



Encounters with Jesus – The Woman at the Well

Date: Sunday 30th January

Speaker: Abbi Wells (City Centre), Eleanor Masters (South Site)

Key Verses: John 4:1-42

Talk Summary:

The cultural context of this passage made it really surprising and unexpected for the first reader of John's gospel. The location, the people involved and conversation itself and how Jesus treats the woman are all really surprising and teach us something important about Jesus and how he relates to us today.

Jesus shouldn't have been travelling through Samaria. There was a 500-year hostility between the two people groups. Samaria was usually avoided at all costs by Jews. It was a place we wouldn't expect someone to encounter Jesus. Likewise, the woman was a social outcast, avoiding those in her village by collecting water at midday alone, rather than early morning/evening with the other women. As a woman she doesn't count in that culture. Jesus shouldn't have been talking to her in public and yet he engages in a back-and-forth conversation with her, treating her with dignity, respect; treating her as an equal. She is someone you wouldn't expect Jesus to seek out...but he does!

Jesus deliberately puts himself in need of the woman, by going to the well tired from his journey and without a bucket. (Middle Eastern wells don't have buckets!) He doesn't start off telling her she needs him, or berating her for her sin, he starts off in need of her. Though he doesn't shy away from her sin, he meets her in the midst of it. Showing love and kindness, empowering her and inviting her to learn more about him.

Jesus meets her in her everyday life and the encounter has unexpected consequences for her. She takes small steps of faith throughout the conversation, "are you greater than Jacob," to "I can see you are prophet", to "Could this be the Messiah?". Through these small steps we see a huge transformation in the woman – outcast to evangelist! She goes to the very people she's been avoiding to share with them about how great Jesus is. Encounters with Jesus have unexpected consequences.

Worship

Worship is not just singing, it is thanking God for who he is and what he has done and is lived out through a life of trusting obedience. Discussing this together is an act of worship.

(Small group worship resources can be found at bvc.so/sgworship)

- What are you thankful for this week?
- Where has God been at work in your life?
- When have you taken risks in faith and obedience this week?

If you have a time of singing you can skip the above questions but please do ask this question each week:

- What has God been speaking to you about this week? *(Go around the group quickly don't spend a long time on it)*

Discussion Questions (choose some which are most relevant to your group)

- As you read the story, does anything stick out to you? Is there anything that seems unexpected in the story? Anything you don't understand?
- Jesus always has and always will meet with the people we don't expect in the places we don't expect. Like Samaria, where are the places and people we often avoid today? Is there anywhere or anyone that God is asking you to share who He is?
- What do you think about the way Jesus approached the woman's sin?
 - Does it change your thoughts about how Jesus approaches us and our sin and mess?
- The woman comes to the well exactly as she is. Jesus meets her in the middle of her daily life and in the middle of all her sin and she leaves transformed.
 - Do you feel able to come to the well as you are? Is there anything you find difficult to bring with you, that you want to bring to Jesus?
 - What small steps could you take towards Jesus?
 - Where might Jesus want to meet you in your daily life this week? How would you like him to bring transformation?

Witness - *How would you share what you have learned with a non-church friend?*

We want to be investing in authentic relationships with those who don't know Jesus yet and inviting them to anything where they might meet other Christians and Jesus. Pick one of the below each week:

- How would you share what you have learned with a non-church friend?
- What church events coming up would your friends appreciate an invitation to?
 - Upcoming Events (go to bvc.so/whats-on for details)
 - Worship Circle – 2nd February
 - Chinese New Year – 5th February