
G’Day everyone.

It would be good to have your Bibles turned to chapter 4 of John, and we’ll be looking at verses 1 to 26

**Intro/Context (vv1-6)**

As most of you know I was born in Ireland

And my time there was mostly in the period of time called “The Troubles”

At a time when the IRA was very active - and Catholics and Protestants were very much at loggerheads with each other

So much so - that the British Army had to keep the peace in Northern Ireland

The problem between Catholics and Protestants was very complex...

But to try a simplify it:

The Protestants - were very much against the Pope and the RC Church - they wanted to keep the British Monarchy - and they wanted to keep Northern Ireland separate from Southern Ireland

The Catholics on the other hand - were clearly in favour of the Pope and the RC Church - they wanted the Monarchy out of Ireland - and they wanted the whole of Ireland to be together as one country and as a republic!

In this environment - there was terrorism, bombings and hatred - and RC children raised not to talk to Protestant children and vice versa - there was a social barrier!
Imagine the shock and horror then when my RC Aunty found out her son (my cousin) was going to marry a Protestant girl.

I can remember my Mum talking to her on the phone about this - and my Mum simply said “There are a lot worse things he could do...” - and she was right.

(pause)

And there’s a similarity here with our passage today - just like in Ireland - we have two different groups of people - the Jews and the Samaritans

There are Jews living in both Galilee in the North and Judea in the South

And trapped in the middle is Samaria - where the Samaritans lived

[Powerpoint 1 - Map]

The Samaritans were historically a mixed breed of Jews who had inter-married with people from Assyria and Babylon, following the Assyrian invasion of Northern Israel - in 750 BC.

By the Samaritans intermarrying - as far as the Jews were concerned the Samaritans were no longer real Jews - and so the Jews and the Samaritans had nothing to do with each other and in fact hated each other

There was a huge social barrier

So we pick up the story in v1 and 2 where we discover that Jesus and his disciples are baptizing more people than John the Baptist - and the religious heavyweights - the Pharisees had heard about this

Jesus doesn’t want to get embroiled in an argument about baptism - as He has work to do for His Father’s Kingdom

So in v3 - he decides to leave Judea and head for Galilee
And in v4 - he takes the route - right through the middle of Samaria - enemy territory so to speak

[Explain the alternative]

Then in v5 and 6 he comes to a place called Sychar in Samaria where Jacob’s well is - and He’s very tired from His journey

**Breaking Social Barriers (vv7-9)**

And here in Samaria - Jesus breaks 2 social barriers in one go

[Powerpoint 2 - Jesus broke 2 social barriers]

Firstly he talks to a woman - Rabbis and teachers were not supposed to talk to women - as this could start the gossip-mongers and tarnish their reputation

And secondly - Jesus is a Jew - talking to a Samaritan - Jews and Samaritans don’t talk or mix - or share dishes (as some footnotes in your Bible might say)

But Jesus turns social barriers upside down!

Remember - He was the friend of tax collectors and sinners (Luke 7:34)

[Powerpoint 3 - what social barriers do we have?]

What about us?

What social barriers do we have in place?

Do we steer clear of Muslims - because they might be terrorists?

Do we avoid Roman Catholics - because we’re Protestant?

Do we avoid talking to gays and lesbians - because we don’t agree with Same-sex marriage or we don’t agree with their lifestyle?
Do we ignore Aboriginals - because we don’t understand their culture?
Do we hold grudges against the Indonesians for the Bali bombing and the recent executions?
Do we hold grudges against the Japanese and the Germans because of the war?
What about the homeless and the addicts - will talking to them make us feel uncomfortable?
What about the disabled - Are they just too scary to talk to!
My friend Jason - who has cerebral palsy - told me of his experience at Harvey Norman one time!
Jason was looking for a flat-screen TV - the staff saw him stumbling into the shop - and realized he was disabled - and none of the staff came near him
Eventually a member of staff came over to him - and Jason tried to explain what he was looking for - but the staff member couldn’t understand Jason because he has a speech impediment - so the staff member asked him to write down what he wanted - but Jason can’t write! - how frustrating for Jason!
So does that mean that everyone should avoid him - and give up - because it’s too hard?
We need to be better than that?
What would Jesus do?
If we’re really serious about showing Christian love
And if we’re really serious about people hearing about Jesus
We need to be breaking social barriers...

