

I want to show you something to get the ball rolling this morning.

*Youtube: Boston Dynamics 'Atlas robot can backflip now*

You may be thinking what does this have to do with our sermon series on sharing our faith.

Before I had retired, three men at my work were watching this video of the Atlas robot on an I-Phone. As I walked towards them, they invited me over to watch it. Afterwards, we talked about the advancements of artificial intelligence and how they could take over the world – yes, our science fiction imaginations were running wild, and then I said, this reminds me of something I recently read.

I told them I had been reading the book of Revelation and tossed out the crazy idea that maybe the writer was trying to describe some type of artificial intelligence, like the Terminator that was tormenting the people on Earth. The three of them were very interested and we talked about this topic further, and I also made other references to the tribulation period mentioned in the Bible. We talked more about end times stuff, and one of them said, “*the Bible is just too hard to read and understand*” – and the other two agreed. These were people who had very little knowledge of the Bible.

So, I explained that the Bible was actually a story – a true story, and with no effort on my part, we simply and naturally moved from the Terminator, of all things, to the gospel. They were interested in the end times stuff, but I had to explain how we got to the end times stuff – **what was the purpose of the end times stuff?**

This wasn't scripted anywhere. It wasn't awkwardly forced into our Syfy conversation. It wasn't a canned presentation where I did all the talking and they did all the listening. Rather, it was a just conversation that moved into the direction of the gospel, where we all talked and listened to one another. And that discussion led to some later conversations about the gospel with these guys. In fact, one of them was having some personal problems, he confided in me, and I was able to share how God had worked in my own life when I had similar problems. In essence, I connected his story with my story – and wouldn't you know it – my story just so happened to be connected to the gospel story. **It's all connected isn't it?**

This is our final week in our sermon series about sharing our faith. If you recall, we have talked about the fears of sharing our faith, we have talked about our motivation for sharing, and last week I wanted you to consider the gospel as a grand epic story with plotlines – because people like stories, people tell stories,

people remember stories, and people can understand and relate to stories. But, if we are going to share the story, we need to know the story. We need to know the essence of what we are talking about.

This morning, I want to talk about talking to people. I think it is fair to say that we will never lead anyone to an encounter with Jesus if we don't talk to them, and we need to talk *to* people instead of talking *at* people. **Now, what do I mean by that?** For most of us, when we envision sharing our faith, we think of these scary gospel presentations where we do all the talking – where we talk *at* people as if they were an audience, and they do all the listening. That may work for some, but not all. Instead, we need to shift from gospel presentations to gospel conversations where we talk together and listen to each other.

So, with that in mind, let's take a look at the longest recorded conversation a person had with Jesus – it's the conversation between Jesus and the woman at the well. Now before we get started, it is not my intent to dissect this passage, but to only draw out those truths that might help us in sharing our faith. So, turn with me to **John 4**, beginning with **verse 3**.

**<sup>3</sup>He left Judea and went away again into Galilee. <sup>4</sup>And He had to pass through Samaria.**

Jesus, with His disciples in tow, left Judea, likely Jerusalem and headed north to Galilee. There were two main routes they could take – the long northeastern route by crossing the Jordan River or they could take shorter and quicker northwestern route. One would think that the shorter route would be the natural choice, but that route went through Samaria – and no self-respecting Jew would take that route because they despised the Samaritans. Just to give you a little history for context, when the Assyrians had conquered the northern kingdom of Israel hundreds of years earlier, the Assyrian king deported most of the Jews, but he left those who were considered of no value, like the poor and the destitute, in the land. The king then repopulated the area with foreigners from other conquered nations who intermarried with these Jews who had been left behind, and they became a mixed race called the Samaritans. The Jews considered the Samaritans like half-breed mongrel dogs – they were despised and they were to be avoided, but we are told that Jesus **had to pass through Samaria**, where these Samaritans lived.

So, to understand this, geographically, Jesus didn't have to take this route – He could have taken the longer route like all the other self-respecting Jews, but Jesus needed to pass through Samaria, He was compelled to pass through Samaria, it was necessary because there were people there who needed to know Him.

Let's talk about this for a moment because this applies to you and me. God has placed you on the road you are on – maybe the road to Samaria – maybe a road you don't want to be on – for a purpose. God has placed you where you are, at this time, with your gifts, and your talents, and your passions, and your opportunities, and your limitations, and your experiences – God has sovereignly done that. You are where you are because God has placed you where you are – for a purpose.

*I told you earlier that a coworker had come to me with a personal problem after watching the backflipping robot and discussing end times stuff from the Bible.*

*And this was his personal problem: He was married and his wife suffered from a painful and debilitating medical condition with no cure. He felt completely helpless, he was frustrated, and it was difficult for him to watch as she suffered. He thought no one could understand what he was experiencing. **Is there anyone you could think of that could possibly relate to this man?** You are looking at him.*

My own experiences, my own sense of helplessness, my own frustration, my own story was related to his story, and my story was entwined with the gospel.

