

## OUTCAST: On the Outside

### Large Group Talk 1

*\*Don't forget to start with the intro found in the Large Group Talk Outlines folder.*

#### **Objective:**

The goal of this large group session is to help students see what makes someone an outsider or feel like they are on the fringes of community. Students will take a look at the Samaritan woman at the well from the Gospel of John to discover why she was an outcast. From there, students will begin to identify who the outsiders are in their own communities so that they can begin to follow in Jesus' footsteps and reach out to invite them back in.

#### **Transition to On the Outside Large Group Talk:**

**Ask:** *What makes someone an outsider in our society? What makes someone an outsider in your youth group?*

**Say Something Like:** *Think about the different circles that make up the communities you interact with all day. You have your family circle (parents, siblings), your school circle (teachers, administrators, students), your friend circle (old and new), maybe an extracurricular circle (teammates, band members, cast members), and a youth group circle. For most of these, it's pretty easy to tell who is on the inside and who is on the outside—teammates wear the same jerseys and classmates all sit in desks together. But sometimes that line can become blurred. Just because someone shows up to youth group every week doesn't mean they feel like an insider. What are the things that draw people inside those circles? What pushes them to the fringes? Let's spend some time looking at someone Jesus encountered who had been pushed outside of every circle she used to belong to.*

**Tell the story of the woman at the well, found in John 4:1-30.** It's pretty long, so you may wish to summarize the story for your students first then read the actual verses as you teach through the passage throughout all four large group sessions.

#### **Teaching:**

##### **1. Different**

**Say Something Like:** *Jesus was definitely stepping outside the box by having a conversation with a Samaritan woman. He was traveling from Judea to Galilee, but to get there, he had to pass through Samaria. It was not common for Samaritans to associate with Jews. In fact, Samaritans were viewed as rejects. The Jews saw themselves as pure, but the Samaritans had married people from other cultures and had mixed other religions with their own. So Jews believed they would become tainted or unclean just by sharing dinner with Samaritans.*

*But you probably know the term Samaritan from another story: the Good Samaritan. A Jewish man is beaten by robbers, but several Jewish religious leaders wouldn't even cross the road to help him. In the end, it was a Samaritan—not a Jew—who helped him. Now you know why that story was so radical to Jesus' Jewish audience. The holiest Jews wouldn't help a man in need, but a lowly, tainted Samaritan would? Yeah, right. So you can see that the Samaritan woman at the well was the victim of some pretty extreme cultural prejudices.*

*The truth is that Jesus may have raised a few eyebrows by talking with a Samaritan, but it wasn't unheard of. At least he wasn't sharing a meal with one. But it was extremely shocking that he'd talk to her for another reason: she was a woman. Men rarely spoke to women outside of their homes because during Jesus' day women were seen as second-class citizens in many parts of the world. But Jesus wasn't just any man—he was a Rabbi, a teacher. He was given the very special task of teaching people about God and his law. That was a privilege Rabbis couldn't take lightly. It was his job to teach men at all times (and his time was very valuable). Teaching women was believed to be a waste of time for Rabbis. As you can see, Jesus was breaking a ton of cultural and gender rules by having a discussion with the woman at the well.*

## 2. Rejected

**Say Something Like:** *Even in her own culture, this woman was a loner. The Jews looked down on her because she was a Samaritan, and the men looked down on her because she was a woman, but surely she could find acceptance among other Samaritan women. Everyone, no matter how different they are, must have someone who is like them, right? Yet when she arrives at the well, she's alone. This might not seem like a big deal to us—people go shopping by themselves all the time, but in her culture, the fact that this woman was alone spoke volumes.*

*That's what it was like for this woman to come to the well alone. The well was the social gathering spot for the whole community, and women would always get water in groups. The only reason she'd be there by herself is if she had done something shameful, something that meant no one else wanted to be associated with her. It turns out that this woman had been married several times.*

*So what? People get remarried all the time. It's not like this woman murdered someone. Why would getting remarried cause her entire community to shun her?*

*In Jesus' day, being married more than once was a huge problem. In fact, it was almost unheard of. Yet this woman hadn't just remarried once; she had been married to five different men, and the man she was currently living with wasn't her husband. That's like messing up in a major way times five—plus a big, ugly cherry on top. She couldn't claim that she'd just made a mistake because she was a repeat offender. What this woman had done was enough to brand her as sleazy. People had been stoned to death for less! That's why she was ostracized by all the other women in her culture, the only other people who could really relate to her. If there was a rock bottom socially, she wasn't far from it.*

### 3. Valuable

**Say Something Like:** *Despite all of this, Jesus starts talking to this woman, not in a secluded house or a back alley but right at the well. By choosing the well as his backdrop, Jesus is making it very clear that he is not concerned how people will judge him. He's way more concerned with showing this woman that she matters, that she has value. But why? From every angle, this woman shouldn't have any value. She's a Samaritan woman who disgraced herself, an outcast in every way.*

**Ask:** *Why do you think Jesus saw this woman as valuable? What gave her value despite her cultural situation and her mistakes?*

**Say Something Like:** *Did anyone come close with your guesses? How could any of these fairly common items be worth what people actually paid for them? Even the expensive things (like a piano) sold for way more than they're worth. They're valuable because of the celebrities who owned them or signed them. Things that shouldn't cost much (or nothing at all) skyrocket in value because they're associated with the right people. Take the broken cell phone, for example. For all intents and purposes, the phone was worthless. But when Rihanna associated herself with it by signing it, the phone became outrageously valuable.*

*The truth is that the woman at the well, you, me, and every other human being are broken and outcast. We're rejected because of our cultures, our genders, or our personalities. We've done things we aren't proud of, and we've hurt people we should have loved. Based on those things, we should be worthless. But we're not. In fact, we're unbelievably valuable—priceless. Why? Because of the One who associates himself with us. We're God's creations, and he made us in his image. That means we were created to represent him to the world in a unique way. You could almost think of God's image as his autograph on us that marks us for life as outrageously valuable. And there's no level of brokenness or mistreatment that could ever take away that value. Just how valuable are we to God? We're so valuable that he sent his son, Jesus, to die a terrible death on a cross to defeat death and rebuild a relationship with us. While the rest of the world rejected the woman at the well, Jesus showed her that she was valuable by reaching past the outcast status and having a conversation with her. And not long after this day, he showed that she was valuable again—in a greater way—by dying on the cross for her and for us.*

### **Putting It All Together:**

**Say Something Like:** *Apart from anything he actually said to her, Jesus showed the woman at the well that she was valuable by actually engaging her in conversation. She had more than her fair share of baggage and brokenness, and she'd clearly been rejected by numerous people. But Jesus looked past those issues and connected with her. He didn't see a reject, an outcast, or an untouchable. He saw her as a valuable child of God, someone worth taking the time to see, know, and ultimately die for.*

**Looking Forward:**

**[Speaker's Note:** The questions below will be discussed in the Small Group Session that follows this lesson. Remember to pose these questions and encourage students to write down their responses on **page 4** of the Student Book.]

**Question 1:** Can you think of a time when your heart drifted from God (maybe even now)? How did that happen? What are some other things your heart has been drawn to instead of God?

**Question 2:** Why does God care more about our hearts than our outside appearances?

**Need to Know:** Let the students know that the next lesson will dive into the specific ways Jesus interacted with the woman at the well, building on all the things we talked about during this first lesson. Be sure to give them any instructions (or schedule info) they might need to go from here.

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