

Living our spirituality out loud

People are craving genuine spirituality. They don't want our institutions or rules and are often turned off by our 'religion'. However, many people are searching for hope, meaning and a sense of belonging. By being real with our spirituality and allowing it to shine in our everyday interactions, more people can encounter Jesus through us.

Reflections from Jesus and the Samaritan woman John 4:4-30

This conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan Woman, is an amazing story of Jesus living his spirituality 'out loud', as he engages with the Woman on a number of different levels. The fruit from this interaction transformed not only the life of the Woman but her whole village.

As you go, be spirituality attentive

Now he (Jesus) had to go through Samaria ... John 4:4

The challenge here is to be spiritually attentive and transparent in all our connections - we can fall into the habit of switching our spirituality on and off as we go about our day and week. This is not about being 'religious' but being a disciple who represents Jesus in all parts of our lives; always ready to engage with people God might be speaking to.

Jesus could have walked through Samaria and ignored the people around him - in fact, that would have been expected. And yet, Jesus was attentive to what was happening in the life of the Woman, and purposeful about how he engaged with her.

Become OK with vulnerability - it can be an opportunity

... Jesus, tired from the journey, sat down by the well. John 4:6

Often the best sharing comes from a position of weakness and vulnerability. We don't need to project strength but rather just be ourselves and share the ways that God is working in the easy and the hard. By being real, sharing the struggles we face and how we see God at work (through answered prayer, remembering scripture and encouragement through relationships), we can give hope to others.

We see this all throughout Jesus' ministry - he wept, he was tired, he was thirsty, he became angry. Jesus didn't ignore his own or other people's emotions and vulnerabilities. Instead, he used these to either fulfil or respond to God's purpose.



Political correctness or social norms should not be a barrier

'... 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). John 4:9

There will be cultural, religious, moral and social differences with every person we meet – this does not need to be a barrier. Rather, it can be an opportunity to learn and be curious about each other's lives. Show respect and listen carefully. Our role is not to 'convert' or change people but rather to see what God is doing in their lives and partner with him.

Jesus and the Woman would usually never speak to each other, their cultural differences were too wide, and yet their conversation was respectful and gentle, even when it dealt with deep cultural, religious and personal issues.

Move conversations from casual to meaningful to spiritual within the topic of conversation

'Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink ...'. John 4:10

'Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst again'. John 4:13

The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water ...' John 4:15

By endeavouring to take the conversation a little deeper, you will be able to see if a person is potentially open to a more in-depth conversation. Be curious about their world – what is important to them? How do they view the situation? Do they have a spiritual perspective?

Invite people to discover and ask questions. Plant spiritual seeds and listen carefully to how they're processing. Are they searching (even if they're not sure what they are searching for)?

Resource: Watch 'Having Spiritual Conversations'

Avoid falling into religious conversations. Draw people to the core message of Jesus - a relationship with God

'Our fathers worshipped on this mountain but you Jews claim the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.' John 4:20

'Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth ...' John 4:23

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This is a good reminder to us, that spiritual conversations aren't about pushing our faith or forcing someone into a debate. Instead, they're about having real discussions with people - being curious, asking questions and allowing them to go on the journey of discovery.

Just as Jesus did in this conversation, our role is to help people meet and fall in love with God. The deepest spiritual need in a person is a desire to connect in a way that brings assurance, peace and purpose.

Remember that revelation of Christ comes through the Holy Spirit

Then Jesus declared, 'I who speak to you am he.' John 4:26

Jesus only revealed himself when the Woman was ready and in response to her statement. Don't rush people or a conversation - trust that the Holy Spirit is at work.

Explore whether this person is a 'person of peace'

Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, 'Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?' John 4:28-29

People of peace will be spiritually open, hungry and willing to share among their families and networks. In this story, Jesus recognised this Woman was a person of peace. She gathered the people of the town together and shared her experience with Jesus. For us, it may require some time and follow-up to see if they have an ongoing hunger or willingness to share, before we can know if they are a person of peace.

This is one of the most amazing parts of the story - the Woman left Jesus and went back to her village and gathered everyone together to meet Jesus. In verses 39-42 we see this became an important teaching time, where many people became followers of Jesus.

If Jesus had ignored, judged or condemned this woman, an amazing opportunity to transform her life would have been lost and, potentially, a whole community could have remained closed. Sometimes we need to be flexible and prepared to change our plans if God is at work. Be open to opportunities in unexpected places.



Want to go deeper?

- Watch and read '**Identifying People of Peace**' and its accompanying resources.
- Read **Contagious Disciple Making: Leading others on a journey of discovery**, chapters 13 and 14.
- Contact us if you would like to find a disciple-making coach or a Hub near you - connect@praxeis.org

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