



# Sermon Growth Guide

**March 30, 2025**

**Forgiven**



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**“Forgiven”**

**John 4:13-26**

**Key Verse:** John 4:13-2

“Then Jesus declared, I, the one speaking to you – I am he.”

**Big Idea:** Realizing that Jesus knows all about us and loves us unconditionally, frees us to receive the new life He offers.

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## Foundations

This is a familiar and beloved story. And as beloved as it is, the woman in the story is often maligned as a prostitute or some woman of ill-repute. The story does not say that. What it does say is that she has had a rough life. She has had difficulty in her relationships. Her divorces and current living situation put her in a precarious situation – socially, economically, and religiously.

While she lives in this town, she is an outcast. The Jews hate her because she is a Samaritan. As you know, when the Jews returned to the Holy Land after exile, they conflicted with the Samaritans – those who had been left behind and whose religious practices over time had become a mixture of Israel’s faith and pagan gods. The Samaritans won’t associate with her because of her messed up life. And then, she is a woman in a culture where faithful Jewish men prayed every morning, “O Lord, I thank Thee that I was not born a woman.”

She has a thirst for something better than what she has and along comes Jesus, who speaks to her! And so begins her unfolding understanding of who Jesus is. As Pastor Tim said in his sermon, quoting Ephrem of Syria: “She got the better of a thirsty man; showed dislike of the Jew; heckled the Rabbi; was swept off her feet by the prophet; and she adored the Christ.”

## Understanding God’s Word

Together read the text (John 4:13-26). In John 4:4, we read the words that Jesus “had to go through Samaria. This was not because it was the quickest or shortest route to Jerusalem. Why do you think he “had” to go through this difficult place? You have also seen the many barriers in this story that would discourage any kind of conversation. In what ways does Jesus go about breaking down barriers in this account?

## Applying God’s Word

Go back to today’s text but begin with verse 10 (John 4:10-26). Count the number of times this woman is referred to as “you.” We don’t know her name. Nicodemus was named in his conversation with Jesus in chapter 3, but this woman remains anonymous throughout. Why do you think John tells the story this way? What could be the purpose in not knowing her name?

## Witnessing God’s Word

Jesus went out of His way to meet this woman and engage her in conversation. She was where she was because she was avoiding her failures, her hurts, and her loneliness. Do you know someone who is avoiding experiencing pain? Is there some way you could offer the living water of Jesus?

I have never broken a bone. Not that I haven't tried. I mountain bike, I ski, I rock climb (or, used to) but never broke a bone, thank God. But I have had a bad tooth or two. A doctor checking a broken bone says, "Does this hurt?" You can say, "Yow! Sure does." But when a dentist does it... This was not Dr. Albers by the way, one of our Elders, but a different dentist was poking at a wisdom tooth. "Does this hurt?" YMMMPHFF! You have to touch what hurts before it can be healed. You can't heal what you don't feel. This passage, as long as it is, is still just a snippet of a story, one of my favorite stories: the story of the Samaritan Woman at the Well. It is a conversion story. Turn Again is a series about conversion, about meeting Jesus and finding new life in Him. At the pivotal moment, Jesus, the Great Healer, the Great Redeemer, the Savior, puts His finger right on what hurts, but what the woman finds is grace, and healing, and joy. She is Forgiven. We can be too.

So, we are at Jacob's Well with Jesus and this Samaritan woman. You can visit Jacob's Well. A church is built up around it now, so it is indoors, seven feet wide and 145 feet deep. We don't even get the woman's name, but she stars in one of the most important chapters of Jesus' ministry and the longest conversation Jesus has in the Gospels. He meets this woman, and she experiences conversion. One encounter with Jesus can change your life, past, present and future. It begins with thirst. "Jesus answered, 'Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 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.'" (John 4:13-14) Jesus showed up thirsty, and without a bucket, and asked the woman for a drink. That became the occasion for a relationship. I need something. Would you help me? Jesus shares His thirst first, but it is the woman who truly feels a burning thirst.

