# John 4:1-42 - Drawing from the True Well

Over the last few weeks we have seen the issue of racial prejudice rise to the top of our national dialogue. There are many political issues that are going on, but there is one indisputable fact that we know. Racial prejudice is sin. The Bible is clear that there is only one race, the human race. It is clear that as Christians we should not make distinctions of Jew nor Greek, barbarian nor Scythians, nor slave nor free. In the culture, Jews symbolize those who live a religious life, Greeks were the intellectuals and intelligentsia, the barbarians were anyone, no matter how cultured, who was not a part of the Greek culture, and a Scythian was what we would call a barbarian, uneducated, rude and uncultured. In all of this, we are told not to make distinctions but to love each one as God loved us.

That being said, there are some areas that are safer than others, not because of the ethnicity of the people who live there, but because of the choices that people have made. The first apartment that I rented was in a bad area of Colorado Springs called Knob Hill. The police impound lot was across the street. There were regular drug deals and drunk people on the streets outside my building. Some people in Colorado Springs would say that it was a bad area because of the racial makeup of the neighborhood, but in the truth was that many of the problems was because of the choices that individual people made. There were wonderful people and terrible people of all races in the neighborhood.

Just east of this neighborhood was the Citadel Mall, just west was a rather upscale area of Colorado Springs. The prejudice against the area where I lived was sufficient that many people from the west would drive an extra 2-3 miles to drive around the neighborhood instead of going straight through it. With automobiles, driving an extra couple of miles is not a big deal, but what if you had to do it on foot? Would it be worth an extra 45 minutes to walk around the area.

In the same way that we know prejudice is sin, we also know that people are uncomfortable around those who are not like them. As humans we find any possible reason to be suspicious and, unfortunately, differences in skin tone and culture often raise those suspicions. This is true now and was also true in the first century when Jesus walked the earth. In the middle of Israel there was a place occupied by the Samaritans. To go around Samaria would take an extra 2-3 days of walking, but many Jews would go around to avoid having contact with Those people. But Jesus took a different view. Watch this with me.

**1** `The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John, **2** although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. **3** When the Lord learned of this, he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

**4** Now he had to go through Samaria. **5** So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. **6** Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. **7** When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" **8** (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) **9** The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?") (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans. **10** Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." **11** "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? **12** Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?" **13** Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, **14** but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." **15** The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water." **16** He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." **17** "I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. **18** The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true." **19** "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. **20** Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem." **21** Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. **22** You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. **23** Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. **24** God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." **25** The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." **26** Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he."

**27** 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?" **28** Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, **29** "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" **30** They came out of the town and made their way toward him. **31** Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something." **32** But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about." **33** Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?" **34** "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. **35** Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. **36** Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. **37** Thus the saying ‘One sows and another reaps’ is true. **38** I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor." **39** Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." **40** So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. **41** And because of his words many more became believers. **42** 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."” (Joh 4:1-42 NIVUS)

What lessons can we learn from this story? From this passage we can learn 5 lessons that will help us to share the Gospel and which will also help in overcoming racial prejudice. In conversations we must learn to take risks, invite dialog, connect truth, involve others and follow through.

## Taking Risks John 4:4-8

**4** Now he had to go through Samaria. **5** So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. **6** Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. **7** When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" **8** (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

During the exile of the Israelites to Assyria, the Assyrians resettled people from other conquered lands into the area where Israel had lived. When God sent lions among these settlers they begged for a priest to come and teach them how to worship God (2 Kings 17:25-33). Since political boundaries kept them from worshipping in Jerusalem, they start to worship on Mount Gerizim which was where God had blessed the people of Israel during the time of Moses.

Because of the association with both the exile and because they practiced a corrupted form of Judaism, the Jews hated the Samaritans so much that, as I said, they walked an extra 3 days to avoid contact with them, but Jesus took the risk.

