

Intro: (Lights Dim) Close your eyes with me, and remember:

Think of the worst thing you have ever done...the thing that you hope and pray no one ever finds out about

And imagine it being played on the screen up in front of the church!

We all have something in our past that we don't want ANYONE to see, don't we?

Imagine what it would be like if someone you never even met walked up and said...Hey... "I know you!" Details

John 4:1-26 Page 752

Today I want to talk with you about "Loving People With A Past"

The reality is...that is every one of us!

For some of us it is well hidden...way in the past...and as far as we know it is safely forgiven and forgotten, left behind.

For others...some of us...and some of the people we know...they are living their nightmare right now.

How do you love people with a Past?

1. Look Past Your Prejudices And Expectations To The Spiritual Need.

1-8

- Jesus knew EVERYONE needed Him as Lord and Savior

~Moral, Religious, Jewish Man:

Nicodemas

He was supposed to be anticipating

~Immoral, Confused, Samaritan Woman:

Woman @ Well

She was spiritually confused, antagonistic

From God's viewpoint, both are equally lost and in spiritual danger. One is not "Further Away" than the other!

In fact, if anything, the woman @ well is "closer" because she knows she is lost...Nicodemus feels pretty good about himself!

Reality is, hell is just as hot for both of them, Eternal Life is just as far away, and each of them need EXACTLY same thing

- Our Expectations and our Prejudices are often wrong and misleading.

~You would expect that the religious Jew would be open, ready, willing to accept the Messiah: Walks away thinking

~You would expect that the spiritually confused Samaritan, whose life is a mess, would reject, She accepts right there!

Appl: It have experienced the exact same thing over the years in my ministry.

Those I expect to be spiritually open and ready...Seems at first they have questions...Talk, Talk, Talk, Talk

Those that I for whatever reason think are going to reject me, push me away, refuse to listen...often the most open!

Step 1: Look at People...Not Their Past!

2. Set Aside Your Social Awkwardness And Simply Accept People Where They Are.

8-9

There were a TON of reasons why this COULD have been an incredibly awkward situation.

- *Stranger*

The dynamics of an unaccompanied woman and a strange man at well create many issues

We would be cautious today...they even more so

- *Male/Female:*

No good Jewish male would ever talk with strange woman...

Women were second class citizens in Jerusalem...looked down upon

One Rabbi: "Better the words of the Law of Moses be burned than delivered to a woman!"

Prayer: "Thank you God that you did not make me a gentile or a woman!"

- *Jew/Samaritan:*

There is an incredible racial animosity

When the Jews were carried away into captivity, not all went...Poor were left behind

During the time the Jews were in captivity, those poor who were left behind intermarried with Gentiles, moved in

When the Jews RETURNED, they rejected the "halfbreeds" they were called...and other worse things

They could not trace a pure Jewish bloodline back to one of the 12 tribes...they were outcasts

- *Religious Issues:*

The Jews worshipped at Temple in Jerusalem

When they returned fm captivity and rebuilt the Temple, Samaritans in the land offered: NO

They were offended, rejected, sent away...So they went to a diff mountain, built their own!

So there is the running animosity...religious as well as racial...they separates the two!

MAP: Vs 4: Had to go through Samaria: Well...yes.in order to do what God wanted Him to do...Shortest route

Usually though...it didn't matter! Actually 3 Roads...

- *Unbiblical lifestyle:*

5 husbands...living with someone!

You might expect that she would not want anything to do with Religious Jew/Prophet

But...because Jesus met her where she was:

Respect

Value

Gave Her Time

Offered Hope

Step 2: Accept People: Whoever and wherever are: If we are going to love people like Jesus...Just be open, honest

3. Focus On Central Spiritual Issues, Not Some Side Issue.

9-18

If we aren't careful, we can easily get sidetracked in our discussion of spiritual matters on something that doesn't matter!

When we are having a spiritual conversation with someone...keep the main thing the main thing...What about Jesus!

