

Reaching Out to the Left Out

John 4: 4-35 I attended an Intentional Interim Ministry update training in Dallas last week. The session focused on the topic, "How to become a missional church." At the meeting we were told about a church in Texas that has added a new requirement for church membership: all members are required to have a passport. The obvious reason for such a radical requirement is that members of this church must be willing to participate in the Great Commission of Christ (Matt. 28:19-20). These church members must be free to go anywhere in the world to share Christ. Well, it is true that fulfilling the Great Commission requires crossing national boundaries. However, obeying Christ's command demands a journey across other boundaries also. Sharing the gospel requires us to cross ethnic and social "borders" as well as geographical ones. We see this clearly in the familiar story of the Samaritan Woman, the Woman at the Well in John 4. John said that Jesus had to go through Samaria to get back home in Galilee after being in Judea. However, we will see today that his trip through Samaria was motivated by ministry rather than geography. Jesus' motive was missions. At the beginning of his ministry Jesus was making a strong statement to his new disciples. He was showing them that their ministry was to include the Samaritans. The Jews hated the Samaritans (their neighbors) more than anyone else on earth. Jesus wanted to show his disciples that their mission was to reach out to everyone, even those whom they considered beyond their boundaries. They were to reach out to the left out. Their mission is ours as well. What does the story of the Samaritan woman teach about our mission? It teaches that to reach out to the left out ...

- **We must take the initiative (John 4:7)**
 - We need to remember that prayers are said with both the mouth and the hand (Matt. 7:7-8)
 - Waiting for an opportunity is the best way to miss it (Eph. 5:16)
 - We don't have to wait for an invitation we've already received [We shouldn't need a dictionary to understand the meaning of "go" (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8)]
- **We must be willing to take a chance (John 4:9)**
 - Reaching out requires crossing boundaries that are more cultural than geographical [Crossing cultural boundaries requires the risk of breaking the barriers that surround them (Matt. 26:73; John 4:9)]
 - Worrying about what people think will keep us from helping them (Reaching out to others is being more concerned about their need than our image (Mark 3:1-6; Luke 10:30-37; John 4:9; 2 Tim. 3:12))
 - Rescue missions are rarely risk free [Saving the lost requires bearing a cross (Matt. 16:24-25)]
- **We must be willing to take charge (John 4:16-18)**
 - Love is caring enough to confront [Salvation normally requires intervention (Acts 9:1-6; Gal. 6:1-2)]
 - To hear someone say "It's none of your business" may mean that it is [We are in fact "our brother's keeper" (Gen. 4:9; Ezek. 33:8)]
- **We should be willing to take the heat (John 4: 27)**
 - Like firemen our work may take us to hot places (John 4:27; Luke 7:39; 15:1-2)
 - Fear of criticism is a phobia that will cancel our mission [Criticism often comes from those who refuse *to do* the good you're already *doing* (Matt. 23:4; Luke 10:30-37; Acts 4:17-21, 29)]
- **We can expect to take heart (John 4: 31-41)**
 - The best thing you can do with your heart is to share it with others (Encouragement is willingness "to enhearten" others (Col. 4:8))
 - Faith is the ability to see the harvest when we've only begun to plant the seeds (Matt. 9:35-38; John 4:35; Gal. 6:9)