



# Sermon Growth Guide

**September 12, 2021**

**Belong - Open to Others**

**John 4:27-42**

**Key Verse:** John 4:29-30 "Come see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah? They came out of town and made their way toward Him."

**Big Idea:** Belonging can only happen when we are open to others.

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## Foundations

As we continue the story of the woman whom Jesus meets at Jacob's well, we see a progression in her understanding. At first she sees Jesus as a Jewish man and therefore not someone to talk to a woman of Samaria. Then she sees that Jesus takes her seriously, so she becomes more committed to speaking with Him. Eventually she sees Him as a prophet because He knows everything about her.

But we also witness a progression in her sense of belonging. She journeys from being an outsider to sensing that Jesus is "safe" and that she can talk to Him. Then as she drinks of the Living Water that Jesus offers, she runs to all those neighbors she had so carefully avoided. She is not afraid to talk about her past as she tells the townspeople who she has met and what has happened.

She is able to move toward others because Jesus has moved toward her and included her among those who would follow Him. As Pastor Tim said in his sermon, her story is no longer a failed marriages story. It isn't a shame story. It is a Jesus story.

When she shared her new story, a new community was formed. The villagers were intrigued by what she had to say and invited Jesus into their midst. Think about this: In what ways does this story illustrate the saying that "our faith is personal but it is not private"?

## Understanding God's Word

In John 4:26-30 we see a model of how one can have spiritual conversations with others. It is not formulaic. It is relational. When this woman runs in to town her words are enthusiastic, experiential, engaging, it's all about Jesus. And, it is brief. Dale Bruner, in his commentary on John, summarizes her "sermon" as honest, real and Christ-centered. Because of her testimony, many in the village became followers of Jesus.

That was a "great harvest." As you read verses 34-38, what encouragement do you receive as you face the challenge of having spiritual conversations with friends and neighbors?

## Applying God's Word

When we drink of the Living Water, we are transformed in a way that motivates us to reach out to others with the good news about Jesus. Bruner writes: "Having tasted the Well of Living Water herself, she has been transformed into a Fountain of Flowing Water." How do you think the manner in which we share Jesus with others creates relationships and belonging?

## Witnessing God's Word

This woman left her jar and went running to tell others about Jesus. What do you think this means? What things do you have to leave behind to tell others about Jesus?

**ALONE IS NO GOOD. JESUS INVITES YOU TO BELONG.**

She starts out a loner. She ends up the town evangelist. How does that happen? Jesus once said the Kingdom of God is a seed. "It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds perched in its branches" (Luke 13:19). The smallest of all seeds. The unlikeliest of persons to bring a city to Jesus. But something changes and this woman, this seed, is soon a tree, a place for others to rest, a shelter and a refuge. Not only is she suddenly at home in her own skin, not only is she at home with Jesus, but she is **Open to Others**. A new story begins. The Samaritan Woman found true belonging. That's what we want. Loneliness is killing us. Jesus invites us to **Belong**.

After preaching the first message in this series, the one about Jesus going to the well without a bucket, I got a text from my niece Amanda. She is an Air Force wife now and just moved to California. She went to UCCS and met her husband when he was a Cadet; they met at New Life's college worship night. By the way, how many

of you met your spouses at church? See? On a related note, Greg Hartnett has started a new College and Young Adults group called Basecamp. The first meeting is today, just in case anyone needed that information. Amanda watched the sermon and sent me this text: "Hi Uncle Tim! How're you? I hope you and the family are well. I have a story for you. I'll make a really long story short. So being here in California, I've been feeling really lonely. Recently, our washer broke. (Of course, Taylor leaves on a month-long training AND THEN our washer breaks). Anyways, I had thought about your sermon on Sunday and I thought to myself, 'Well, I can either haul two baby boys with me to the laundromat to do laundry or I can go to my neighbors with an 'empty bucket' and ask if I can use their washer for the time being,' and I did! And our neighbors are an older retired couple and the wife, Na, has already watched Robby while I've had to put David down for a nap, folded a load of my laundry, and taught me how to make sushi, so we are feeling very blessed and I'm just so thankful for the word

The Lord gave you and how it's already made an impact here on my life in Cali. So, thank you." Need is an occasion for relationship.