- The woman offers up a number of "red herrings" Things to distract and discuss. Jesus Doesn't "bite"

~Social Issue:

How can you ask me?

Loaded with all the issues we just discussed

~Physical Issue:

Just like Nicodemas!

She thinks he is talking about water!

~Personal Issue:

Who do you think you are?

Greater than Jacob

~Lifestyle Issue:

What about this thing (Gay/Abortion/Poor)

I have no husband:

~Religious Issues!

People Never heard/ Other religions

Worship our Temple...or Yours!?

NONE OF THOSE ARE THE REAL ISSUE:

REAL ISSUE IS...WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO W/ JESUS?

- **Jesus Keeps His Focus on Spiritual Matters!** Vs 10
He doesn't "chase after" any of those issues...He goes straight to the heart of the matter
If you knew...

~Who I am:	The Gift of God	Jn 3:16	God so loved...he gave
~What I have to offer:	Living Water	Jn 7:37-39	Living water springing up
~He you can get it:	Believing In Me	Jn 4:21	Believe me

Appl: This is a KEY when you are talking to anyone about spiritual matters, but esp so when you are dealing with someone that feels like they have a "past". You can tell, because it usually comes out this way:

You don't understand what I have done: "I don't think God can ever forgive me."
I can't forgive myself...why would God forgive me?

Step 3: Focus on Jesus...Not on the Past, the Problem

Reality: *All those other things...SYMPTOMS! Get the foundation right...Get in Relationship with God
Have a firm, spiritual place to stand, with God speaking into your life, giving you strength, guidance...deal!*

Illus: Day I came to know Jesus, I had a LOT of problems!

Family Problems,	Drug Problems,	Car Problems,	School Problems 1.2
Friend Problems,	Money Problems,	Future Problems,	Spiritual Problem (Which One)

**EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THOSE WAS A SYMPTOM OF MY REAL PROBLEM! DIDN'T KNOW JESUS
I'm afraid...I want to do the right thing..Don't know which...or how...if I can! Accept Jesus...let him guide you**

4. Point The Way To Forgiveness and The Future. Vs 10-26

Notice that Jesus didn't spend hardly ANY time talking about the past.

He acknowledges it, But His issue is Forgiveness and Relationship, not Condemnation and Judgment

He is interested in moving her forward...So that is what He talks about!

- **Believe Me:** Put your trust in what I tell you! (Learned after 40 years..Just do it!)
- **Worship in Spirit:** It needs to come from the heart..be sincere , not some rote set of rules and regulations
- **Worship in Truth:** Not Just a matter of simply being sincere, but also based on biblical truth
*Biggest lie today is "It doesn't matter what you believe...as long as you are sincere!"
It DOES matter! You can be sincerely WRONG!*

Applic: Graveyards are FULL of people that were sincerely WRONG!
If you were going to Ocean City...Just go...sincere...ITS OK!
Wiring electric panel, Picking mushrooms for stew
Taking medicine...tell pharmacist...give me whatever

- **I am He:** I am the Promised Messiah, God in the Flesh..The fulfillment of all promises of God
THAT is what we have to believe

Step 4: Tell people...YOU NEED JESUS!

CONCL:

How do you Love Like Jesus when someone has a past?

- **Leave Your Prejudices and Expectations behind:** See People...not Pasts
- **Set Aside Awkwardness...Don't hesitate to start a spiritual conversation:** How are you and God?
- **Stay Focused on Central Issue...Don't Take the Bait and argue about other things**
- **Tell them how to get the future they want:** Believe In Him, Sincerely, Biblically, As the Son of God, Paid Price World

Maybe You are here today...wondering if God can forgive your past...Feel like you are far from Him

There is NOTHING that is greater than the Grace of God

1 Jn 1:9	If we confess our sins
Psm 103:12	As Far as the East is from the west
1 Jn 5:13	That you might KNOW you have eternal life

Ready for that Forgiveness...Want That Future...Come...Let me Pray with you...Start that new life today