

Evangelization – Jesus’ Approach with the Samaritan Woman

1. Jesus is there at Jacob’s well – being present, even though hungry, and attentive....
2. The woman of Samaria arrives. Jesus notices her, who she is, and that Jews don’t talk or have anything to do with Samaritans – observantly picking up all we can about the other....
3. Jesus asks her for a drink. He is thirsty and gives her an opportunity to do some good all the while knowing He has something more valuable to offer her – allowing ourselves to be vulnerable before the other, even a stranger....
4. She reacts: “Are you nuts? What’s your problem? Aren’t you a Jew?” – a reaction is far better than being ignored, she is at least willing to engage; this is good....
5. Jesus does not allow himself to be put off by her strong reaction or distracted by it, but sees it for what it is: she is willing to engage Him. So He tells her if she knew who He was and what He had to offer, the gift of God which is the Holy Spirit, then she would be much more eager and open to receive. – It is crucial that we know who we are before God and be confident in God’s great eagerness and ever readiness to pour out the Holy Spirit in every person who opens up to Him....
6. Taken by Jesus self-confidence and by his intriguing offer, she becomes curious and wants to know “Who are you, anyway?” We might get from people something like, “Who do you think you are, anyway?” – This is an incredible expression of interest and openness, even though it may at first seem off putting; so we need to expect the worst all the while hoping for the best, because the Holy Spirit, Jesus, and the Father are our partners....
7. Jesus capitalizes on her curiosity and He boldly tells her more than she may have bargained for. He simply states that He is offering living water that gives eternal life and through these simple words He awakens the hunger and thirst for God that lies often dormant in every human soul.– In our conversation with such a person we could relate how we are being refreshed by that living water that comes from God and how much more alive we now feel now matter what is happening to us.
8. She immediately wakes up and says “I want that, give me some.” – The person might then respond by asking, “Well how do you get that, or how can I get that myself?”
9. This is the first time the woman buys into what Jesus is saying, showing incredible trust and openness; so Jesus moves in much closer and gets personal. He asks her to go get her husband. – In a similar situation, we might ask the person to tell us something about who they are, what they do for a living, or to tell us about themselves.
10. That is too close for comfort and the woman becomes evasive, “I don’t have a husband.” – It is to be expected that in similar circumstances, once we get personal, our dialogue partner would also become evasive.

11. Jesus doesn’t back off or back down and does not let himself be put off by her evasion but continues on the personal level and shows her that He has already noticed something very personal about her, astonishing her with an element of the truth about her life. – We may not have Jesus’ insight into souls, although the Holy Spirit can and does give such words of knowledge about others to those who humbly try to evangelize; so the most likely is that we can follow Jesus’ lead here by sharing with our dialogue partner something we by then may have noticed about them, such as, “I may be wrong, but you seem tired, or depressed, or jubilant, or preoccupied....”
12. Jesus is right on the money and astonished, she acknowledges Him to be a prophet. Still, she still isn’t altogether comfortable with how personal He is getting; so she changes the topic to something more general like religion: the differences between Jews and Samaritans, taking the opportunity to vent some of her frustration with Jews and their religion as biased against her and her people. – We could be acknowledged as a smart aleck or maybe as observant, or as compassionate, and it is also to be expected that the person would do the same thing and revert to a general discussion about religion.
13. Jesus doesn’t let her suck Him into a general discussion about religion, which would only spoil the personal connection He is building with her. So rather than go where she leads, He goes to a deeper level. He establishes his authority by saying she doesn’t know who she is worshipping, that is, her religiosity is not connecting in a personal way to a real, specific, identifiable Person in God, and further asserts that He does know who He is worshipping, that true faith comes from the Jews. Then He goes to the very heart of religion, which is about worship not primarily in external observance but in spirit and truth. – This is a great lead from Jesus, and we could do the same and go deeper than a general discussion about religion and go to the heart of our own experience of having a personal connection with God both privately and in our Sunday worship in our Parish community of faith.
14. Jesus confident reference to interior worship in spirit and truth awakens her awareness of her own hunger and thirst for God – which is common to every human being and put in us by God – and she finally gives in and gets personal, admitting her own hope for the coming of the Messiah and hunger for God. – This is a profoundly intimate and trusting moment when a person admits to us their searching, hunger and thirst for something better, for goodness, truth, beauty, justice, love, God. We need to be very attentive, respectful, and reverent to receive well and in wrap silence and attention such a sharing....
15. The woman’s doors are finally wide open and in complete trust; so Jesus opens wide his own heart too and admits that He who is talking to her is the very Person she has been waiting for, the Messiah sent by God. – Obviously we can make no such statement, but we can share with her or him our conviction that the God whom they seek and desire is truly present right here between us, and say it with our complete conviction that it is true.
16. The woman is totally flabbergasted and no longer knows what to say. – We might hear the person say to us something like, “I wish I could know that or feel that as you do.”

17. When the apostles arrive and surround Jesus she sees all these men following Jesus and realizes in a flash that all his words must be true. The realization of what is happening to her hits her like lightning, and she gets all excited, drops her jar, and runs off to tell everyone in the city what has just happened to her. She isn’t even fully convinced yet that Jesus really is the Messiah and yet she becomes an incredible evangelizer, bringing out a whole crowd to meet Jesus. – Our dialogue partner might not be struck by lightning so quickly and might need another step; since we are not Jesus in Person. So in response to the person’s expressed wish to have what we have, we could then very respectfully offer to pray with the person, and if they accept, pray out loud after a moment of silence and closing our eyes, a humble prayer of petition, acknowledging the Lord’s loving presence here and now, that the Lord is eager to reveal Himself to this person, giving our testimony to the person’s desire and openness of heart, and humbly asking the Lord to come into this open heart and glorify Himself, doing as He himself pleases to bring the person closer.
18. As Jesus simply let the Samaritan woman run off and responded to his apostles’ dialogue, so we would, after our prayer, wait a moment in silence, continuing to pray for the person, and after some moments, while continuing to pray for them, open our eyes and look up to see if there are any signs of anything happening for the person. If there are obvious signs, like tears, we can gaze lovingly at the person and continue praying, until the tears pass and the person looks up or speaks to us something like, “Wow! I’m sorry, I don’t know what’s happening, but suddenly I’m all emotional....”
19. Such a response is an invitation from the person to chat with them and explore what has been happening. It is wise to assume nothing but rather show interest and allow the person to relate to us in their own words what has just happened to them. God can work wonders in a relatively short time, and based on what they say, we may from our own experience or with graced insight the Holy Spirit may provide us be able to say something to them that will shed a little light on what the Lord is doing, and this may be enough for them for now. The Lord will continue working in them, we can be very confident of that. Still, we can look for an opportunity to see whether the person knows any others who know the Lord and with whom they could find support. If not, we can offer them an invitation to join us at our Parish, and if not, at least to pray for them, and maybe to have coffee at some point soon.
20. The essentials for a continuing vital connection with God and growth in our experience of faith and trust in God and in his love are:
 - (1) Continuing to pray during the day and also at fixed points like morning and night
 - (2) Opening the Bible and reading the Word of God each day as a way to listen to God
 - (3) Joining in Sunday worship with other Christians
 - (4) Share with others the good news of what is happening to us to give glory to God
21. The Father, Jesus his Son, and the Holy Spirit want to fill us to overflowing with their love and vitality, and offer us an active part in the great mission Jesus began to assist others in finding the living God for whom their heart hungers and thirsts just as ours does.....