[Powerpoint 4 - We need to break social barriers]
People are not coming to Jesus – because we’re not going to the people!

(pause)

We can’t be fishers of men by fishing in a barrel – if the fish won’t come to the barrel - then we must go where the fish are!

(pause)

The problem with sowing the seed of God’s Word – is not that there is no good ground to be found - but that the seed is still in the barn!

(pause)

How to break Social Barriers (v7, vv16–20)

[Powerpoint 5 - heading]

So how do we break these social barriers?

Is there anything we can learn from Jesus’ approach in this passage?

See v7 - he starts a simple conversation based on his need for water – and knowing that the person he is talking to can meet that need?

They have something in common right there – Water!

[Powerpoint 5a - common ground]

That was all that was needed to start a conversation - We do this all the time - say in the supermarket queue - we might comment on the weather, the price of food – what’s on special – don’t we?

As the conversation continues – Jesus is able to move from common ground to spiritual matters – and even talk about the woman’s life.
See v16 - “Go call your husband and come back”

We do that sort of thing all the time too - don't we?

Are you married? Do you have kids? Grandkids?

And notice even though Jesus knows about her lifestyle - and that she has had 5 husbands and the man she lives with now is not her husband -

He makes no judgment on that lifestyle

He doesn't condone it either

[Powerpoint 5b - no judgment/condoning/goal is eternity and saving]

That's because His goal is eternity - His aim is to get this woman into the kingdom of God -

Condemning and judging her - may will lose her -

But continuing the conversation - keeps her attention - and allows Him to achieve His goal

Remember Jesus came to save the world - not condemn it (John 3:17)

His goal is saving

And remember too - Jesus said in Matthew 6:33 - “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well"

If the woman becomes a believer - her lifestyle will get sorted out in the process.

We can learn from this approach too!

We can keep people engaged and focused on eternal and spiritual things - by not letting people's preferences and lifestyles distract us or disarm us
And notice as the conversation continues – Jesus finds some more common ground – see v20 – where the woman brings up the topic of worshipping God –
She says the Samaritans worshipped God on the mountain (Gerizim) in Samaria – whereas the Jews worship in Jerusalem!
This enables Jesus – to talk more about true worship of God!

[Powerpoint 5c - opportunities and common ground for us - build relationship]

What about us? - we have so many opportunities to talk to people:
At work - with our work colleagues
At School or uni - with fellow students
At the various clubs and associations we are involved in
Then there’s our neighbours, friends and family
At there’s lots of common ground too: family and children, hobbies, travel, what’s happening in our community, our country, the world - and so on.
We don’t have to go straight to talking about spiritual stuff - but build a relationship first!

But notice by Jesus speaking to the woman:
As a man speaking to a woman
As a Rabbi speaking to a woman with a suspect lifestyle
And as a Jew speaking to a Samaritan
He arouses her interest - so He can talk to her about spiritual matters
We can do the same -
[Powerpoint 5d - arousing interest so we can move to spiritual]

By showing kindness and compassion to all -

By not harbouring racial or social prejudices to those who are different

And by our own example of faith and hope

We can arouse people’s interest too

Notice too - how Jesus shifts the conversation from physical water to spiritual water

It started off with his need for physical water - and he shifts to her need for spiritual water

We can learn from this - and shift conversations to spiritual matters:

For example - if you’re talking about family and kids - you can ask if the kids go to any youth group and mention we have a youth group at our church - and see where the conversation goes then

If you’re talking about hobbies - you can mention we have different hobby groups at church - and again see where the conversation leads.

