

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS

Overcoming Barriers

5-Day Devotional | John 4:7–26

There are barriers we encounter every day. Some are obvious. Others have been around so long that we barely notice them anymore.

In John 4, Jesus meets a Samaritan woman at a well. On the surface, it's a simple conversation. But underneath it are barriers of gender, culture, religion, reputation, and personal brokenness.

Jesus doesn't avoid those barriers. He crosses them.

Over the next five days, we'll look at this encounter and consider the barriers Jesus wants to overcome in us—and the barriers He may be asking us to cross for someone else.

DAY 1 — JESUS CROSSES THE LINE

Read

John 4:7–9

“You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?”

There were plenty of reasons this conversation shouldn't have happened.

Jesus was Jewish. She was Samaritan.

He was a man. She was a woman.

There were generations of cultural and religious tension between their people. And as the story unfolds, we discover there were things about this woman's life that probably caused others to keep their distance.

But Jesus spoke to her.

It's easy to read right past that. Yet sometimes the most powerful thing Jesus does is simply **take the first step**.

Jesus wasn't intimidated by the barriers everyone else had accepted.

We have barriers too.

Sometimes they're cultural. Sometimes political. Sometimes generational. Sometimes they're created by hurt, disagreement, awkwardness, or assumptions we've made about another person.

And sometimes the barrier is simply convenience.

We tend to gravitate toward people who are like us. People who think like us. People who understand us. People who don't require much effort.

Jesus consistently moved the other direction.

He noticed people others overlooked. He approached people others avoided. He started conversations others wouldn't.

Following Jesus means we can't spend our entire lives safely surrounded by people just like us.

There may be someone God has placed in your life who feels difficult to approach. Maybe you've been waiting for them to make the first move.

What if you did?

You don't need the perfect words.

You don't need to know how the conversation will end.

Sometimes following Jesus simply means being willing to cross the room.

Consider

Who have I unintentionally kept at a distance?

What barrier makes it difficult for me to connect with them?

Today

Take the first step.

Send the text. Introduce yourself. Sit somewhere different. Start the conversation.

You never know what God might do on the other side of one small step.

DAY 2 — WHAT ARE YOU REALLY THIRSTY FOR?

Read

John 4:10–15

Jesus tells the woman:

“Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst.”

She's standing beside a well thinking about water.

Jesus is talking about something much deeper.

We all get thirsty.

Not physically—but internally.

We thirst for approval.

Success.

Security.

Comfort.

Control.

Relationships.

Recognition.

And when we're thirsty, we start looking for something that will satisfy us.

The problem isn't necessarily that these things are bad. The problem is asking temporary things to satisfy something eternal.

Jesus tells the woman that everyone who drinks ordinary water will eventually become thirsty again.

That's true of almost everything we chase.

The accomplishment feels great—until we need another one.

Someone's approval feels good—until we're afraid of losing it.
The purchase is exciting—until we want something else.
The distraction works—until we're alone with our thoughts again.
Psalm 42:2 says:

“My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.”

There is a thirst underneath our other thirsts.
And Jesus doesn't shame us for being thirsty.
He offers us something better.

Living water.

A relationship with Him that isn't dependent upon our circumstances, performance, reputation, or ability to hold everything together.

Maybe the question today isn't simply, *What do I want?*

Maybe it's:

What am I expecting to satisfy me that was never designed to carry that weight?

Jesus is still offering living water.
And we are still invited to drink.

Consider

What have I been turning to lately for satisfaction, comfort, or security?
Where have I been spiritually thirsty?

Today

Before reaching for your normal distraction, stop for five minutes.
Pray.
Read Psalm 42.
Tell Jesus honestly what you're thirsty for.
Then ask:
Jesus, teach me to find what I'm looking for in You.

DAY 3 — THE FREEDOM OF TELLING THE TRUTH

Read

John 4:16–18

The conversation suddenly gets uncomfortable.
Jesus says:
“Go, call your husband and come back.”
She answers:
“I have no husband.”

Jesus already knows.

Five husbands. And the man she's currently with isn't her husband.

Yet notice what Jesus doesn't do.

He doesn't walk away.

He doesn't humiliate her.

He doesn't pretend her past doesn't matter either.

Jesus brings the truth into the light.

There's something important here:

Grace doesn't require us to hide the truth. Grace gives us the courage to face it.

Most of us have things we'd rather keep hidden.

Failure.

Sin.

Regret.

Habits.

Relationships.

Thoughts we're embarrassed by.

Mistakes we wish we could undo.

So we learn to manage appearances. We tell enough of the truth to seem honest while carefully protecting the parts we don't want anyone to see.

