



Week 3 Discussion Guide

Face the Issue:

In our last week of this series, Jeremy focused his sermon on who is influencing us. He shared that we are all moving somewhere but there are really only two directions, towards God or away from Him. He also shared that we do not walk alone. We are social creatures by nature and none of us truly walk alone.

This is by design. God made us this way. Genesis 2:18 says “The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.’” This is the whole basis for our love and marriage relationships but, in a broader sense, it also means that God knows that we need partners to help us in our spiritual direction.

Have you ever had a friendship in which someone you trusted was allowed to ask you deep spiritual questions? How did the relationship develop?

Have you ever thought there must be more to your faith than what you’re experiencing? Were you frustrated by that? What contributed to your frustration? Did you take steps to confront your frustration, or did it simply pass? Would a trusted wise spiritual partner have helped you with your frustration?

Even God, Himself, has partners that are expressed in the Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—as the supreme example of relationship. Do you think this kind of community is possible among human beings within the church?

Into the Word:

Read John 4:1–26.

If you have been a believer for some time, you are probably very familiar with this story of Jesus meeting the Samaritan woman at the well. But this time, look at it from the perspective of Jesus being a good, wise friend who is helping a struggling friend to move closer to God.

It is important that we focus on Jesus’ actions in this relationship. He starts with a question, and He never lets her stray from the subject.

His opening seems to be a simple request for water. But when a Jewish man asks a Samaritan woman for assistance, it's a loaded question. Jesus knew that He was really asking a spiritual question. He was inviting this woman into a relationship. Samaritans and Jews were bitter enemies; men and women did not have casual conversations. Yet Jesus welcomes the Samaritan woman to speak to Him and to demonstrate compassion for Him by helping Him.

When the woman, an outcast because of her immoral behavior, attempts to avoid the invasive nature of Jesus' comments, He brings her back to the issue of her spiritual condition. When she attempts to change the topic of their discussion by talking about doctrinal issues rather than her personal sin, Jesus again brings her back to topic.

Because Jesus spoke honestly and compassionately, the woman meets the Messiah, comes to faith, and finds in Him the living water she so desperately needs to wash out the stagnant places in her soul and in her relationships.

This is the basic outline of how Jesus helped to walk with this woman in wisdom:

- Jesus helped the woman recognize the ugly reality of her sinful life.
- He helped her detach from her idols (sinful, sexual relationships, traditions) and attach to God.
- Jesus helped the woman move toward God and His love. She then felt compelled to share the news of this true love with the men of Samaria, who knew about her previous failed attempts to find love.

From this example, what do you think is the role of frankness in spiritual direction and personal growth? Must truth hurt before it heals?

Would you be willing for someone to speak to you as directly as Jesus spoke to the woman at the well? Would you be willing to speak to someone else in this way?

Apply The Word

What changes will be required within the church for people to experience open, honest relationships that allow them to confront deep, soul issues?

Make a list of the times in your life when you have experienced the most spiritual growth. Beside each one, list a lesson or two you learned, how your attitude or behavior changed, and what you could share with someone who was seeking a wise friend to walk beside. Ask God to give you opportunities to share this wisdom and to learn from others,