

CROSSING BARRIERS FOR THE GOSPEL

BIG IDEA:

Jesus deliberately went to the people others avoided, and he calls us to go too.

SCRIPTURES:

John 4:1–42; Mark 1:38 (CEV)

OPENING (5 MIN)

A QUESTION BEFORE THE PASSAGE

ASK:

Is there a person, a place, or a type of people that you find genuinely difficult to care about—or that you've quietly decided isn't your responsibility?

Let a few people respond.

TRANSITION:

Whatever name just came to mind—that is your Samaria. And Jesus has something to say about Samaria.

SET THE SCENE (5 MIN)

THREE WORDS THAT CHANGE EVERYTHING

READ JOHN 4:4 ALOUD:

"Now he had to go through Samaria."

SAY:

Jews of that era routinely traveled around Samaria—a journey of several extra days—to avoid contact with Samaritans. The Greek word for "had to" is *dei*, which means "divine necessity." It's the same word used when Jesus says he "must" suffer, he "must" be raised. *Dei* tells us this was a divine appointment.

A QUICK BACKGROUND:

- Jews despised Samaritans as racially and religiously compromised—the result of intermarriage after the Assyrian conquest.

- A Jewish rabbi would not normally speak to a woman in public.
- Typically, women went to the well in the morning in a group. This woman came alone to the well at noon, which signals social exclusion.

SAY:

Jesus went to the most avoided person in the most avoided place at the most avoided time.

BIBLE STUDY (20 MIN)

JOHN 4:1–42

Read the full passage together, then discuss the questions below.

PART 1 — THE GOD WHO ASKS FIRST

In verse 7, Jesus asks her for a drink of water.

- What does it mean that Jesus opened the conversation with a request rather than an offer?
- When we think about sharing the gospel or doing missions, do we typically lead with what we're bringing or with a genuine interest in the person in front of us? What's the difference?

PART 2 — LIVING WATER AND EMPTY JARS

Jesus reveals that he already knows her story completely—and stays in the conversation.

- What do you think she had been searching for through those five marriages? What do people in our culture search for in the wrong places?
- How does a conversation's dynamic change when someone feels fully known rather than managed or judged?

PART 3 — SHE LEFT HER JAR

The woman came for water. She left without it to bring the news back into a town of people who had pushed her out.

- She didn't wait until she had all her theology sorted out. Her testimony was essentially: "He saw me." How does that challenge the way we sometimes wait to share our faith until we feel qualified enough?
- What does it take to be a witness to the people who know your whole story, the hard parts included?

PART 4 — THE HARVEST NOBODY PLANTED

In verses 35–38, Jesus tells the disciples to lift up their eyes because the fields are already ripe for harvest.

- What does it mean that the harvest was already ready? How does that reframe our role in missions?
- God was already at work in that Samaritan woman's life before Jesus arrived. Who in your community might God already be working on? Who is being sent to show up?

REAL WORLD (8 MIN)

WHEN LOUISIANA BAPTISTS GO THROUGH SAMARIA

SHARE THIS STORY WITH YOUR GROUP.

There is a women's prison in Louisiana. It is someone's Samaria—a place most people drive past without a second thought. A place many people overlook or avoid.

A former prison chaplain reached out to Dick DeBusk, an Associational Mission Strategist for the Big Creek Association, with a need. Dick connected with WMU groups, and they began packing and delivering care boxes, filled primarily with hygiene items, to inmates.

Dick describes what happens when the boxes arrive: "It's a blessing to see the transformation of the faces of the inmates. It helps you realize they are people just like you, but who have made some bad decisions. You realize that this is someone's child, mother, or grandmother that you're touching."

The Georgia Barnette Louisiana Missions Offering is what makes it possible for people like Dick to keep going through those gates. When we give to this offering, we are not writing a check to a program. We are going into a place we may never set foot to share the love of Jesus tangibly.

DISCUSS:

- What does a box communicate that a sermon alone can't?
- Why do we need the reminder that the women in prison are people just like us?
- What is the Samaria in your community that believers may be called to go through?

REFLECTION (5 MIN)

THE HARD QUESTION

The disciples walked into the same town Jesus did, but they missed what he was doing right in front of them.

ASK:

- Is it possible to be in the middle of a mission field and be distracted while Jesus is doing something right in front of us?
- What would it look like to join Jesus where he is already working?

CLOSING (5 MIN)

THREE WAYS TO GO THROUGH SAMARIA

Connect the passage directly to the Georgia Barnette Louisiana Missions Offering.

Give. The Georgia Barnette Louisiana Missions Offering supports people who are going to the places we don't go.

Pray specifically. Pray for Dick DeBusk and the WMU volunteers who pack those boxes. Pray for the inmates who will receive them. Pray by name if you know names. Pray for the harvest that is already ripe.

Identify your Samaria. Before next week, ask God to show you one person or one place you've been going around instead of through. It may not be a prison. It may be your neighbor, a coworker, or a family member you've written off. Ask God for the courage to go.

CLOSING PRAYER



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