

Personal Interviews of Jesus

II. With a Woman of Samaria—A Call to a New Life

John 4: 1-30.

TOPIC FOR THE JUNE CONGREGATION MEETING.

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Preliminary questions. How did Jesus happen to be at Jacob's well? Where were His disciples? What was the character of this Samaritan woman? What kind of feeling existed between the Jews and the Samaritans? What was the origin of the Samaritan race (see 2 Kings 17)? What was the origin of their race quarrel with the Jews (Ezra 4)?

Jesus' life-purpose. Jesus' life was dominated by a high and noble purpose—to bless His fellow-men and lead them into the kingdom of God. He went about doing them good; He healed their bodies and their souls. He administered both to their physical and their spiritual needs. He knew no class distinction; the rich and the poor were both alike to Him though the unfortunate and the sinful seem to have had a special claim upon His sympathy. With one of these unfortunates He now had a chance meeting. What will He do?

Jesus recognizes this woman a person who is in need of help such as He can give. He resolves to help her. The great purpose of His life now asserts itself: He will seek to impart to her spiritual truth leading to the salvation of her soul. An opportunity to save a soul has presented itself and He will embrace it.

Difficulties to be overcome. He is hungry and weary; but the needs of the body do not count in the balance against an opportunity to save a soul. Jewish etiquette would prevent Him from entering into conversation with a woman and especially one of an unsavory reputation; but when the good of others is the goal sought etiquette must be brushed aside. She was of the race of the Samaritans to which the Jews had no dealings; but Christian love knows no such limitations. She was half-heathen in her religion, and in her life unspiritual and sinful; between her and the pure-hearted and noble-minded stranger before her there seemed to be very little in common; but the love of God in the heart is sure to find some common ground for sympathy and fellowship. There are no difficulties too great for faith and love hence Jesus resolves to win her for the kingdom. Notice the successive steps which He takes in doing so.

First Step. He does not bluntly face her with the question of her sin and her need of salvation. He must first secure her attention and win her confidence. His first step is to ask her for a favor—a drink of water. This was a most natural request, and placed them upon common ground; they were both in search of water.

Her reply. She replies by a question which reminds Him of the race feud between the two races to which they respectively belong. Her question indicates that she is really surprised that He, a Jew, should speak to her, a Samaritan woman? Or does she ask the question in a sportive spirit, with a desire to twist Him by reminding Him that, for the time being He, a Jew, must humble Himself before a detested Samaritan, and simply because He is thirsty?

Progress Made:

1. He has opened up a conversation upon common ground.

2. He has gained her attention.

Second Step. He now introduces the chosen theme. He mentions the gift of God, the living water, and Himself as able to provide it. Without paying any attention to the cool reception which she had given Him, He seeks to lead her into

a more serious and thoughtful frame of mind.

Her reply. She desires to know if He is greater than our father Jacob, and whence He has this living water.

Progress Made:

3. He has introduced His chosen theme.

4. He has led her into serious thought.

5. He has gained her respect, as evidenced by the title "sir," by which she now addresses Him.

Third Step. He enlarges upon the value of the living water and contrasts it with ordinary water, showing that it is permanently satisfying, being a well of water that springs up into eternal life.

Her reply. She asks for this water, that she may be saved the drudgery of coming to draw water at this well.

Progress Made:

6. He has commenced to develop His theme.

7. He has gained her deep interest.

8. He has won her confidence.

9. He has learned something of her inner experience. He has gained from her an admission that there is an inner weariness in her life: She is under the necessity of coming a distance to draw water from a well that is deep, which is no easy task, and that every day; her life is a drudgery, and she is tired.

What will the Master do next? He will seek to lead her to repentance, otherwise He cannot impart to her spiritual truth.

Fourth Step. He asks that she bring her husband—a most natural request, and yet one that brought to her a sense of her guilt. How delicate and artful! What fine property and ingenuitous skill! These were manifest! Jesus could not, at an earlier time in the course of the conversation, even hint at her guilt, for He had not then won her confidence; but now that He has her confidence He seeks to lead her to repentance.