We are driven by our thirsts. We are live in a time of deep spiritual thirst. Souls are thirsty, not getting what they need, and when your soul gets thirsty you get desperate. It's like shopping hungry, you'll take anything. You're so thirsty, you

don't care what you're drinking—it can be pond water, it can be filthy, toxic...it could be Manitou Springs mineral water. I once told my youngest those springs tasted like ginger ale. What good is having kids if you can't mess with them a little? When your soul is thirsty, you are in a dangerous place. Jesus and this woman are at the well in the heat of the day when nobody should be out gathering water. Jesus was stuck there, if you read the story, but this particular woman came out alone in the heat of the day. At a well like this you could imagine a morning social water gathering, people telling stories and chatting while water was drawn and buckets were filled. For whatever reason, this woman didn't participate. She came out alone in the middle of the day. Something's up.

Now, not only is she a woman, and there were cultural mores to keep a Rabbi from talking to a woman in public alone, but she is also a Samaritan. In Jesus' time, the Samaritans were despised by the Jews, and the Jews by the Samaritans. John summarizes the relationship with three words in verse 9: "do not associate." Jesus doesn't care. Here is a soul who needs God. He wants her to know there is a source of new life, a fresh source of fresh life, a spring of water welling up and overflowing with eternal life. Jesus wants her to have it. He wants you to have it. But she doesn't understand. She pictures a magic jar. "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.'" (John 4:15) What if there were a magical thing? Jars of magical water, and when you poured them on the ground, a spring welled up, and the water started flowing, pure and clean and limitless? That would be good in Narnia or Harry Potter! Sometimes as we approach knowing Jesus, we have it close. We know there is something supernatural, something spiritual, but we don't quite get it yet.

Jesus brings the conversation to the crux, to the turning point. "He told her, 'Go, call your husband and come back.'" (John 4:16) Can you feel that in your guts? This fun conversation, this back-and-forth banter, suddenly it is getting real. I imagine her stomach flipped. What does



this man know? “‘I have no husband,’ she replied. Jesus said to her, ‘You are right when you say you have no husband. 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.’” (John 4:17-18) Jesus, the Great Physician, puts His finger right on the wound. Does this hurt? You can’t heal what you can’t feel.

Conversion involves repentance; turning away from past mistakes and hurts and turning toward the future of God’s promises and hope. Jesus names the pain. He names the pain. “It hasn’t gone well, has it?” Sometimes this passage gets preached as if the woman was unfaithful. That’s not in the text. We do know her current situation is off base, but we don’t know what happened with these relationships. As a young pastor I preached a passage about a prostitute. A woman approached me later and said, “Tim, you’re a good preacher. I love your messages, but you preached that as if she wanted to be a prostitute. Don’t you think she was stuck? No woman wants that.” I haven’t forgotten that. Still, what do we have here? The Great Physician presses where it hurts. Her fault or not, this is where it hurts. There is nothing in your life Jesus is afraid to address. There is no hidden part of your past that Jesus doesn’t know about. There is no shame, no sin, no suffering that He did not witness as it played out. And He loves you still—more than you will ever understand. Sometimes he puts His finger on the wound. She sees Jesus in a different light now. “‘Sir,’ the woman said, ‘I can see that you are a prophet.’” (John 4:19)

After a short talk about worship, she starts to think this might be more than a prophet. “The woman said, ‘I know that Messiah’ (called Christ) ‘is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.’ Then Jesus declared, ‘I, the one speaking to you—I am he.’” (John 4:25-26) This is the strongest declaration of divinity Jesus has made up to now in John. Nowhere has Jesus said so clearly, “I am the Messiah.” It is also the first of His famous “I am” statements in John. Who gets it? This unknown, Samaritan woman at Jacob’s Well. A long time

ago, a church father named Ephrem the Syrian preached: “At the beginning of the conversation he did not make himself known to her, but first she caught sight of a thirsty man, then a Jew, then a Rabbi, afterwards a prophet, last of all the Messiah. She tried to get the better of the thirsty man, she showed dislike of the Jew, she heckled the Rabbi, she was swept off her feet by the prophet, and she adored the Christ.”