The Samaritan Woman is a lesson in how to break out of loneliness and move into true belonging. I want you to see the pattern. Four steps. First, she was alone. She avoided others. She kept her defenses up. Who was Jesus to her in this stage? He was a stranger, a foreign man she didn't know. She called him "Lord" or "Sir" in the NIV. "'Sir,' the woman said, 'you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?'" (John 4:11) Next, she gets known by Jesus. He sees through her mask and knows her story. She, as we said, risks being known. Who is Jesus to her now, in this second stage? Jesus is a prophet. He knows stuff he ought not to know. "'Sir,' the woman said, 'I can see that you are a prophet.'" (John 4:19) Then what? Well now, she comes to Jesus. She comes to realize who Jesus really is! She comes to Christ. "The woman said, 'I know that Messiah' (called Christ) is coming. When





he comes, he will explain everything to us.' Then Jesus declared, 'I, the one speaking to you—I am he'" (John 4:25-26). Until now, Jesus has only made vague references to the Son of Man, leaving listeners to wonder if He is talking about Himself or someone else. Get this now, the very first clear revelation in the Gospel of John that Jesus is the Messiah comes to this Samaritan Woman at the well. Who is Jesus now? He is the Christ.

Well, the fourth thing is what happens today. She is a new person. She can move toward others in a new way. Her story is changed. She is transformed. She has a new ground of being, a new identity in Christ, forgiveness, reconciliation, peace with God and with herself, a new and eternal life. No more hiding. No more evading. She can walk toward others, and her entire story is altered. Whether Jesus shows up in the first chapter of your life, or the last, or anywhere in between, Jesus changes the whole story. "Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, 'Come, see a man who told me everything I ever

did. Could this be the Messiah?"' (John 4:28-29) Who is Jesus now? He is the one who knows her. He is her personal Savior. Her Jesus. Now her story isn't a lonely story. Her story isn't a failed marriages story. Her story isn't a shame story. Her story is a Jesus story. And she walks out of isolation and into true belonging.

I want you to see this pattern. We are going to spend the rest of our series unpacking it and applying it to church life. So here it is: **(1) Lonely, (2) Risk Being Known, (3) Meet Jesus, (4) Move Toward Others.** Put that on a card in your pocket. Throw it in your notes app. Learn how to move out of lonely and into true belonging. Let's study.

"Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, 'What do you want?' or 'Why are you talking with her?'" (John 4:27) "Surprised." Astonished is closer. Traumatized is not far off. The disciples are worried about all the wrong things, aren't they? They are worried about

appearances. They are worried about racial and religious lines. They are worried about food. I'm not going to go into the food conversation at all, but they were upset about the food! He sent us to get food. We went to get food. We got back with the food. Jesus says, "I don't need food!" What is this? Even well-meaning disciples of Jesus get all worked up about the wrong things sometimes. It was a divine appointment. Jesus, remember, "had" to go through Samaria back in verse 4. He happened to sit down at noon in verse 6, just when the woman arrived—when no woman should. Once He reveals Himself to her as Messiah, verse 26, the disciples happen to pull up, "just then," verse 27. Jesus is in the business of divine appointments. When did He show up in your life? Just then. Right on time.

The farmers had a saying, "four months till harvest," verse 35. But Jesus wants us to see, as soon as the seed drops the Kingdom springs up. God is up to stuff we will miss if we insist on keeping our eyes on what doesn't matter at all. And just



to make it clear, just to make it crystal clear, Jesus says the harvest is ready and He sweeps His hand over the region of Samaria. The disciples' skin was crawling just passing through there. They don't want that harvest. They don't want that people coming into the family of God. We discriminate. We draw lines to limit God's love. The harvest is ready if you are willing to accept and love and welcome any whom God brings, any whom the love of God reaches. But we focus on the wrong things and disqualify others from God's grace and love. Let's not.