He risked by going through Samaria, He took a risk by sitting at a well near a city of Samaritans, but the biggest risk He took was talking to someone. His conversation with her was taboo both because of her ethnicity as a Samaritan and because it was not proper for a man to have a conversation with a woman without anyone to chaperone.

It was even riskier because this woman had a bad reputation. Most people would come to draw water in the first hours of the day, before the heat made it difficult work. The women would all gather together and help each other to lower their containers into the well and then to pull up the full containers of water. It was a time for work, but also a time for community, and for this woman to come at the sixth hour means she was likely excluded from that community?

Are you willing to take risks for the Gospel? Are you willing to go where “those people” are, no matter how you define “those people”? Will you talk to those that culture says you should avoid?

## Inviting Dialog John 4:9-14

**9** The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?") (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans. **10** Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." **11** "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? **12** Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?" **13** Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, **14** but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

The very way that she starts the conversation is designed to shut down conversation. Rather than shut down or get upset, Jesus instead says something to intrigue her thoughts and keep the conversation going. She again tries to shut him down by telling Him that He does not live up to the standards which she holds, but once again He says something intriguing enough to keep her interested, offering water that will cure thirst.

When someone tries to shut down the conversation, what will you do? Will you shut up, get mad, or invite conversation? Are you willing to invite dialog for the Gospel? Will you find a way to pique the interest?

## Connecting Truth John 4:15-27

 **15** The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water." **16** He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." **17** "I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. **18** The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true." **19** "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. **20** Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem." **21** Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. **22** You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. **23** Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. **24** God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." **25** The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." **26** Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he."

Again she challenges Him, put up or shut up, give me the water. Jesus wants her to see the truth, but knows she is not ready so He puts undeniable truth in front of her and explains her marriage situation. But notice, He is gentle and loving in the way He phrases the truth. You aren’t a prophet who can explain the marital situation of those around you, but you can expose undeniable truth. We will all die some day. All of us fall short of God’s requirements. Our world is getting worse. All of these are undeniable truths.

Recognizing that Jesus is something special, she now changes the subject again, asking a religious question. If he said they should worship at the temple, she could dismiss him as, in her eyes, a heretic, but if He accepted her statement, she could say she was doing good enough in worshipping God. Instead, Jesus turns from the religious question to the heart issue. A common question today might be, what about those people who haven’t heard of Jesus are you saying they are going to hell? You can answer by saying, I don’t know, but you have heard the gospel, so how will you react. Someone else might say, but there are many ways to God and heaven. You can respond that Jesus said He is the only way, or you can ask, how is that working for you? Just be sure that you answer in love, not anger (Ephesians 4:15)

Are you willing to connect to the truth when you are talking with someone? Will you seek to share the truth in love?

## Involving Others John 4:27-38

**27** 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?" **28** Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, **29** "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" **30** They came out of the town and made their way toward him. **31** Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something." **32** But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about." **33** Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?" **34** "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. **35** Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. **36** Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. **37** Thus the saying ‘One sows and another reaps’ is true. **38** I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor."

When Jesus’ disciples see Him talking to her, they are surprised. They know the cultural implications of talking with a woman, alone, and that she is there at that time of day. They would never have considered doing something like that. In their discomfort, they ignore the elephant in the room and change the subject by asking about food. Again, Jesus redirects them to the truth that they need to wake up to the task at hand. They are so focused on making themselves comfortable that they don’t think about God’s task for them.

## Following Through John 4:39-42

**39** Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." **40** So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. **41** And because of his words many more became believers. **42** 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."” (Joh 4:1-42 NIVUS)

In the introduction I talked about these being clues to both evangelism and to overcoming prejudice. But during the message, I only talked about the Gospel. This was intentional. Overcoming prejudice is critical, but sharing the Gospel is even more critical. Sure, these principles will help anyone to avoid prejudice, whether they are Christians or not, but the prejudice is still in the heart. The only true way to remove prejudice is when God is working in our hearts so we see each other through His eyes instead of our own.