when my best comebacks are written. Cancel, counterattack, or divert. Actually, the woman will choose door number three as we will see next week. She diverts. How about a religious controversy to shift the conversation? But she doesn't run. She doesn't cancel. She doesn't counter. She hangs in there.

Why do we respond these ways when we are challenged or exposed? Why do we jump in our bunkers and pull up our masks? It is very frightening to risk being known by others. We think our weaknesses and mistakes will drive people away from us or cause them to love us less. This is a lie. People are impressed with competence, but they are

drawn to character. Your strengths may impress them, but your vulnerabilities will bind you together. They might be inspired by your persona, but they will love you for your person—with all the wounds and mistakes and vulnerabilities and questions and doubts, along with your faith in your Savior. Think of it this way. Our relationships sit in some combination of being known and being loved. If you are unknown and unloved, that's no relationship. If you are known and unloved, that's no good. What about loved but unknown? You are admired and appreciated, you get all the good feels of approval and acceptance, but it's coming from people who really don't know you behind the mask. Honestly, I think that's where most of us are. That's where we live these days. Loved but not known. There are a thousand reasons we get there, but we learn to use the mask, we learn to throw the impostor out there in front of us, the false front, and we get some measure of emotional stroking for this, we feel, kind





of, OK. But inside we always wonder, what if they really knew me?

Unknown and unloved, that's nothing. Known and unloved, that's dark. Loved and unknown, that's lonely. Belonging, true belonging, is being known and being loved through and through. It can't come so long as you live behind the mask. One way or another, you will have to risk being known to find true belonging. Jesus will help. Jesus will be there with you. "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet" (John 4:19). Jesus knows. He already knows. He already sees right through the masks we wear. Five failed marriages? Jesus isn't walking away. Jesus doesn't bat an eye. He knows every story. He knows every moment of pain. He counted every tear as it fell from her cheek. No shame. No hiding. You are known. And you are loved. Jesus will not turn away. Instead, Jesus has a different plan. Fully known and fully loved, that's His plan.

It means something inside can change. Here they are sitting around a well, but Jesus offers a spring, a source, a wellspring of eternal life within the very soul. We try to fix it from the outside or manage it with external things, but Jesus says, no, you will be fully known and fully loved and it will change the inside. "Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:14). The woman still thought in external, even material, pragmatic terms: "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty" (John 4:15). Jesus says, no, it isn't about learning to not thirst, it isn't about not needing water anymore, it isn't about suppressing or numbing or denying the great thirst of your soul. Your soul's greatest thirst is to know the living God, the soul's deepest thirst is for God Himself, and this is exactly what Christ brings. Jesus imparts to believers His own Holy Spirit within them, which becomes a fountain of living waters where they never stop drinking in eternal life, eternal refreshment, eternal joy. Isaiah

promised "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation" (Isaiah 12:3) and Jesus said, "Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them" (John 7:38). By which, it says, he meant the Spirit.

Jesus doesn't want you to deny your thirst. He wants something else. He wants you filled to the brim with eternal life, living water, new life. Known and loved and redeemed. You belong. How? Jesus became thirsty so you could have living water. On the cross, He cried out, "I thirst." The things we hide behind our masks, Jesus already paid for them, Jesus already died for them. He lived the life you could not live and died a death you could not die so that God could be both just and justifying those who believe. The penalty has been paid. Now there is no shame, no unpaid debt, no burden, no surprise. Jesus already knows. And He has already forgiven. You belong.

