

OUTCAST: The Great Invitation

Large Group Talk 4

Objective:

The main objective of this lesson is to introduce students to the healing and transformation Jesus brings to his followers. Once students have been transformed, they'll grow more and more like Jesus, taking his priorities as their own. As we've seen in the story of the woman at the well, Jesus values all people, even those who have messed up and been pushed to the margins. Students who follow Christ will love those he loves and value what he values. Then they'll be compelled to share Jesus with those on the fringe. Jesus was the only one who could heal the Samaritan woman's brokenness, and he's the only one who can heal those today who have been hurt, rejected, or cast aside.

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 In Our Shoes:

Say Something Like: *So far, we've seen why the woman at the well was on the fringe of her society, the great value she had in God's eyes, the sacrifices Jesus was willing to make to build a relationship with her, and the steps he took to help her find healing in himself. He empathized with her and had compassion for her vulnerable state. He didn't look down on her or worry about offending her. He knew her rejection and pain—he'd experienced them, too, and knew that the only solution for her situation was to know him. Now we're going to look at the woman's response to Jesus and whether their conversation had any impact.*

Transition to The Great Invitation:

Ask: *Think of the last movie you saw that was awesome. How many people did you tell about it? Why did you tell them about it?*

Say Something Like: *"People don't change." Have you ever heard someone say that before? It seems pretty pessimistic, doesn't it? But the truth is that most of the time people prefer to do things the way they've always been done—even if there's a better way or what they're doing is hurting them. People try to stop smoking but can't. People want to start exercising but don't. People start to switch over*

from Apple to Android but can't figure it out. It's just so easy and comfortable to avoid change. We've built up so much momentum in our lives that it feels like nothing can turn us around. But that's not entirely true. Yes, it's tough to change people, but it's not impossible. It just requires something massive, something earth shattering. When people experience something that huge, they can change in ways that seem impossible.

Read John 4:25–30:

The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things." Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."

Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you seek?" or, "Why are you talking with her?" So, the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" They went out of the town and were coming to him.

Say Something Like: *It all comes down to this: Jesus reveals to the woman that he is the Messiah, the only one who can save her from her spiritual brokenness and the rejection she's felt for so long. There are a few ways she could have responded. She could have flat-out rejected him and laughed in his face. But he'd just told her things he couldn't have known if he wasn't someone special. She could have believed Jesus but kept it to herself. After all, why should she share this good news with people who had looked down on her and ostracized her for so long? Considering her history, what she does is shocking: she leaves everything behind to tell anyone she can find to come see the one who made such an impact in her own life. In other words, Jesus' conversation with her led to real change. She was transformed from a skeptical, wounded person into someone so excited about what she'd experienced that she didn't care what others thought of her anymore. She wanted others to experience the love and healing that she'd been shown. That's the type of life change that only happens after something huge—something as big as meeting God face to face. Let's dig a little deeper into her response.*

Teaching:

1. Transformation

Say Something Like: *We've talked a lot about how Jesus reached out to this marginalized woman, and we've thought about what it might look like to do the same thing in our own contexts. However, this will never happen if we think we can do it on our own. We can't help other people until we've been helped ourselves. You've probably heard a version of this, but Jesus is the one who originally said, "If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit" (Matt. 15:14). Before we can reach out to others, we need to be transformed by Christ, the one who first reached out to us. Otherwise, we're not going to be much help. We aren't powerful enough or big enough to cause major transformation and life-change on our own. Those we seek to help need something outrageously huge. Ultimately, what the rejected and broken need most is a relationship with Jesus. That was the solution for the woman at the well, and that's the solution for the outsiders and devalued of today. But we can't give something we don't have.*

Ask: *Without answering, think closely about your own view of Jesus. Do you see him as the only hope for your brokenness? Do you love him as your Savior? Do you believe he's the only one who can forgive your sins and bring you back into relationship with God? Until you can say yes to those questions, you won't be able to help others who have been hurt in the way they really need.*

Say Something Like: *Once the woman at the well learned that Jesus was the Savior her people had been waiting for, her response was immediate. Without any hesitation, she ran and told others to come and see Jesus. That's right—she went and told the very people who had rejected her, who had looked at her as trash, about Jesus. Why? Because those are exactly the people who need to know about Jesus. We're all broken. We've all messed up. That's why it's so important for us to do what the Samaritan woman did.*