*I told this man, “You know, unfortunately, I understand all too well where you are coming from. I wish I didn't, but I do, and it's difficult for me too, it's hard to watch someone you love suffer, but let me tell you how I've walked through this and Who has walked with me.”*

That's how I introduced the gospel to this man. Sometimes, it is the other person who opens the door for a gospel conversation, and instead of figuring out a way to force the gospel into a conversation, just listen to people, listen for their own hurts, listen for their hopes, and be sensitive to ways that the gospel truths might relate to them.

God has placed you on the road you are on, maybe the road to Samaria, and He has placed people in your life for a reason – for a purpose. It's not an accident that you are here in this place, in this time.

Jesus is on the road to Samaria because He needed to be on the road to Samaria.

**<sup>5</sup> So He came to a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph; <sup>6</sup> and Jacob's well was there. So Jesus, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. <sup>7</sup> There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give Me a drink.” <sup>8</sup> For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food <sup>9</sup> Therefore the Samaritan woman said to Him, “**How is it that You, being****

**a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?” (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)**

After a long day of walking, Jesus was wearied, and hungry, and thirsty. Yes, Jesus is God, but He is also a man with human limitations. It was about noon, during the heat of the day, and Jesus sits by Jacob’s well. He wanted a cool drink of water, and the disciples had been sent off to go buy some food.

Then this woman comes to the well to draw water, which was women’s work in those days. So this was usual, but she comes by herself in the middle of the day, which was unusual because women typically came in the morning or in the evening when it was cooler and the women came in groups – it was kind of a social event, but it appears this woman was not welcomed by the others, so she came to the well, about a half mile from town, all alone. She was a woman of shame. As we learn later, she had been passed around and rejected by several men, I suppose she was looking for love in all the wrong places, and she was currently living with a man who was not her husband. In the eyes of the Samaritans, who were themselves considered social outcasts – she was a social outcast. That’s bad!

So, this woman is at the well with Jesus. She wasn’t looking for Him, she just wants water, but Jesus was apparently looking for her, and He says to her, **“Give me a drink.”**

I understand that Jesus was thirsty, but we know He could have gotten His own drink if He really wanted to. Remember, this is Jesus we are talking about – the same Jesus who was present at creation and formed the oceans and the rivers and the streams. I suppose Jesus could have called an angel to bring Him a drink, but instead, Jesus intentionally reaches out to this woman and says – **“Give me a drink.”** It was a simple request based on their common interest of water to open the door for a conversation. Jesus knew exactly what He was doing and where He was going with this conversation starter.

But the woman was surprised and curious. She recognized Jesus as a Jew, likely because of His attire, and she was taken back that Jesus would actually talk to her because respectable Jews did not talk to Samaritans, they hated Samaritans, and men were not permitted to address women like her in public. And on top of that, a Jew would not drink from a cup that a Samaritan had touched because the cup would be considered unclean. So, Jesus is breaking all the rules, and this woman is surprised by His friendliness towards her.

This brings up another point to consider about sharing our faith. I understand that we naturally associate with those who are like us. We tend to interact with other

Christians – and I get that, but if all we do is isolate ourselves in our safe and comfortable Christian circles, and if we don't step outside those circles, we will have no opportunities to share our faith with those who do not know God. As we have seen in the gospels, people who were nothing like Jesus wanted to be near Jesus, and Jesus wanted to be near people who were nothing like Him. Remember, Jesus was a friend of sinners – not a friend of sin. There's a difference.

Okay, let's go to **verse 10**.

**<sup>10</sup> Jesus answered and said to her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.” <sup>11</sup> She said to Him, “Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water? <sup>12</sup> You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?” <sup>13</sup> Jesus answered and said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; <sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.” <sup>15</sup> The woman said to Him, “Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw.”**

This is an interesting conversation between Jesus and this woman. If you noticed, Jesus didn't get drawn into an argument about their cultural differences – He just avoids it altogether, and so should we when it comes to sharing our faith. There is no need to argue. People don't come to Jesus because you win an argument.

So, in this encounter, Jesus uses a normal situation – the thirst for natural water, to move into a conversation about spiritual things – in this case living water – eternal life. Initially, Jesus had asked the woman to serve Him, but now He's thrown her a curve ball so to speak, and He wants to serve her. Jesus tells her in so many words, *“If you knew who I was and the gift I had for you, you would be asking Me for living water and I would give it to you.”*

Well, the woman doesn't know who Jesus is, but she says to Him, **“Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw.”** The woman had no idea of what Jesus was really offering her. For the moment, she's under the impression that Jesus is talking about some kind of magic spring water that she can drink where she will no longer be thirsty and no longer have to walk to Jacob's well in the heat of the day to fetch water. That's what she wants, but she's also skeptical – surely thinking how can this be, and maybe it's at this point she

turns to walk back towards town. Then Jesus says something that stops her in her tracks. Look at **verse 16**.