I love the progression. She slowly comes around. A few weeks ago, I delivered a lecture on conversion and a lot of you asked, “What if I never experienced that? I have always been Christian, or I grew to know Jesus slowly over time.” Jonathan Edwards described conversions during a revival among young people in Massachusetts at the beginning of the Great Awakening, “In some, converting light is like a glorious brightness suddenly shining upon a person, and all around him: they are in a remarkable manner brought out of darkness into marvelous light. In many others it has been like the dawning of the day, when at first but a little light appears, and it maybe is presently hid with a cloud; and then it appears again, and shines a little brighter, and gradually increases, with intervening darkness, till at length it breaks forth more clearly from behind the clouds.” It can happen quickly or slowly; the important thing is that you wind up in the light. For this woman it was a progression. But have no doubt, she was saved that day. She was transferred. She met Christ. And she was forgiven.

Jennie Allen is an author and Christian speaker. She has been participating in the last few years in something called Unite US along with Pastor Jonathan Pakluda and Tonya Prewett, the founder, the wife of an Auburn basketball coach who started a revival movement among undergrads. It started with a worship night at Auburn in March 2023. They didn’t know if 500 kids would come. 5,000 did. Jonathan and Jennie shared the Gospel. As Jennie Allen was stepping off the stage, a local pastor showed her his phone. A student texted him, “I want to get baptized tonight.” He said he was taking her to a friend’s house with a pool. Jennie asked, “What if we think



bigger?” She got back on stage and asked, “Is there anyone here who wants to be baptized?” Dozens of hands shot up in the air. There was a lake about a mile away. Thousands of Auburn students paraded down the road to the lakeshore and 200 were baptized.

She said, “Everybody came. They picked up people on their way. There were 6,000 people there and I mean, it was just wrapping the entire lake and it’s a pretty big lake. It was wild.” Baptisms went to midnight, with testimonies sharing deep passion for the Lord. “It was amazing,” Allen said. “And hearing the kids... every single kid said something different, but one of the things they said consistently was... ‘I want to be clean. I want to be clean.’” Later she learned that a small group of girls had been meeting regularly to pray for revival at Auburn, at that very lake.

Allen had been at another school earlier that year when kids started spontaneously shouting out their besetting sins. They wanted to be clean. To repent. Lust! Rage! Pride! Addiction! Deceit, one girl shouted, “Deceit has no place here!” Does this hurt? Name it. Repent. Be healed. A year later, one year ago, the same happened at University of Georgia, only they filled up beds of pickup trucks in the parking lot for hours of spontaneous baptisms. This has been happening at school after school, revival after revival. It’s happening, church. I want you to know. Pray for it. Celebrate it. Jennie Allen says a huge part of it is repentance. Jesus puts His finger on the pain point sometimes. Don’t despair, He only does it to bring healing and forgiveness. Julian of Norwich said when the love of Christ penetrates your heart, “Sin will be no shame, but honor.” You mean I’m proud of my sin? No. But at the cross of Christ, even your sin, even your shame chapters, they get transformed. Your story is rewritten in Gospel letters. Five marriages? Just part of the story. Alcoholism? It drove me to my Savior. Porn addiction? Just a step on the road to Jesus. That mistake on the business trip. That disobedient son dropped off by police. That failed business that drove you to depression. The past is not shame, but glory. How? At the cross

it is transformed. Your whole life is transformed. It’s not about your failure; it’s about your Savior. New life. Clean. Forgiven. Rivers of living water welling up pure from a heart that only moments ago was empty.

I want to pray for you. You don’t have to repeat it as we sometimes do, but make it your own, take this prayer into your heart as I pray. “Jesus, thank you for meeting me here. You know me and you know my story; you know me through and through. There are sins in my life, things in my past, habits I can’t shake. I name them now before you, silently... Forgive my sins and make me clean; give me this living water, Lord. Save me and I will be yours. I give you my life today.” If that is something you prayed for the first time, please talk to one of us. We will have a baptism service on April 27 at the end of this series. Maybe it is time to come to the water. If you have renewed your faith today, share that with someone. New life is here in Jesus. Amen.