[Powerpoint 5e - not too far, too fast]

It’s also important that we don’t go too far, too fast

See v15 - it is clear the woman doesn’t understand what Jesus means about living water - she’s thinking physical water that won’t make her thirsty again so she doesn’t have to come back to the well - but Jesus is thinking spiritual

Once Jesus sees she doesn’t get it - he also sees the need to slow her down
So he says in v16 - to go fetch her husband -
This leads to Him showing that He is a prophet - and establishing her trust in him first
We need to establish trust with the person before moving on with the conversation

And sometimes people don’t realize what they need first
They want to talk about the book of Revelation when they need to be grounded in the Gospel first!
They need milk - before they start on solid foods

Why we should break Social Barriers (v10-15, 19-26)
So we’ve touched briefly on breaking social barriers and how we might do it.
But why should we break social barriers?
[Powerpoint 6 - Heading - Why?]

Well - Because there is something really really important that everyone needs
See v10 - and Jesus says that God is able to give the woman a gift of living water.
What is this living water?
For the answer - we need to look at John chapter 7

37 On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from
within them.” By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

This living water is the Holy Spirit we receive inside us when we believe in Jesus...

When we believe He died for the sin of the world - so people can have forgiveness
And when we believe He rose from the dead - so people can have everlasting life
And by believing this - Jesus says in v14 - they get this living water inside them in the form of the Holy Spirit - that wells up inside to give eternal life - life with God forever.

[Powerpoint 6a - Need living water - welling into eternal life]

Jesus is the only one who can give this living water!

People need to drink Jesus - so to speak - to be filled with His Spirit!

That’s why it’s so important to break down social barriers!

(pause)

And Jesus gives another reason for breaking social barriers - there in v23

So that people become true (or real or sincere) worshippers of God and worship Him in Spirit and Truth?

So what does it mean to worship God in Spirit and truth?

[Powerpoint 6b - Worship in Spirit and Truth]

Well Jesus has just explained to the woman that location of worship is irrelevant - neither on Mount Gerizim nor Jerusalem
The lesson here is that worship of God is not be confined to a single geographical location - nor is it regulated by the temporary provisions of the Old Testament - which were a shadow of what was to come in Jesus - the Messiah.

Nor was it about separation between the Jews and the Samaritans and the Gentiles.

With the coming of Jesus - all of God's children have equal access to God through Jesus.

So worship becomes a matter of the heart - and not external actions.

And worship is directed by the Truth - God’s Word - made flesh in Jesus - and nor directed by pomp and ceremony nor tradition.

Jesus summarized it in Mark 12:30

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.

That’s what worshipping in Spirit and Truth is!

This combining of spirit and truth in worship is summed up by Jonathan Edwards, the 18th century American pastor and theologian. He said: “My duty (as a Preacher) is to raise the affections [emotions] of my hearers as high as I possibly can, provided that they are affected with nothing but truth [God’s Word].”

Edwards recognized that truth and only truth can properly influence the emotions and affect us - in a way that brings honor to God. The truth of God, being of
infinite value, is worthy of infinite passion and praise.

So there with have 2 wonderful reasons for breaking social barriers:

1. So that people receive God’s gift of eternal life
2. So that people are affected to worship God in Spirit and Truth

**Conclusion/Challenges**

Hopefully this morning -
we’ve seen how Jesus broke down social barriers -
and why He did it!

I want to finish this morning with 2 challenges

Firstly - write down the name of a person whom you will break some social barrier with this week? Someone you have been avoiding for whatever reason?

Remember we are to be insulated not isolated - moving in the midst of sinfulness but remain untouched by it.

Separation is contact - without contamination.

Jesus himself was: ‘holy, blameless, pure and set apart from sinners’ (Heb 7:26)
and yet he was a friend of tax-collectors and sinners’ (Luke 7:34)

Write down the name of that person on your outline - and act on it this week!

Secondly - think about this -
[Powerpoint 7b - Everyone?]

If we were to put a sign out the front - Everyone Welcome!

Would we really mean - everyone?

You can let me know what you think...

Let’s pray...