

TOUGH QUESTIONS 2

LISTEN - John 4

INTRODUCTION

-A couple of weeks ago our son Curtis moved to Phoenix to attend college. If you've gone through that transition you know it's tough

-One of my jobs after he left was to sell his car.

-So I went out one hot evening and washed it and decided to wax it. (I'm not sure it had been washed or waxed in the two years that my son owned it...so it needed it pretty bad)

-So I got the whole thing waxed up, and I got the old orbital waxer off the shelf. I plugged it in and started buffing away.

-Those machines make pretty short work of it. I was making pretty good progress when my neighbor stepped outside.

-We don't talk much, but he walked over and starts talking to me.

-I like my neighbor and want to talk with him but I really wanted to wax the car and be done with it.

-The problem? The waxer is too loud to use while talking to him.

-But I remembered what the Bible says about our neighbors.

1. God love our neighbors. 2. God wants us to love our neighbors.

3. God's plan for saving our neighbors involves us.

-So I went into the garage and got an old towel and continued waxing **by hand** so I could talk to my neighbor. (Life is hard)

-And I ended up having a great conversation, and I'm so glad I took the time to be a neighbor, and listen to my neighbor.

-Last week we started a short series called Adventures in Neighboring and we challenged everyone to be praying for their neighbors; to walk through their neighborhood and pray.

-By a show of hands; how many took time to pray for neighbors last week? Great job. Keep doing it! Do it again this week.

-It'd be a great practice to do this once a week or so.

-Prayer is just the first part of a simple plan called the B.L.E.S.S. strategy. Here's how it goes!

Begin with prayer. We take time to notice the people around us; the people in our neighborhoods.

-And then we lift them up to God in prayer. We are praying for their souls, praying for their families, praying for their situations.

Listen. We are watching for opportunities to engage them in conversation and want to really listen to what they are saying.

Eat. Most of us eat food every day. Unless you're fasting you're probably going to eat a meal. Guess what? So are your neighbors.

-If they eat, and we eat maybe you could eat together?

Serve. Is there a way we can help them? Serve them?

-We'll talk about that more next week. All these things are done to be a good neighbor, to show love for our neighbors, but we're also watching for an opportunity to share Christ with them.

-This morning I want to share a story from John 4 about a time when Jesus walked into a neighborhood and had a conversation with a woman.

-And we're going to gain several key insights from Jesus about how to talk with, AND LISTEN TO, our neighbors.

4 He had to go through Samaria on the way. 5 Eventually he came to the Samaritan village of Sychar (*sookar*), near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

-Jesus was walking through Samaria. As far as the Jews were concerned the Samaria was a bad neighborhood.

-In fact the name Sychar (*sookar*) means = drunken.

-Many of the Jews chose to travel the long way around Samaria to avoid these people. They were Samaritans and were lost sinners.

-But Jesus went right in there and here's why: Jesus came to reach people; and you'll never reach people when you carry those kinds of prejudices around.

-You can't reach groups of people that you're trying to avoid!

-Just like Jesus laid aside stereotypes about Samaritans; we must:

Shed our prejudices and stereotypes.

-It's easy to find fault about neighbors and build cases in our minds as to why those people aren't our kind of people.

-We can judge them by the cars they drive, by their kids, by their ethnicity, how nice their yard is.

-But Jesus came to reach lost people, and if we are going to get on mission with Jesus, we have to be willing to talk with anyone.

-The other night Laura was just about to put dinner on the table and I saw a guy looking around at Curtis' car for sale.

-So I stepped outside. And the guy I met was about as different from me as you could be.

-He was a young adult man riding a BMX bike, smoking a cigar.

-He had gold chains around his neck and tattoos on his knuckles and arms and neck.

-His pants were sagging down low, and the bill on hat was flat.

-My first thought was "what is that gang-banger doing by my car?"

-Dinner was on the table, and I had an important elders meeting in 30 min, but when I stopped to talk to him, we really hit it off.

-Often times when we're trying to reach people and we only see our differences. But focusing on our differences prevents us from seeing the opportunity that we have.

-I had a really good talk with this young man. **He started talking about his kids, his past, and his plans for the future.**

-My dinner was little cold by the time I got in, and was rushed for my meeting but I'm so glad I took the time to listen.

-Our first thoughts sometimes lead us to make snap judgments.

