**Series Road Map**

**Series Overview:** We live in a westernized, individualistic culture. In that, we can lose sight of the fact that the Gospel is for EVERYONE. When Jesus commands his disciples to be his witnesses everywhere, he means to all people—ethnicities, backgrounds, languages and cultures. How do we reconcile this in 2021 and beyond? How do we unleash a generation to the world to spread the hope of the Gospel of Jesus Christ? That’s what we’re going to explore in this series entitled, “The Nations.”

**Week Overview:** What does it mean to share the Gospel with the Nations? To preach the Good News—as Jesus commanded his disciples to do—in Samaria? It means developing the courage to move towards the, “other.” It means practicing the power of presence.

***Outline:***

**Grab the Room (Intro):** Cultural Context Jews v. Samaritans—hated each other. Seen as opposites. Would have been uncomfortable around one another.

**Personal Story:** Story of you having difficulty loving someone different than you.

**Tension (what’s the struggle):** Why are we so afraid to love those different from us? How do we step into the tension that can’t be ignored?

**Text: Acts, 1:8-9, John 4:6-9, 16-19, 25-27, 28-30**

**THP**: There is power in presence.

**Supporting Points:**

Our job is not to change one another but to admire, appreciate and love one another.

Illustration: Play Doh – multiple colors…when they lie in proximity to one another, when they’re in the presence of on another, they create a beautiful image. When one tries to dominate the others or convince or connive their way into rightness, when one tries to manipulate its way into superiority, it messes up the whole picture and what’s left is a mess.

There is a God and it is not you. It’s not your job to change others. It’s not your job to solidify yourself as superior.

To bring the gospel to the ends of the earth, you have to love people—you have to love people who are different than you and create a relationship centered around trust and acceptance. When trust and acceptance are earned, the Holy Spirit will give you opportunities to discern how to best share the Good News of Jesus.

**Application (call to action)**:

Practice: Justice

Jesus was a man of social justice. He sought to treat ALL people equally with love.

* Women (John 4)
* The Poor (Luke 14:13)
* The Unclean (Mark 1:40)
* The Oppressors (Centurion)
* Racial Enemies (Parable of Samaritan)

Join a be the bridge group.

Read books by authors who hold similar values but come from different backgrounds, upbringings and ways of life.

Reflect about some of the biases you hold about others different than you. Lament, confess and repent of those biases and then make a conscious effort to step into a relationship with one person whom you’ve deemed as “other.”

Maybe it’s befriending a person of a different culture or language, someone with different skin color, someone with a disability or someone with a different sexual orientation or religious background.

*Red – Scripture*

*Blue – Personal Story*

*Green – Prop*

***THP/Main Points – Bold***

**The Nations**

**Week 2**

**Northview Church**

**Intro:**

[General Greeting]

I’m excited to continue in week 2 of our teaching series, “The Nations.” We’re walking through Jesus’ commission of his disciples in Acts chapter 1, verse 8 where he says, “*you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

This week is a super important week. Every week and every teaching is so important but there are some topics that I believe are especially important to lean into and tonight is one of them. Tonight, I want to talk about how RADICAL it was for Jesus to tell his disciples to be his witnesses in SAMARIA.

See, for most of us, we usually just “read” the Bible. We see the words on the page, we read them, and we try to apply them. But what happens so often is when we don’t ask questions, when we don’t get curious, when we refuse to investigate, “what is Jerusalem, what is Judea and Samaria?” When we don’t know those things, those places, that culture, we miss out. We miss out on the revolutionary truth Jesus is preaching in this moment.

And so tonight, we’re going to dive into Jesus’ heart for the, “other.” But more than that, we’re going to see Jesus’ heart for the, “enemy.” Jesus has much to say and much to show about what it means to love those who are different than us. If we’re going to be Jesus’ witnesses to THE NATIONS, we must reconcile what it means to love those who are different, who annoy us, who we can’t stand, who we would rather die than forge a relationship with.

