

Internal Riches, External Focus

At the end of the evening meeting I sat down on the edge of the platform, exhausted, as others continued to pray with those who had responded to Christ. ... I had just started to unwind when I looked up to see this man, with shabby clothing and matted hair, standing in the center aisle about four rows back and waiting for permission to approach me. "Look at how this Easter Sunday is going to end," I thought. ... "He's going to hit me up for money. ... I'm so tired." ...

I have been around many street people, but this was the strongest stench I have ever encountered. I instinctively had to turn my head sideways to inhale, then look back in his direction while breathing out. [After we spoke briefly] I had heard enough and wanted to get this over quickly. I reached for the money clip in my back pocket. At that moment [he] put his finger in front of my face and said, "No, you don't understand – I don't want your money. I want the Jesus that little red-haired girl talked about."

I hesitated, then closed my eyes. "God forgive me," I begged. I felt soiled and cheap ... I had wanted simply to get rid of him, when he was crying out for the help of Christ I had just preached about. I swallowed hard as God's love flooded my soul. ...

He moved toward me and fell on my chest, burying his grimy head against my white shirt and tie. Holding him close, I talked to him about Jesus' love. ... And that smell ... I don't know how to explain it. It had almost made me sick, but now it became the most beautiful fragrance to me. ...

The Lord seemed to say to me in that instant, "Jim ... if you have any purpose in my work – it has to do with this odor. This is the smell of the world I died for."

Jim Cymbala, *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire*

Monday – Crossing Boundaries

"Peace has no borders." Yitzhak Rabin, 20th c. Israeli Prime Minister

1. Please read John 4:1-9. Why do you think Jesus was too tired to accompany his disciples into town?

Text Insight: The sixth hour, noted in verse 6, was around noon. Typically women came earlier to draw the household's daily water, yet this woman waited until the heat of the day.

2. What do you think the woman thought about Jesus asking her for a drink? If the conversation had ended there, what might she have told her friends later?
3. Jesus did not allow people's opinions or social norms to dissuade him from what he felt led to do. What lessons can be learned from his example?

Making it Personal: Think of how Jesus reached out to the woman. How has God reached out to you?

Tuesday – Challenging Assumptions

"Never assume the obvious is true." William Safire, American writer

1. Please read John 4:9-18. Why might Jesus have chosen not to answer the woman's question in verse 9?
2. Was the woman sarcastic or sincere in verse 15? How did Jesus' response treat her needs seriously?
3. When is it most useful to speak candidly, as Jesus did in verses 17-18? How does Jesus' insight help you understand why the woman may have waited to come to the well after all the other woman had already gathered their water?

Digging Deeper: What did Jesus mean in verses 13-14, when he spoke of another kind of water?

Wednesday – Claiming Authority

"Truth is incontrovertible, ignorance can deride it, panic may resent it, malice may destroy it, but there it is." Winston Churchill

1. Please read John 4:16-26. How did the woman evade Jesus' comment in verses 16-20? When have you tried to evade God in your life?

Text Insight: The Samaritans were descended from Jews who had intermarried with foreigners after Assyria conquered the northern portion of ancient Israel hundreds of years earlier.

2. How did Jesus finally get the woman's attention in verses 21-24? When has God captured your attention?
3. Considering the history of the Jews and the Samaritans, what is significant about verses 23-26?

Prayer Focus: Pray for those who take God's word to people who are on the outside margins of society.

Thursday – Calling a Meeting (or two)

"Christ is our temple, in whom by faith all believers meet." Matthew Henry, 17th-18th c. English pastor

1. Please read John 4:27-38. What did the woman do? How did Jesus use the time it took for the villagers to make their way to the well?
2. Why do you think the villagers listened to what the woman had to say when she gathered them together?
3. What is this food that Jesus was feasting upon?

Making it Personal: Jesus may just have been too excited to eat. When have you been so excited about something God is doing that everything else took a back seat until you finished serving in his name?

Friday – Committing Their Lives

"The uncommitted life isn't worth living." Marshall Fishwick, 20th c. American historian

1. Please read John 4:39-42. Why did the Samaritans respond to the woman's testimony about Jesus? How did they later respond to Jesus himself?
2. How does verse 42 tie in with verse 26? The villagers urged Jesus to stay, and "the savior of the world" chose to spend two extra days with them. What does this decision tell you about the nature of God?

Making it Personal: Jesus changed his plans when he saw the needs and open hearts of this Samaritan community. Are you willing to change your plans if God opens a door of opportunity to care for those in need?

For the Weekend: Re-read John 4:1-42. Whom do you identify with most? Why? What is the biggest lesson you take away from this passage?