Her reply. "I have no husband." This is candid. It is a half-confession which she did not need to make, and would not have made had she been desirous of concealing her guilt or justifying her life.

Progress Made:

10. He has gained from her an admission which, if followed up, will lead her to a sense of guilt.

Fifth Step. He practically commends her for telling the truth, and at the same time presses home her guilt.

Her reply. She acknowledges him to be a prophet. Being moved with a feeling of shame and a sense of guilt, she turns to religion as a means of escape from her sin, and asks Him to enlighten her as to where God should be worshipped.

Progress Made:

11. Her estimate of Christ is raised. He is recognized as a prophet.

12. Her desire unto God is quickened.

Sixth Step. Jesus tries to spiritualize her crude ideas of worship. God may be worshipped in any place and through any form. He must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. The day has already dawned when that which is local, formal and typical in worship is about to give place to that which is spiritual.

Her reply. She voices the deepest desire of her heart. She looks for the Master who will settle all her doubts, teach her the way to God, and show her how to be saved from sin.

Progress Made:

13. He has led her to the expression of her highest hope—she looks for the Messiah.

What will Jesus do next? Only one step remains, and it is easily taken.

Seventh and Last Step. He makes Himself known to her as the Messiah, the One on whom her hope is set. She is now ready to receive that message, for step by step He had prepared her for it.

Her reply. Recognizing Jesus as the Christ, she leaves her waterpot behind and runs hastily into the city to announce the good news to her friends and neighbors and the men of the city. *Grand Result!*

14. He reveals Himself to her as the Messiah.

15. He secures her faith.

16. She becomes a witness for Him. Her testimony, freely given, leads others to believe. A spiritual revival ensues, and Jesus is persuaded to tarry two days among them. The earnestness of the woman is seen in the fact that she does not even take time to carry her waterpot with her as she goes into the city to tell others.

(c) Learn from Jesus the lesson of tact in winning others. How gradually and surely He led the woman along, delicately hinting to her that it was she who became a new disciple, going out and bringing others to Him! How tactfully and successfully Jesus won His way! At first He was a stranger, or, even worse, a detested Jew; but finally He was the Messiah. His testimony, freely given, led others to believe. A detested Jew, a respectable gentleman, a confidential friend, a prophet, the long-looked-for Messiah. Such was the progress made in her estimation of Jesus. Notice also the progressive change in her own feelings toward Him. He gained her attention. He secured her interest. He won her confidence. He gained a knowledge of her inner experiences. He led her to give expression to her highest hope. He secured her faith, and finally He enlisted her services in active co-operation in bringing others to Him.

(b) Learn from the Master the value of a Purpose in life. Let that purpose be so high and noble that it is not easily shaken; so constant that you never lose an opportunity to further it; and so strong that it will be able to surmount all difficulties.

(c) Learn from the Master the value of Sympathy in winning souls. Get so close to those whom you seek to help that you gain a knowledge of their inner experience.

A Mock "Opening of the Legislature"—Provincial House

Recently a Mock Parliament was very successfully carried out by the Epworth League of Petrolia and their visiting guests, the Baptist Young People's Union of that town. The latter occupied the seats of the "Government," while the League members were the "Opposition." Printed programmes were distributed, so that the programme could follow the various representatives of leading politicians in the various constituencies. Rev. H. D. Moyer upheld the corporal traditions of the Lieutenant-Governorship with precision, while Rev. A. C. Bingham wielded the gavel with commendable precision.

The young men who participated presented the reports, schemes, or plans of the Departments so well that they are worthy of commendation. In the near future they are planning for a "Convention of the Labor Party." The Citizenship Department occlusively League is doing excellent work, and in the training of young men in Parliamentary debate the value of its helpfulness cannot be overestimated. Leagues desiring hints and suggestions for such a meeting under their Citizenship Department would do well to drop a note of further enquiry regarding the above meeting to Dr. Calder or Mr. G. W. Thompson, Petrolia, Ont.