-But we must push past those and think about the souls of the person we're talking to .

-Don't use prejudices and stereotypes as an excuse to avoid talking to neighbors; remember God loves our neighbors & wants to save them.

6 Jacob's well was there; and Jesus, tired from the long walk, sat wearily beside the well about noontime. 7 Soon a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Please give me a drink."

Watch for natural opportunities.

-How many times do we have a casual conversation with someone in the supermarket line? At the bank? At our kids sporting event?

-How many little conversations do we have with people at work, at dentist's office, at the gas station or around the neighborhood?

-Sometimes when we talk about reaching our neighbors, people envision getting a suit on, with a big Bible, knocking on doors, and having a high-pressure, confrontational conversations.

-But Jesus (and the apostles) talked to whoever God put in front of them. That's the great advantage of thinking about our neighborhood as our mission field.

-There's only so much we could say to someone while we're in line at Taco Bell, but neighbors live by us.

-We'll see them again, and have more opportunities to talk.

-In this case, Jesus ran into a gal at the water cooler (a well).

9 The woman was surprised, for Jews refuse to have anything to do with Samaritans. She said to Jesus, "You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?"

-You may have read this before and not realized it, but this woman is kind of rude. She's at the well drawing water, Jesus asked for a drink, and she says, "You're a Jew!"

-That'd be like someone you just met saying, "why are you talking to me? You're a Swede, you're Mexican, you're gay, you're Muslim, you're gangbanger, you're homeless, an ex-con."

-Why are you talking to me? (*kind of rude*)

-But it didn't phase Jesus one bit. Another principle for us:

We must overlook slights, insults and rudeness.

-When you meet someone for the first time you may not understand their perspective, their culture, their comments.

-You may not get their jokes, or appreciate their language.

-They may not like you or want to talk to you.

-But if we're trying to reach people, you have to have thick skin.

-Jesus didn't react to this woman's rudeness, he stayed focused on his mission; which was reaching lost people.

-Without missing a beat...

10 Jesus replied, "If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water."

-Jesus was telling her a profound spiritual truth. The conversation started by talking about water, and he talked about living water!

-Jesus turned a normal, everyday conversation into a spiritual conversation. It wasn't preachy, it wasn't out of context, he saw an opportunity to tweak the direction of the conversation and did

-But something kind of funny happened next:

11 "But sir, you don't have a rope or a bucket," she said, "and this well is very deep. Where would you get this living water?"

-(face palm) He said something spiritual and she didn't get it.

12 And besides, do you think you're greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us this well? How can you offer better water than he and his sons and his animals enjoyed?"

-She started talking about all kinds of whacky stuff. Ancestors, buckets, and the history of wells. Here's another pointer for us:

Be patient when people don't understand.

-There are people who just don't know. They really don't understand. They may not think about spiritual things.

-Jesus didn't roll his eyes, or shake his head, or follow the rabbit trail she was on. He just patiently listened and then redirected.

13 Jesus replied, "Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again. 14 But those who drink the water I give will never be

thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life.”

-He spelled it out for her; that he’s talking about **eternal life** and she finally got it. **No...she didn’t**. In response to what he said:
15 “Please, sir,” the woman said, “give me this water! Then I’ll never be thirsty again, and I won’t have to come here to get water.” 16 “Go and get your husband,” Jesus told her. 17 “I don’t have a husband,” the woman replied. Jesus said, “You’re right! You don’t have a husband— 18 for you have had five husbands, and you aren’t even married to the man you’re living with now.”
-Jesus did something interesting here that I’m not sure we fully understand at first glance.

OHe was talking about eternal life and her spiritual life but she wasn’t tracking. So he changed gears and talked about her practical life.

-He knew she was living in sin, and she knew that too.

-The Samaritans also had the Law of Moses, they knew about right and wrong, so Jesus brought that up.

-They talked about it. There is something to be learned from that

Don’t be shocked (or shy) in talking about sin.

-Notice that he didn’t lead with that.

-He didn’t **start** his talk with this woman by bringing up her obvious sin.

-But he didn’t shy away from it either.

-Sometimes I think that Christians are so sheltered that we don’t know how to talk with real people about real things.

-For many believers, when they find out their neighbor is an atheist, or living in sin, or an alcoholic, or a Washington Husky fan...they retreat, or give up, write them off.

