

## Village Guide

**Current Series:** Outcasts

**Texts:** John 4:1-30

**Core Value Focus:** The response of Jesus

**Big Ideas from the Message:**

- Jesus responds in love and in truth to our particularities.
  - When Jesus met the woman at the well, he embraced the particularities that made her an outcast (including her ethnicity, her gender and her past). His humanity intersected with his divinity in an encounter that shows God has space for exactly who we are.
- We are all trying to fill that God-shaped vacuum in our hearts; some of us just pull it off better than others. “There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ.” –Blaine Pascal
- What’s the main thing? Worship, however it looks: “It’s who you are and the way you live that count before God. Your worship must engage your spirit in the pursuit of truth. That’s the kind of people the Father is out looking for: those who are simply and honestly *themselves* before him in their worship. God is sheer being itself—Spirit. Those who worship him must do it out of their very being, their spirits, their true selves, in adoration.” (John 4:23-24, *The Message*)
- What did it mean to be a Samaritan, 2000 years ago? Half-breed (or bi-racial to us today), mostly because their hybrid mix of religion. Additionally she was a Samaritan woman, outcast as “unclean” 365 days a year, according to Pharisaic law.
- What did it mean to be a woman, 2000 years ago? Her father and (then) her husband ruled over her. Holy men prayed this prayer: “Lord, I thank you that I was not born an imbecile, a slave or a woman.”
- What did it mean to have a past, 2000 years ago? According to the Talmud, her husband could divorce her for reason or for no reason at all. And because of her perpetually unclean status, she could not even draw water in the early morning hours with the rest of the women in her community.
- Jesus’ response to her (and to us) is more important than anything.

**CONNECT** (5 min)

- Question chosen for open group discussion or someone pre-invited to share their story.

**HEAR** (5 min)

- Spend some time in your group sharing what you recall from Sunday’s message. Give a loose theme or subject of the sermon to jumpstart everyone’s thoughts and recollections. (Example: “On Sunday, Cara continued our series, Outcasts. Who was there on Sunday? Could you recap the content for us?” What struck you, and what questions did it leave you with?)
- Read John 4:1-30. What did Cara say that these passages reveal about God? About us? Do you see anything differently or that wasn’t mentioned in this particular sermon?

**TALK (20 min)**

*Note: This format is intentionally less linear in an effort to generate discussion. It is not meant to be followed left-to-right, nor do all the questions need to be asked. As a facilitator, stewarding good discussion means modeling **true listening**, which also means a conversation without an agenda. Use your discernment to see what your group needs to talk about.*

<i>Conceptual</i>	<i>Practical Implications</i>	<i>Spiritual Formation</i>
<b>Outcasts in Scripture</b>	<b>Outcasts and regular life</b>	<b>Outcasts and Transformation</b>
<p>What does it mean to be an outcast, according to the Gospel of John? (Talk especially about the three things that made her an outcast: her ethnicity, her gender and her past).</p> <p>Jesus came as a fleshy embodiment of the person of God. His extravagant love embraced the outcasts among us, ourselves included. What do you think his interaction (and her response to his interaction) communicate to the disciples and to the community at large around her? Would you have taken her seriously, given her gender, her ethnicity and her past?</p> <p>Looking at John 4, why do you think the disciples responded the way they did? (v 27) How do you imagine the scene playing out?</p>	<p>When John 4 is read, it's hard not to think of the news we read every day. The #metoo movement is uncovering atrocities to many women among us. The Black Lives Matter movement was birthed (and is still valid) because black and brown lives do not have equal value in American society. We look at those with a criminal past, or even those who've made unwise decisions, and we label them lost and forgotten. What other modern day outcasts fit Jesus' vision of inclusion. How would Jesus respond to them.</p> <p>Jesus affirms outcasts as "in," but usually also challenges them. In fact, Jesus challenges people from all walks of life from all different places on the "status" spectrum. Why is invitation and challenge so important to Jesus? How does this bring us closer to confronting shame in its many forms, both personally and/or systemically?</p> <p>Jesus loves people exactly as they are, without believing they need to conform in order to be worthy and valued. This is the core of his message, yet it's not always the message of the church. How might Jesus invite us to lean into this reality? Where else in our culture do we see a message of needing to change before we're welcomed in?</p>	<p><i>Take a few minutes of silence to think of what your current experience of life these past couple weeks have been like. (Give a few minutes for reflection before asking the question).</i></p> <p>As you look inward, is there a situation that you are sitting with that makes you feel like an outcast? Is there a way you're trying to fill that God-shaped vacuum apart from the love of Jesus? Are you willing to share this? (If not, no pressure at all!!!)</p> <p><i>We are all in different places in our spiritual journey. Can you think of ways in which Christian community and Jesus have partnered together to heal the ways you've felt like an outcast, or tried to fill your life with something other than Christ?</i></p> <p>What is one step you might take this week in discerning ways forward to bring your God-shaped vacuum to Jesus? Do you trust him with your heart enough to explore a new layer of it?</p>

(Space for your own questions or notes)

**LIVE (20 min)**

- How might this conversation impact you this next week? What are you taking with you?
- How might we pray for each other based on this conversation and other highs/lows in life?