



Devotional - 9/17/2024

Today, I want to reflect on the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well. There's so much to take in from this remarkable account, but I want to focus on just one verse.

In John 4:4, we read something curious: "*Now he had to go through Samaria.*" It's not the kind of verse people typically memorize or frame on their wall, but I think it should catch our attention. Why is it so strange? Because it wasn't true geographically. Jews didn't have to go through Samaria. In fact, most avoided it entirely. This would be like saying, "I'm driving to Galveston, so I HAVE to spend the night in a hotel in the 3rd Ward." No Houstonian must take that route.

You see Jewish travelers often went out of their way to avoid the region and its people. Samaritans were viewed as heretics, idolaters, and cultural outcasts. For Jews, Samaritans represented everything that had gone wrong with their history—the compromises and sins that led to their nation's downfall. They were people to be avoided.

So why does Jesus "have to" go through Samaria? It wasn't out of necessity, but out of purpose. He went to meet someone—a Samaritan woman.

Jesus intentionally broke cultural barriers to engage with a person no one else wanted to acknowledge. A Jewish man, much less a rabbi, talking to a Samaritan woman? That was unthinkable. Yet, Jesus meets her where she is, at a well, in the middle of the day. And not just any woman—a five-time divorcee, shunned even by her own people, forced to draw water alone at the hottest time of day to avoid the whispers and judgment.

But Jesus made the trip for her. He stepped into her world, showed her compassion, and through their conversation, not only transformed her life but the lives of many others. He "had to" go through Samaria, not because of geography, but because of His mission.

Now, think about our own lives. How often do we stick to our patterns without an eye towards how changing them could provide new opportunities?

When my family and I moved here, we downsized from a generous three-car garage to a much smaller two-car one. I dislike having our cars out of the garage, so I worked hard to make space for both cars by moving all the kids toys and all of my tools into a shed.

But recently, I've been rethinking that. Maybe I should leave my car outside—not out of necessity, but out of purpose. By making room for the kids' bikes to be more accessible

they could play in the front yard more easily. And when I come home, I'd be more likely to bump into our neighbors.

If Jesus went out of His way to meet the Samaritan woman, maybe we need to step out of our routines to meet the people God has placed around us. It's hardly a trip through Samaria, but if I am to be a little Christ, maybe I should consider a little disruption to my normal patterns.

So, what about you? What patterns or routines could you change to create more opportunities to engage with your neighbors?

- Maybe it's building a front porch swing and enjoying your morning coffee outside.
- Maybe it's hosting a Super Bowl party, not for your church friends, but for your neighbors.
- Maybe it's going to your apartment complex's gym and cancelling your gym membership.
- Maybe it's working on projects with your garage door open.
- Maybe it's canceling the lawn service so you can work in the yard yourself and bump into your neighbors.

I don't know, but today's challenge is for you to think of three small changes you could make in your routines to better facilitate opportunities to meet and love your neighbors.

Once you have 3, consider starting that change this week. Not because they are necessary but out of intentional purpose to be like Jesus. Consider that maybe you too must go through Samaria for the sake of the Kingdom.