

## OUTCAST: Invite Them In

### Large Group Talk 2

#### **Objective:**

This lesson will teach students how to engage those who have been excluded or don't seem to fit in. Jesus' interaction with the Samaritan woman is an excellent example of how to embrace the awkward situations of life; how to look beyond social stigmas, past actions, and basic differences to appreciate the value of any person; and how to reach out to those on the fringe instead of waiting for them to make the first move. As students come to understand the value God places in all people, they'll begin to desire unity based on Christ over division based on differences.

**Speaker's Note:** These Large Group Talks are designed to give you a foundation to speak from. They are full of optional illustrations, object lessons, and anecdotes that you can use as much or as little as you'd like.

\*View any illustration video clips ahead of time to make sure they will fit well with your audience.

\*Also included in your *Outcast* download are presentation backgrounds to use with these Large Group Talks or any other place that will help make your DNow event great!

#### **Recap of On the Outside:**

**Say Something Like:** *Before we continue looking at Jesus' conversation with the woman at the well, remember that in our last session, we saw why this woman was on the outside of her culture. First, she was a Samaritan, so it would have been countercultural for any Jew to speak with her. Second, she was a woman, which made it doubly awkward for a teacher like Jesus to interact with her by himself. Finally, even in her own Samaritan culture she was excluded because she wasn't living a very respectable life. But, as we saw, even this woman who had so much going against her was remarkably valuable in God's eyes. Now we're going to see the lines Jesus was willing to cross to show her just how valuable she was.*

#### **Transition to Invite Them In:**

**Ask:** *What's the most awkward interaction you've ever experienced? What made it so awkward?*

**Say Something Like:** *Putting yourself out there in social situations can be awkward. It's like going swimming on a sunny day. You're hoping the water's nice and warm. But what if you dive in and it's freezing? There's nothing worse than jumping head-first into a conversation only to get a freezing cold shoulder. Imagine knocking on your teacher's door after school hoping to talk about joining the club she leads. After three or four knocks, she finally opens the door with a scowl. She sees that it's a stu-*

dent and lets out a groan. Everything about her mannerisms, from the tone of her voice to her raised eyebrow, seems to say, “Why are you bugging me? You don’t have what it takes to join this club!” That doesn’t exactly make you feel great. Or maybe there’s a group of students in youth group laughing at a joke. You ask, “What’s so funny?” hoping to join the conversation. They stare at you for a minute. One of them says, “It’s an inside joke,” rolls his eyes, and turns his back to you. Most of us have been humiliated like this before. No one wants to put him or herself out there only to get rejected. Let’s see how Jesus treated the woman at the well when they found themselves in an awkward social situation.

### Read John 4:4-9:

And he had to pass through Samaria. So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob’s well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.

A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?” (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)

**Say Something Like:** *Jesus was always getting into awkward conversations. When he was teaching, he didn’t shy away from telling people hard truths or even pointing out their issues like hypocrisy, arrogance, selfishness, or greed. He didn’t seem to care much about social norms, often creating opportunities for the “in-crowd” to brush up against the “outsiders” and forcing everyone to rethink his or her preconceptions.*

*In today’s passage, Jesus’ trip to Galilee was cut short when he had to make a stop in Samaria. This was definitely “outsider” territory. I don’t know about you, but when I’m surrounded by people who are totally different from me, I’m not much of a conversationalist. It takes a lot of effort to get past the awkwardness of how uncomfortable I am and how different we seem. The last thing I want to do is figure out what we could possibly talk about. But what does Jesus do? He dives right into a conversation! Why would he do something like that? We’ll find out during this lesson.*

## Teaching:

### 1. Embrace the Awkward

**Say Something Like:** *The truth is that running into this Samaritan woman was awkward on so many levels. Remember what we talked about during the last lesson: women usually got water in groups. The fact that she was alone probably meant that others didn’t want to be around her—probably because she’d had so many husbands. But more uncomfortable than that, it was taboo for a Jew to interact with a Samaritan, especially if she was a woman. For most Jews, a conversation with this woman would have been the worst kind of awkward.*

*Have you ever been so nervous talking to someone that you made a mess of it, too? Cringe-worthy conversations can happen with anyone. Maybe it was a stranger at the coffee shop, a new member*

*of your class/team, or an adult you needed to impress. You rehearsed what you would say and maybe even thought of some jokes to break the ice. But when you opened your mouth, you just blurted out a bunch of nonsense. At best, the other person was polite but confused. At worst, they got offended, laughed at you, or avoided you like the plague.*

*Most of us think talking with people outside of our close circles of friends, people who are different or who have different interests, is incredibly awkward. You don't share common experiences. You don't like the same music or activities. You don't talk the same way. And the more different you seem, the more there is potential for awkwardness. What if you say something embarrassing? Or accidentally do something offensive? Yet, Jesus didn't avoid the awkwardness at the well. To him, this woman was worth the risk of a few awkward moments, not because of anything she did to make herself worthy but because she was a person created by God.*

**Discuss:** Tell a story of a time when a person or group who could have ignored you invited you to be a part of things instead. Maybe they made you feel like a part of a team, or perhaps they just listened to you when you needed to talk to someone. Don't be afraid to get vulnerable in front of the students. Then ask if this has happened to any of them.