Jesus calls us to love and witness to ALL of those people and we’re going to discover how we can do such a thing tonight.

Hear the Word of the Lord from John chapter 4, starting in verse 9. It says this,

*The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?”* ***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.”*

Let’s pray.

*Prayer.*

*Amen.*

**Cultural Context:**

Okay, before we really dive into the text, let’s get our bearings on who the Samaritans are. The Nation of Israel at one time in the Old Testament was divided in 2. There was the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom. The Southern Kingdom houses Jerusalem which in that time, was where all Jews were required to go and offer sacrifices to God who dwelled within the temple.

A certain King in the Northern Kingdom told the inhabitants that they no longer needed to travel south to worship in Jerusalem. Instead, they set up idols in the Northern cities of Dan and Bethel, causing anger to rise up amongst the southern Jews. Then, the northern Jews began to intermarry with the enemy Assyrians—leading to the southern Jews permanently disowning Samaritans as, “dogs” or “half-breeds.”

As you can see, things were heated and it led to disturbing division amongst the Jewish people and a rivalry was born that we see all throughout the New Testament.

**Personal Story:**

***Story of you having difficulty loving someone different than you.***

*Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you had to interact with someone different than you? Perhaps someone whom society would say you should be ashamed of interacting with? Someone who scared other people? Hurt other people? Who was looked down on by other people?*

*I once met and interacted with someone like that. His name is Priest. Priest was who I was tasked with guarding in a basketball game that my team played at a local jail near our university. At the time, I was 21 years old, Priest was 20 and after the game, Priest and I sat down to talk and we came to find out that we had A LOT in common.*

*I found out during our conversation that Priest loved basketball, so did I. Priest had a lot of tattoos, I had 6 at the time so I could relate—sort of, haha. Priest had his ears pierced as did I. Priest loved to read, and we started to talk about what books we were reading. He said that one day, he’d love to come see me play in person but that he didn’t think that was ever going to happen. It was in that moment that the conversation took a hard turn.*

*I asked Priest what his life had been like up to this point. He said it was hard. He was abandoned at an early age, forced to hit the street corner to sell crack cocaine and marijuana as a young boy just to make money to eat. He played ball through grade school and middle school but in high school, he couldn’t keep up his grades and he had no support at home, so he just started wandering. It was at this point that I asked him what had led him to Miami County Correctional Facility. His eyes started to well up with tears, his voice got all choked up and he proceeded to tell me that in a rush of anger, he lost control of all his self-awareness and he shot and murdered two people.*

*20 years old.*

*Locked up for life.*

*Committer of double homicide.*

**Tension:**

*And as he explained this to me, I felt my body begin to tense up. I felt myself growing hot and anxious. “I’m not supposed to be talking to you. You’re violent. You’re dangerous. You’re not safe to be around.”*

*And as I began to reflect on that interaction, I started to ask myself why my first inclination wasn’t to lean in? Because as a follower of Jesus, we see Jesus constantly befriend and defend the worst of the worst, the lowest of the low, the outcasts, the sinners, the liars, the thieves and the crooks. Jesus—in that moment—wouldn’t have tensed up, no, he would’ve used that opportunity to unlock a compartment of compassion that perhaps no one had ever shown to Priest.*

*Now, you may be thinking, “yeah, right, Micah. Jesus would not ask you to love a murderer. He wouldn’t ask you to befriend someone who was seen as a danger or a threat to society.” But I disagree.*

Because in John chapter 4, we see Jesus befriend an outcast. We see him love someone whom Jews would have seen as the enemy and not just the enemy, but as literally worthless. And this raises a question that we—as apprentices of Jesus—HAVE to answer and it’s this: **Why are we so afraid to love those different from us (repeat)?**

How do we step into a different cultural, ethnic, societal, socio-economic, popularity relationship and lean into the tension present? How do we love the person whom society would deem—either explicitly or implicitly—“the other?”

