

Because Bible Context Matters

# JESUS ENGAGES A SAMARITAN WOMAN

Watching the Master Communicator at Work  
*Relational Insights for Individuals and Groups*

Doug Greenwold

Author of

*Zechariah and Elizabeth: Persistent Faith in a Faithful God*

*The Rest of the Story: A Closer Look at Familiar Passages*

*Making Disciples Jesus' Way: Wisdom We Have Missed*

*Encounters with Jesus: The Rest of Their Stories*

*The Paralytics Amazing Friends*

*Becoming a Judean Shepherd*

*That Good Samaritan*

*Those Prodigal Sons*

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A Digging Deeper Faith Study



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# Forward

## A Digging Deeper Faith Study

In relationships, have you ever done or said the “right” thing at the wrong time? Or done the “wrong” thing at the right time? In hindsight, I seem to have an advanced degree in that regard!

While reading Luther’s preface to the book of Romans quite some time ago, I discovered his definition of a “righteous act.” Luther suggested that an act pleasing to God occurs when the right act/statement is done at the right time, in the right spirit, and for the right motivation. Now that is a humbling perspective!

We observe Jesus on the pages of the Gospels always speaking “righteous” words and doing “righteous” acts – the “right” thing at just the “right” time, in the “right” spirit, and for the “right” motivation. It doesn’t matter whether it is a Chief Priest or a tax collector; an esteemed Pharisee (Nicodemus) or a woman with an issue of blood (Luke 8); the president of a local synagogue (Jarius in Luke 8) or a no-name, rescued demoniac (Luke 8). Jesus interacts with each one in a “righteous” manner.

Luther’s definition of a “righteous” act strikes me that it is much easier to interact in a “righteous” manner with people who are more like me than with people who are not. First-century observant Jews were no different. They only viewed “people like me” as my “neighbor,” and therefore, worthy of “love your neighbor as yourself.” But if you are not like me, then I don’t have to view you as my neighbor or treat you in a “righteous” manner at all. In fact in first century observant Judaism, I can despise you and feel as if I am still honoring God. (You can understand why Jesus had to re-define “who is my neighbor” with the “Good Samaritan” parable.)

I can relate to that. It’s more difficult to act “righteous” toward those who are not like me.

Even more so to those who have offended me, or broken the “rules” of my sense of “right and wrong.” Jesus never had a double-standard for “righteousness.” He approached every person/situation by doing the right thing at the right time for the right reason and motivation. Oh, so much to learn from Him about engaging people, sustaining relationships and guiding those relationships into redemptive outcomes.

Are there people in your world that consistently irritate you? Those that are so off-putting you can feel your blood pressure rise each time you attempt to interact with them? Or maybe you have some people in your world that you feel have forfeited the right to grace. Maybe it’s the family “black sheep,” or perhaps a prodigal daughter or son, or maybe a wayward father or mother. Or is it that homeless person you pass everyday on the way to your subway stop?

In John 4 Jesus encounters a Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well in a remarkable redemptive encounter. As that rendezvous unfolds, we learn this woman (whose name we do not know) has a very checkered past (and that puts it mildly!). Nevertheless, He approaches and interacts with her “righteously,” and gently brings her into the Kingdom. Placed into its original context, this remarkable event has much to teach us about how to effectively communicate with those “black sheep,” prodigals, and other marginalized people that God puts in our path and networks. Jesus’ “righteous” ways show us how to establish redemptive relationships in our family, our workplace, and our neighborhoods.

I pray that God’s Spirit will use this book to encourage and challenge you to be more intentional in your relationships so as to nurture redemptive change.

Doug Greenwold  
Columbia, Maryland  
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