## 2. Look Beyond

**Say Something Like:** *Putting yourself out there is one thing. Most of us can sit through an uncomfortable conversation every once in a while—as long as it doesn't happen too often. But in this case, talking to the woman was more than just uncomfortable; she was someone Jesus was not supposed to be around, much less talk to. She had done some pretty terrible things, and there was a good chance that Jesus would look bad by associating with her.*

*Despite all of this, Jesus looked beyond the women's faults straight into her heart. Where most people couldn't look past the bad things she'd done or her different culture, Jesus saw her as she was: a human being who needed to be known and healed. And this wasn't the only time he looked beyond the ways people were messed up. He spent so much time hanging out with the outsiders and the lowest of the low that he started getting associated with them (just like the pizza with the sock on it). Matthew 11:19 says that people called Jesus "a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners." In other words, he was so concerned with reaching out to the outsiders that he didn't care what other people thought of him.*

*Not long before Jesus met the woman at the well, he had a deep discussion with a man named Nicodemus—a wealthy, Jewish bigwig. He was the kind of guy who could seriously boost Jesus' reputation just by being seen with him. All Jesus had to do was hang out with people like that and no one would ever think badly of him. Yet Jesus threw away all of those popularity points and committed social suicide when he decided to have a deep conversation with this Samaritan woman. He showed someone at the bottom of the social ladder the same respect he showed to someone near the top. Unlike everyone else, Jesus looked beyond this woman's faults, her culture, and her gender because he knew that everyone has the same spiritual needs, the same need for him.*

**Ask:** *What's the most embarrassing thing you've ever done in front of other people? Did it help your social standing or hurt it?*

### 3. Reach Out

**Say Something Like:** *Sometimes our lives feel like one big staring contest. We've been hurt in terrible ways, so we wait for someone to apologize to us. We feel awkward reaching out to the people we've hurt, so we hope that they'll come to us. Either way, we want the other person to blink first. I have some good news for you: the staring contest is already over! While we were busy trying to win, Jesus blinked first. Just look at what happened with the woman at the well. While she was probably worried about the awkwardness of the social situation or dreading the judgment that would come from Jesus seeing her alone and humiliated, Jesus spoke first. He stepped over her broken past and the cultural norms and engaged her in conversation, offering her the thing she needed most: himself.*

*And he does the same thing for each of us. No matter where we are on the social ladder, no matter the mistakes we've made in the past, and no matter the ways we've embarrassed ourselves, he reaches out to us first. He says, "Do you feel rejected by people? I'll accept you. Have you done things you're not proud of? I'll forgive you. Do you struggle with doubts? I'll be right here beside you." No matter where we are or what we've done, Jesus always takes the first step toward us, his hand reaching out to pull us to him. He didn't wait for us to shape up before he died for us on the cross—he did it while we were still sinners. Maybe you've heard that God helps those who help themselves? That couldn't be further from the truth. God helps those who can't help themselves.*

*That takes away all the pressure in our situations. Jesus blinked first, so we can forget about our painful, tiring staring contest. We don't have to wait for others to apologize or to take the first step before we enter back into relationship with them; Jesus already took the first step for us. And he gives us the strength to break through those awkward barriers and build relationships with people who aren't anything like us. In fact, it's impossible to truly love people without him!*

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

**Say Something Like:** *We have to look at people the way Jesus did if we are going to make sure they feel welcome. Jesus did that with the woman at well. He embraced the awkwardness of their differences, looked beyond her brokenness to see her incredible value, and traded his good social standing to stand with her. We will dig deeper into their conversation in the following lesson, learning to put into practice what Jesus did with this Samaritan woman.*

**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 12** of the Student Book.]

**Question 1:** What do you think people see when they look at you?

**Question 2:** Is there anything you wish they could look past? If so, what?

**Need to Know:** Let the students know that the next lesson will look at what it's like to step into the shoes of the marginalized and broken. Be sure to give them any instructions (or schedule info) they might need to go from here.

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