**Text:**

In John chapter 4, Jesus departs on this journey from Judea to Galilee. Now, most Jews in this time would have taken the long route—a route that would have added almost 2 extra days of travel—just to avoid the Samaritans. That’s how much the Jews hated the Samaritans.

But Jesus doesn’t avoid the hated outcasts, he approaches them. Jesus understands that **there’s power in being present.** And on his journey through Samaria, he stops at a well which is where we pick up the story in verse 6. It says,

*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](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%204&version=NIV" \l "fen-NIV-26166a" \o "See footnote a)])*

So, here the woman even confirms the cultural war that’s present between them. Why are you talk to me? You’re a Jew and I’m a Samaritan woman. You shouldn’t be talking to me! But, Jesus purposefully sees past their cultural differences and offers this woman, “living water.”

Wait, you just asked me for a drink. How can you offer me, “living water?” Jesus then says that the water he has to offer will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life. That anyone who drinks this water will never thirst again. What Jesus is doing here is he’s offering salvation to a Samaritan woman! This would have been unheard of. Samaritans couldn’t receive the same salvation as Jews—they weren’t worthy. They weren’t equal. Nonetheless, Jesus says, “this living water is available to you.”

The woman thinks he’s being literal, and she says, “please, give me THAT kind of water. Then, I’ll never have to come and fetch water at this well again.” Now, before you laugh, you have to understand how taxing of a job this was. Women would walk miles upon miles to draw large amounts of water for their families and then would have to carry this water all the way back home. They’d do this day after day. Most women would come in the early morning or evening, but the Bible says that this woman came at midday. This was odd because it would have been extremely hot which would have added to the grueling chore. But we soon find out the reason this woman is sneaking out in the middle of the day to draw water alone.

Jesus continues in verse 16, ***16*** *“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.*

Verse 25, ***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.”* ***27****Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, “What do you want?” or “Why are you talking with her?”*

No one asked. But they were all thinking it. Jesus, what are you doing?! Why are you talking with HER?! Why are you conversing with HER?! Why are you sharing a drink with HER?! She’s not like us! She’s the enemy! She’s an outcast. What are you doing with her, Jesus?!

**Truth:**

See, Jesus understood this fundamental truth that transcends color, it transcends race, it transcends origin, it transcends sexual orientation, it transcends wealth, it transcends gender, it transcends ethnicity, it transcends everything. Here it is: **There is power in presence (repeat).**

The ability to be present with another person, to be invested, to see past what society’s definitions and descriptions and to sit and commune and be enjoy a person for who they REALLY are is one of the greatest ways that we can be LIKE Jesus. There is power in presence. Jesus understood that despite this woman’s cultural reputation—as a Samaritan and as a woman—despite her relational reputation—as a woman married not once, not twice but 5 TIMES—despite her sinful reputation as a woman living with a man out of wedlock—Jesus saw enough VALUE in this woman to spend time with her and to offer her the greatest gift possible—eternal life.

Jesus shows us that before HE can change someone (because we can’t), but before he can change someone, they must feel seen, known, admired, appreciated and loved. Jesus is fully God—he could’ve supernaturally revealed himself to this woman and changed her life forever. But being fully man, he chose to set an example for how we are to love those who are different than us—we are to show up, to care, to commune and to love. Why? Because **there’s power in presence.**

**Illustration:**

*See, people are like Play Doh. We all come in different shapes, sizes and colors. We all come from different backgrounds and have different stories. But, when we are in community with one another, when we seek mercy, justice and empathy with one another, a beautiful picture is formed (show a pre-made Play Doh rainbow).*

*However, what happens so often in our world is that one race or one country or one ethnicity or one person begins to believe that they’re the best. That they’re better than all of the other colors. And when that happens, when one tries to dominate the others or convince or connive their way into rightness or power or elitism, when one tries to manipulate its way into superiority, it messes up the whole picture and what’s left is an unrecognizable mess (show messed up, gross, ball of Play Doh).*

**Application:**

See, within this story is a practice of Jesus that—if we’re going to lead with the power of presence towards those different than us—we have to cultivate. It’s the practice of justice.