2. Share, Like, Follow

Say Something Like: *Think about the last 10 things you shared on social media. What were they? What do all the videos, articles, memes, and gifs you share have in common? More than likely, they have two similarities: they're personal and they caused some kind of emotional reaction in you. Those are two of the top reasons we share a video with our friends, they pass the video along to their friends, and it eventually goes viral. When I say that it's usually personal, I mean that it connects to you in some way—it defines what you like, what you believe, or who you are. Maybe it encourages you to make a version of the video or meme yourself. Think of it in reverse: would you ever share something that you strongly disagreed with or something that you weren't interested in? Probably not. The other reason we share things is because they evoke some kind of emotional reaction in us and we want someone else to have that same reaction. It made you laugh, and you want your friends to laugh. It tugged on your heartstrings, and you want your friends to feel the same way. It was a great experience, and we want our friends to have it, too. We share the things that impact us. We want to invite people into the inside joke, a place we've visited, an insight we've discovered, or a moving story.*

Ask: *What were the last three links, videos, pictures, or articles that you shared on social media? Did they fit the top two reasons we share things? Were they personal? Did they cause an emotional response that you wanted to share? If not, what are some of the reasons you decided to share it with others?*

Say Something Like: *That's exactly what the woman at the well did. She just had to share her experience with others. She wanted them to hear and see the same life-changing thing. Her conversation with Jesus was deeply personal. He revealed things she would never admit. He explained that the Messiah she'd been waiting for her whole life had arrived—Jesus was that Savior. So it's no surprise that when the woman ran to tell everyone about Jesus, she said, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did." Jesus made such a personal impact on her that she wanted other people to see that influence. Secondly, she wanted other people to experience the excitement she had felt when Jesus revealed that he was the Savior she had been waiting for. She was so enthusiastic that she left her water jar (the reason she'd visited the well in the first place) to share with her community that she had met the one they'd been waiting hundreds of years to see. And the Bible says that the people she told dropped what they were doing and followed her to see Jesus.*

Read John 4:39–42:

Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me all that I ever did.” So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.”^c

3. Testimony

Say Something Like: *When we start following Jesus as our Savior, he slowly transforms us to become more and more like him. We take his priorities as our own. We care about the things he cares about. Remember back to our first session—God values every single person beyond belief. No matter how broken we are or how badly we’ve messed up, he still sees us as priceless. So when we become like Jesus, we’ll start seeing other people as valuable, too. We’ll care less and less about how good we look to others, and we’ll start caring more and more about them instead. We’ll want what is best for those people: a relationship with Jesus. As you can see, the love that Jesus first shows us should be passed along to others. It enables us to care for people we wouldn’t normally want to be around, even those who have hurt us in the past.*

But just because we know that telling others about Jesus is the best thing for them doesn’t mean we all find it easy to do. Many of you would probably love to share Jesus’ love—you just don’t know how. Don’t worry. You already have the perfect way to share Christ with others: your own story. The woman at the well didn’t have expert theological knowledge. She’d only known about Jesus for a few minutes at most! But she had a personal and life-changing encounter with the Messiah, so that’s what she told people about. Believe it or not, that was enough to get them to come see for themselves. If you’re a Christ-follower, think about your own story. How has Jesus transformed you in amazing and powerful ways? How has God acted in your life in such a powerful way that it changed you? Think about what make viral videos spread. They’re personal and they make such an impact that you want others to share your experience. So start by sharing with someone the personal ways following Jesus has changed your life. Think about how your relationship with Jesus has transformed you and imagine how someone else could experience that same relationship. Here is an example of what that might look like:

Putting It All Together:

Say Something Like: *As we wrap up our time together, remember that if we loved other people and valued them as Jesus does, no one would ever be cast aside in the first place. But we aren’t perfect, so that type of thing still happens—far too often. So do what Jesus did. Reach out to those people who need healing. Share Jesus’ love with them. If you haven’t experienced the transformation that a relationship with Christ offers, consider giving your life to him today. You can never be too broken for his healing. You can never mess up so much that he won’t still see you as priceless.*

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 28** of the Student Book.]

Question 1: If you are a Christ-follower, are you ready to communicate your personal testimony if given the opportunity? Why or why not?

Question 2: Why is it so important to be transformed by Christ before you can bring healing and transformation to others who need it?

Need to Know: As this DNow comes to a close, please take the time to pray a special prayer for people who are far from God. Challenge your students to look for opportunities to present the gospel. Remind them that the next small group session will be the last. Be sure to give them any instructions (or schedule info) they might need to go from here.

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