

October 3, 2022
PrayerCast

As you enter this time of reflection and prayer, slow down your thoughts and work to stop the world around you. The word teaches us to *“take all thoughts into captivity.”* So, take those racing thoughts and set them aside. Lay them down. You will be able to pick up your thoughts again soon. But in this time, in these moments of right NOW, belong only to Your Father. Turn your mind toward Him, encounter Your God and center yourself in His peace.

In services, Brian has been challenging us to BLESS 217. BLESS is an acronym, that gives us simple ways to bless those around us, in our community. They stand for

- Begin with prayer. Pray for the people in your life and the places that you’re in.
- Listen. Listen to and discover the needs of others and the places where God is at work.
- Eat. Share meals and spend time with people in my life.
- Serve. Respond to the needs of others and help them in practical and impactful ways.
- Story. Share the story of Jesus and what He is doing in my life with others.

This next six weeks, we are focusing on Beginning with prayer. So in our next few prayercasts, we’re going to focus on praying for those who we want to bless and share Christ with.

Brian challenged us to choose one person in our lives who we want to see come to know Jesus. Then, to dedicate these next six weeks to praying for that person. Like a lot of great things, it’s not complicated. It’s simple. But it is very powerful.

This week as I walked my dogs, I was listening to another prayercast on the app, Lectio 365. If you haven’t checked it out, it was the inspiration for our Monday prayercasts. They do a beautiful meditation and prayer for every morning and every evening. Check it out if you haven’t yet.

That particular day, it was focused on Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well. They drew out an aspect of the story I had never considered before. Here’s the passage from John 4:

Jesus Talks With a Samaritan Woman

4 Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John— ² although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. ³ So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

⁴ Now he had to go through Samaria. ⁵ So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

⁷ When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” ⁸ (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, "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.^[a])

¹⁰ Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

¹¹ "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?"

¹³ Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

¹⁶ He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."

¹⁷ "I have no husband," she replied.

Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. ¹⁸ The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

¹⁹ "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

²¹ "Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²² You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. ²⁴ God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

²⁵ The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

²⁶ Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he."

Jesus and the Samaritan woman were separated by several cultural boundaries. She was a Samaritan, he was a Jew. For the Jews, the Samaritans were unclean half-breeds. They were incorrect in their theology, and Jews would skirt areas where they lived to avoid them.

She was a woman. He was a man. That alone was enough to keep them from interacting.

In addition, this particular Samaritan woman was also ostracized from female company. Instead of coming to collect water with the rest of the community's women, she was doing it in the heat of the day. Because of Jesus' comments about her multiple marriages, it appears her lifestyle was closing her out of even Samaritan circles where she normally would have been welcomed.

And yet. They engage in conversation. Jesus asks her for water. He steps out. Across all the boundary lines. Across cultural lines. Across gender lines. Across the lines of her sin.

And so does she! She asks him the question-why me? Why would you ask a Samaritan woman for water? Her curiosity bubbles up and she asks the question on her mind. What results is a conversation that will literally change the entire trajectory of her life, and the life of her community. After meeting Jesus, she returns to her community to tell everyone about the encounter. And we are still reading and being changed by her story today.

I am a naturally curious person. It's probably one of the reasons that I so love my position as a missions pastor. I get to learn about different people, different cultures, different places. That curiosity can be a precursor to conversation, and relationship.

It occurred to me after listening to this meditation, that our curiosity can open doors across boundaries. And so can our needs. Asking others for help, like Jesus asking for water, allows a bond to grow. We become fellow humans, even with strangers.

Sometimes we can become very insulated in our lives. We know our friends, we know our families, maybe a few neighbors, or the other parents at the soccer games. Where could you use curiosity, or your own need, to build a bond and make a new friend?

Several years ago when my daughter was still in preschool, my curiosity drove me to a UIS International event. It was a matching event, bringing internationals together with people from the Springfield community to encourage relationship. We were encouraged to get together with them for meals periodically, invite them to our homes for holidays when they didn't have the chance to return home. And that is how we met Suseela, a young woman from India. Suseela has now been a part of our lives for 9 years. She has shared her Indian traditions with us. She has shared her Indian cooking with us-on several occasions. She has visited Hope, she has been a part of our Christmas celebrations. We attended her graduation party, and celebrated with her when she got married. Recently after a very challenging loss of a job and a difficult situation with her leased apartment, she texted me for prayer. Shortly after, she sent

me this: "Whenever I am disoriented you are the first to come to mind. My heart wants to speak with you for those encouraging words and prayers."

It has been sheer joy to walk alongside Suseela. It is amazing to me what God can do with one chance I took. One evening I gave up, to go meet an International student. The event itself was a little awkward, to be honest. It's never comfortable to go outside of your comfort zone. To attempt conversation with someone you don't know yet. But what God can do with one faithful step!

As we continue to pray about our Bless 217 person that we want to come to know the Lord—lets continue to be curious. Let's ask the question. Let's ask for the drink of water. Who can you get to know through the simplicity of letting them help you with a bag, or asking them to open the door when your hands are full? At the grocery, at the softball game, in the lobby at church. Does God have a Suseela around the corner for you?

Lord, today we ask you for an increase. Increase our curiosity about those around us. Give us a heart that seeks to know others, as You do. Those around us deeply want to be known, Lord. Please give us a heart that seeks them out. May we love them as You do. IN Jesus mighty name we pray, amen.