-We hear about their sins, and we have a little funeral for them in our heart. They’re gone. They’re lost. Not one of us.

-That might be the right diagnosis but the wrong course of action

-When we find out people are sinners, living separated from our Heavenly Father, that’s our cue to engage not retreat!!!

-And can I point out that when we were found guilty of sin, that our loving God did not run, didn’t shake his head, didn’t abandon us to our sins...he got right down in the muck with us, and put our sins on his shoulders and paved the way for us to be forgiven.

Romans 5:8 “But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.”

-Don't be so quick to look at people's sins and dismiss them.

-If God did that to us, who would be saved?

-Jesus hates sin because it separates people from God.

-But Jesus always loved sinners, was understanding with sinners, was always accepting of sinners.

-Jesus accepts us as we are, but loves us too much to leave us that way. He was very patient and kind, but he also didn't mince words

-As we go out to deal with our neighbors we have one very minor advantage over Jesus; we are ***sinners trying to talk to sinners.***

-When we talk with other sinners (which is everyone) we have the chance to tell them that we've met and know the Savior of sinners

19 "Sir," the woman said, "you must be a prophet. 20 So tell me, why is it that you Jews insist that Jerusalem is the only place of worship, while we Samaritans claim it is here at Mount Gerizim, where our ancestors worshiped?"

-Notice how she discreetly changed the subject. He asked her about her 5 husbands different husbands and her shack up honey

-And she says, "Wow you're a prophet! Speaking of prophets...let me change the subject!"

-But again, Jesus didn't get all confrontational, he didn't hammer her on her sin; he just kept on talking about the main thing.

-And in this conversation he says one of his most famous lines

23 But the time is coming—indeed it's here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way. 24 For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth."

-She kept talking about earthly things, and he kept directing her toward spiritual things.

-He revealed to this Samaritan woman the very core of his ministry; he came to lead people into worship of the one true God

-And interestingly enough, she had a frame of reference for this.

25 The woman said, "I know the Messiah is coming—the one who is called Christ. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

26 Then Jesus told her, "I am the Messiah!"

-Some believe that this Samaritan woman was the first one to know that Jesus was the Messiah. He told her first.

-In this impromptu neighborhood conversation, this woman met the Savior! And when he announced who he was.

28 The woman left her water jar beside the well and ran back to the village, telling everyone, 29 "Come and see a man who told

me everything I ever did! Could he possibly be the Messiah?" 30
So the people came streaming from the village to see him.

Listening takes time.

-There is a theme that developed in this conversation; Jesus took time to listen.

-Some Christians get so excited about what we have to say that they don't listen to what others have to say.

-If you really want to reach your neighbors, begin with prayer!

-But take time to listen.

-Listen when they talk about their loves, fears, family, jobs, interests, their successes and their failures.

-As Jesus talked to this woman: he didn't just stereotype her as some Samaritan; he treated her with dignity as another person.

-When she said something rude and offensive to him, he just overlooked it and kept the conversation going.

-He spoke kindly to her and listened to what she had to say.

-He listened as she talked about her Samaritan beliefs; he talked with her about her family situation, her sins, & about eternal life

-We'll never effectively reach anyone if we don't learn to listen.

-Jesus was probably more direct in this conversation than we might be with our neighbors, but he was just passing through.

-We see our neighbors all the time, and can take a more long term approach.

-So walk over when you see them out in the yard and talk for a few minutes. Have them over when you're watching the game.

-Offer to help when you see them working on a project.

-Chat for a minute at the mailbox. AND LISTEN TO THEM!

-If they mention any kind of struggle; that's your cue to say, "I'm going to be praying for you."

-If they later mention that their struggle is over you say, "See, I've been praying for you."

-If they ever share their beliefs, listen first, but then share some of yours. If they bring up religion, talk about your relationship w/Jesus.

-We're sending you out again this morning with the challenge of praying for your neighborhood. Get out there & walk around.

-Watch for opportunities to talk and listen and share.

-At the end of our passage the villagers said:

42 "Now we believe, not just because of what you told us, but because we have heard him ourselves. Now we know that he is indeed the Savior of the world."

-Because Jesus took the time to listen and talk to one woman in the drunken neighborhood; a village found faith in Jesus.

-What if your neighborhood got to know Jesus, the Savior of the World, because you took the time to be a neighbor?

-Church, we can do this. Anyone can do this.