But hiding becomes its own kind of barrier.

Hebrews 12:1 tells us:

“Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.”

You can't throw off what you're unwilling to acknowledge.

Jesus already knew this woman's story.

And He knows yours.

That might sound intimidating until you remember something:

He still came to the well.

Jesus isn't discovering your past as you confess it to Him. He already knows—and He's still inviting you closer.

Freedom often begins with three simple words:

This is true.

No excuses.

No hiding.

No pretending.

And that's where grace meets us.

Consider

Is there something in my life I've been reluctant to admit?

What would honesty with Jesus look like today?

Today

Find a quiet place and pray without editing yourself.

Tell God what's actually happening.

And if there's something you've been carrying alone, consider sharing it with a trusted follower of Jesus.

The truth isn't something to fear when you're standing beside the One who already knows you and still loves you.

DAY 4 — DON'T LET RELIGION BECOME THE BARRIER

Read

John 4:19–24

Once things become personal, the woman changes the subject.

She starts talking theology.

Where should people worship?

Which tradition is right?

Whose mountain?

Whose temple?

It's fascinating how quickly we can move from talking about **our hearts** to talking about **religion**.

We still do it.

Church styles.

Denominations.

Worship preferences.

Politics.

Translations.

Traditions.

Who's right.

Who's wrong.

Some of these conversations matter.

But they can also become convenient barriers that keep us from dealing with the deeper question:

Do I actually know Jesus?

Jesus redirects the conversation.

He tells her that true worshipers will worship the Father “in the Spirit and in truth.”

In other words, God isn't primarily looking for people who have mastered religious arguments.

He's looking for people who belong to Him.

We should care about truth.

But we should never become so obsessed with winning arguments that we forget we're trying to reach people.

There are people around us who may have assumptions about Christianity.

Maybe they've been hurt by a church.

Maybe they disagree with something Christians believe.

Maybe their experience with religion has created a barrier.

Our job isn't to bulldoze through those barriers.

It's to introduce them to Jesus.

Jesus wasn't afraid of this woman's questions.

And we don't have to be either.

Sometimes the best response isn't an argument.

It's listening.

It's kindness.

It's asking another question.

It's saying, **“Come and see.”**

Consider

Have I ever allowed religious differences to keep me from genuinely loving someone?

Do people experience the character of Jesus when they interact with me?

Today

Have a conversation where your goal isn't to correct, convince, or respond.

Listen.

Ask a question.

Learn someone's story.

Trust Jesus enough to believe that you don't have to win every conversation for Him to work through it.

DAY 5 — COME AND SEE

Read

John 4:25–30

The woman tells Jesus:

“I know that Messiah is coming.”

And Jesus responds:

“I, the one speaking to you—I am he.”

The person she had been waiting for was standing right in front of her.

And everything changes.

Later she runs back to town saying:

“Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?”

Think about that.

The woman who entered the story separated by barriers becomes the person inviting others across them.

She doesn't have a theology degree.

She doesn't have all the answers.

Her life hasn't suddenly become neat and uncomplicated.

She simply encountered Jesus.

And now she wants other people to encounter Him too.

“Come and see.”

That might be one of the simplest pictures of evangelism in Scripture.

Not:

Come hear me explain everything.

Not:

Come because I've figured everything out.

Just:

Come see the One who changed me.

There are people in your life who need Jesus.

And sometimes we make reaching them much more complicated than it needs to be.

Maybe your first step isn't explaining the gospel perfectly.

Maybe it's inviting someone to coffee.

Opening your home.

Sharing part of your story.

Inviting someone to church.

Saying, “I'd love for you to come with me.”

Jesus crossed every barrier necessary to reach the woman at the well.

And then she started crossing barriers to reach others.

That's what happens when grace gets hold of someone.

We stop seeing people as interruptions, projects, categories, or outsiders.

We begin seeing them as people Jesus loves.

Consider

Who is one person in my life who needs an encounter with Jesus?

What barrier might I need to cross to reach them?

Today

Write down **one name**.

Pray specifically for that person.

Then ask God for an opportunity to take a step toward them this week.

You don't have to change their life.

You don't have to have every answer.

You can simply say:

Come and see.

THIS WEEK

Jesus crossed barriers of gender, culture, religion, reputation, and sin to meet one woman beside a well.

And He still crosses barriers.

But now He often chooses to do it through ordinary people like us.

So this week:

Take the first step.

Offer what Jesus has given you.

Tell the truth.

Love across the barrier.

Invite someone to come and see.

Because sometimes an ordinary conversation becomes a **close encounter with Jesus.**