

## BIBLE STUDY 4: Jesus the outsider with an outsider

### Way in/ Setting the Scene

Ask the group who are the people you would cross over to the other side of the street in order to avoid. Who are the people you would struggle to have a conversation with and why.

Jesus was journeying back towards Galilee and normally a good Jew would avoid Samaritan territory completely but instead he chooses to venture into the country of the outcasts, for Samaritans were hated by Jews. Therefore he had gone to a place where he was an outsider.

The story begins at Jacob's well: the well of the outcast. Jacob had to flee from Esau because he stole his birthright. It is the hour of the outcast, midday: too hot for any respectable person to be out and so only the social and moral outcasts hover shamefully there.

Yet Jesus has an encounter here with a Samaritan woman that demonstrates his willingness to engage and show concern for all people.

Read: John 4: 1-28, 39

### Questions

1. In what different ways might this woman be seen as an outcast?

2. Even though there are many reasons why Jesus should not be speaking to this woman at this hour, Jesus engages the woman in conversation by starting with common ground: They are both looking for a drink. Why do you think he starts this way and does not immediately tell her that he is the Messiah? What

does this teach us?

3. In verse 12, the woman wants to know whether Jesus is greater than the forefathers of her own race. How does Jesus respond to the challenge of racial supremacy? Is this effective?

4. In verse 20, the woman again wants to engage Jesus in religious debate by talking about where the best place to worship is. She wants to know who is better: Jacob or Jesus: worship in a temple or worship out on the terrain. She wants to know whose side this man is really on and which group he belongs to. Yet Jesus is careful to sidestep this contentious issue by focusing not on the where of worship but rather who we should be worshipping. What are some of the issues that spark religious debate in Northern Ireland that can sidetrack us from relating/ sharing/ displaying the love of Jesus to others?

5. The disciples had already been to the city to buy food yet it says that it took the testimony of the Samaritan woman to encourage others to believe in the Messiah. What challenge does that bring to us?

### Taking it forward

Return to the opening question of who you might find it difficult to have an encounter with. Discuss what things have encouraged you from this study which might help you to reach out to people who are different from you.

Jesus promises living, energising water to us all. Read the passage from Isaiah below and spend the last

moments in prayer asking for fresh strength to reach out to others.

Isaiah 40:29-31

29He gives power to the faint,  
and strengthens the powerless.  
30Even youths will faint and be weary,  
and the young will fall exhausted;  
31but those who wait for the LORD  
shall renew their strength,  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,  
they shall run and not be weary,  
they shall walk and not faint.