See, Jesus was a man of social justice. He sought to treat ALL people equally with love. He chose to lean into the power of presence with everyone that he encountered. In John 4, he’s present with the Samaritan woman. In Luke 14, he’s present with the poor (Luke 14:13). In Mark 1, he’s present with the unclean or the leper or the diseased (Mark 1:40). In Matthew 8, he’s present with the oppressor (Matthew 8:5). In Luke 10, he makes the Jew’s racial ENEMY the HERO of a story (Luke 10:25).

* Samaritan Woman (John 4)
* The Poor (Luke 14:13)
* The Unclean (Mark 1:40)
* The Oppressors (Matthew 8:5)
* Racial Enemies (Luke 10:25)

Jesus didn’t AVOID those who looked different, lived different or acted different from him. He didn’t hole himself up in a church or synagogue and live his life safely in the confines of other Bible-believing Jews. Jesus went to the margins of society and sought to LOVE those who were deemed different, less than or inferior to him.

Jesus believed in the **power of presence.**

What about us? What are we going to do to get outside the bounds of our security and safety? How are we going to intentionally move outside the bounds of our friend groups composed of people who think like us, act like us, talk like us and dress like us? That’s not a bad thing in and of itself, but how are we reaching out to, being present with and LOVING those who are different than us? To be a follower of Jesus requires nothing less.

So, here’s a few ideas of things we can do:

1. **We could join a, “Be the Bridge” group.**

Latasha Morrison is an amazing woman whose foundation, “Be the Bridge” fosters groups literally around the country in coffee shops, college campuses, living rooms and churches that are full of diverse people who come from different backgrounds with different stories to have important conversations about understanding and loving one another.

1. **Read diverse books or intake diverse media**

Perhaps you need to begin reading books by authors who hold similar values but come from different backgrounds, upbringings and ways of life. Maybe you need to reflect on some of the biases you hold about others different than you. Maybe you need to lament, confess and repent of those biases and then make a conscious effort to step into a relationship with one person whom you’ve deemed as “other.”

1. **Befriend the “other”**

Maybe it’s befriending a person of a different culture or language, someone with different skin color, someone with a disability or someone with a different sexual orientation or religious background.

I don’t know what it is, but here’s what I do know—as a follower of Jesus, our call is to befriend and commune with all types of people—especially those whom society has deemed less than, inferior or outcast. This doesn’t mean we have to agree about everything or support every view, but it does mean we need to love one another, as Jesus loves us.

**Inspiration:**

*John 4, verse 28, 28Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, 29“Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?” 30They came out of the town and made their way toward him.*

This woman—moments before—was on the fringes of a fringe society. She was the lowest of the low of the enemy. She was a nobody. Until Jesus. Until Jesus took the time to lean into the power of presence. To stop. To be intentional. To see this woman for who really was—not an adulteress, not a divorcee, not a serial spouse, not a sinner, not a woman, not a Samaritan—but as a child of God.

See my friends, to bring the gospel to Judea and Samaria—perhaps for us as a suburban community it’s the inner city and the hood, or maybe it’s to the math team and the cheerleaders, or maybe it’s to the LGBTQ+ and transgender community—whoever you’re wanting to bring the Gospel to, you have to love people. You have to believe in the power of presence—you have to love people who are different than you and create a relationship centered around trust and acceptance. Because when trust and acceptance are earned, the Holy Spirit will give you opportunities to discern how to best share the Good News of Jesus.

Only after a relationship has been established can redemption take place.

Let us be a people who lead with love and who are purposeful in our presence.

*Let’s pray.*