But back to our hero. The unnamed woman we can only know as the Samaritan Woman at the Well. The disciples were unnerved that Jesus was even talking to her, but they were so rattled, no one dared ask. But watch what happens to her. "Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people," (John 4:28). Pause. Leaving her water jar. Dropping her bucket. Remember how much she liked that bucket? "I have a bucket. You don't have a bucket. I can

get water with my bucket. How are you going to get any water...?" Dropped it and ran. I want you to see that something has impacted her deep inside. She is transformed in that moment. Once she sees Jesus for who He is, her life changes, it is altered root and stem. Just as Jesus has said, rivers of living water start welling up in her, right from that very place of loneliness and pain, right from that vacuous gap in her soul, from that very spot, the Spirit of God enters in and rivers of water start to flow, and she drops that bucket and moves. She moves out, baby! A new woman.

This woman walks right back into that town. She walks back into the community she had systematically evaded for years. She walks back toward those people and engages them all in a new relationship, a new relationship centered on Jesus. "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" (John 4:29) He knows everything I ever did, she says. The townspeople are like, yeah, we all do. No. It's more than that. Her story is different now. I'm sure there

were people there she had hurt. I imagine there were people there that had hurt her. People she disappointed; people who were disappointed in her. There are stories here. Relationships. This is small town life! But with Jesus, her whole story is new, different, transformed. Yes, there were dark times, but they wound up leading me here to the light of Christ. There were mistakes, but they landed me in the arms of grace. There were chapters of horror, but they led to a conclusion, an ending that resolves on Jesus, on eternal life, on forgiveness and restoration and love. Wherever Jesus enters the story, the whole narrative changes. Past, present and future.

So, the town loner becomes the town evangelist. And she is effective. "Come see a man," she says. That's it. Come see. See my Jesus. That's the root of evangelism. Not, listen to my defense of biblical authority. Not, hear my watertight case and ready defense. Not, let me show you how you are wrong and I am right. "Come see a man." Come see a man. Jim Rayburn, the founder





of Young Life, had a saying, “Never stop talking about Jesus.” Come see a man. “Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, ‘He told me everything I ever did’” (John 4:39). He rewrote my story. Many believed. So they invited Jesus toward them. “So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers. 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’” (John 4:40-42). Who is Jesus now? He is not just a man, not just a prophet, not just a helper of one woman by one well. He is the Savior of the world. So much to unpack. And we will. We will. Just not today!

Why was she so effective? When Jesus changes your life and fills that void within, and transforms your story from shame to glory, you can step toward others in a new way. You don’t need their approval for

your identity; your identity is in Christ. You don’t need them to reciprocate your emotions to validate them; you are at peace with God in Jesus Christ. You don’t need them to rewrite their version of your story; your story is a Jesus story! That’s all that matters. So you find you don’t need your bunker and your defense mechanisms the way you used to. You don’t need to armor up. You are at home in Christ. You are open to others in a new way.

Why was she so effective an evangelist? I want to suggest two sources of her charismatic authority. **(1) She had a new story**, a transformed life. Jesus rewrote her story, and everyone could see it. Julian of Norwich said that once the love of Christ penetrates your heart, “Sin will be no shame, but honor.” You mean I’m proud of my sin? No. But at the cross of Christ, even your sin, even your shame chapters, they get transformed. Your story is rewritten in Gospel letters. Five marriages? Just part of the story. Porn addiction. Just a step on the road to Jesus. Alcoholism? It drove me to my Savior. That mistake on the

business trip. That disobedient son dropped off by police. The failed business that drove you to depression. The sin is not shame, but glory. How? At the cross it is transformed. Your whole life is transformed. It’s not about your failure, it’s about your Savior. The tiny seed of faith in the blackened soil of a tried and humbled heart, it becomes a tree where many find rest and shelter and belonging. She had a new story, and **(2) She loved her Savior**. She had a deep, deep love for the Savior who changed her life and saved her soul. Come see a man! Come see my Savior! I dropped my bucket and ran! My heart is different on the inside! I’m not empty. I’m not scared. I’m filled with the Holy Spirit of God! Redeemed. The love of Jesus is the only authority for evangelism. The Gospel changes everything. Find your new story in Jesus. No more alone. Jesus invites you out of alone and into true belonging.