**16 He said to her, “Go, call your husband and come here.” 17 The woman answered and said, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You have correctly said, ‘I have no husband’; 18 for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly.”**

Okay, now it just got too real and too personal. In essence, Jesus just told this woman, *“Although we have never met, I know you. I know all about you. You can’t hide a single thing from Me.”*

Jesus took her to that place of her greatest need to help her understand her condition. He exposed her problem and her emptiness which she tried to satisfy by looking for love in all the wrong places. Jesus had to take her there, He had to expose it, and she had to face it. Sin was this woman’s problem and forgiveness was her need, and Jesus set her up to be honest about it – to be honest about her sin. **And did you notice that even though Jesus called her out, He did not condemn her?**

And there is something we could say here that Jesus could never say. We can say, *“I am no better than you.” “We have all made mistakes, we have all messed up.” “Sin is the problem for all of us and all of us are in need of God’s forgiveness.”*

Sometimes, those who don’t know Jesus have problems with those of us who do because we often come across as judgmental and self-righteous – like we have our lives all together, when the truth is far from it. *“Good people don’t go to heaven; only forgiven people do.”* We all need God’s forgiveness.

**19 The woman said to Him, “Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.**

Well, that’s an understatement! So, this guy is no longer talking nonsense, no longer delirious from the heat – He’s a prophet. But on top of that, this might also be a confession by her – admitting that Jesus is absolutely right about her. *“Jesus, You know all about me – You see right through me.”*

**20 Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.” 21 Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. 22 You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 But an hour is**



coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. <sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” <sup>25</sup> The woman said to Him, “I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us.” <sup>26</sup> Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am He.”

This is a difficult portion of Scripture for me to understand. Without being there to capture the tone of their conversation, it's hard to know why she brought up the subject of religion. Granted, she now recognizes Jesus as a religious man – a prophet, and that may have some bearing on the new direction of this conversation, but many believe the woman was being evasive by attempting to distract Jesus from the subject of her sin. That may very well be the case, but, it's just as possible that she's genuinely convicted of her sinful condition, she's come to that place where she wants to get right with God, at least according to her own understanding of getting right with God – but she just doesn't know how to do that – and here's a religious man in her midst.

Maybe she's thinking she now needs to go get some religion, partake in some external religious ceremony or ritual, and it's her understanding you have to go to a certain place for that. She says maybe it's on Mount Gerizim where the Samaritans worship or the place to go is Jerusalem – because, that's where the Jews say people should worship God.

But Jesus says to her, “**believe Me**”, listen to what I am saying – you don't need religion – in fact, **how can anyone worship a God they don't even know?** The religious people are doing it all wrong, they are just going through the motions, but a time is coming when true followers will obey and serve and worship God in spirit and truth from their hearts. That's the place where worship starts, and that's the kind of worship that God desires. She doesn't need religion – she needs know God.

Then the woman replies that when the Messiah comes, He will declare all this to the people. He will tell us all what to do and explain how to worship. And Jesus replies to her, “**I who speak to you am He.**” *I am the One you are talking about. You are standing face to face with the Messiah – the Son of God. I know you, and I want you to know Me.*

<sup>27</sup> At this point His disciples came, and they were amazed that He had been speaking with a woman, yet no one said, “**What do You seek?**” or, “**Why do**

**You speak with her?”<sup>28</sup> So the woman left her waterpot, and went into the city and said to the men,<sup>29</sup> “Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; **this is not the Christ, is it?**”<sup>30</sup> They went out of the city, and were coming to Him.**

This woman dropped everything, ran back to the city to a people who had shunned her and said, *“Come meet a man who knows everything about me, I mean absolutely everything, and He still talked to me. He accepted me.”*

As John later reports, the people came out from the city to meet Jesus and many believed in Him on the basis of the story of this woman.

Some time ago, I heard someone talk on the radio about the two gardens mentioned in the Bible. There was the Garden of Eden and the Garden of Gethsemane.

In the first garden, man essentially said to God *“not Your will, but mine be done”* but in the second garden, Jesus said to His Father, *“not My will, but Yours’ be done.”* This has stuck with me.

Maybe I am just reaching here, and I could be completely off base, and what I am going to say is not meant to pressure or heap guilt on anyone, and “no”, God is not mad at you – but in my opinion, this is the heart of the matter for every one of us when it comes to sharing our faith – *“not my will, but Yours’ be done.”* We have allowed our negative assumptions about people, our fears, our insecurities, our over-thinking, and our lack of experience to influence our faith and ultimately our obedience. And as we often tend to do, me included, we try to make it harder than it has to be.

In obedience, we just need to talk *to* people not *at* them, and in the context of a normal natural conversation, when the opportunity presents itself, when the thought comes to mind to talk about Jesus and the truths of the gospel – then just do it. There is no need to awkwardly force the gospel into a conversation, just listen, because often times it’s the other person who actually opens the door for you. You just need to be obedient and step in.

Source Material:

Holman Old Testament Commentary – Max Anders  
Twelve Extraordinary Women – John MacArthur  
Sharing Jesus Without Freaking Out – Alvin L. Reid  
Exposition Commentary – Warren Wiersbe  
The Bible Knowledge Commentary – Walvoord & Zuck  
Enduring Word – David Guzik