

Pursuing friendship with people on the margins of Vancouver

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Date: 11 February 2018

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[0 : 00] Yeah, I'm Julia. I'm part of the evening service congregation here and part of a St. John's going family. My parents are just over there. And yeah, I'm part of the group that is going to be sharing this morning, so you'll hear from a number of us.

But yeah, it's been on my heart for some time to create some kind of a session like this to enable us to discuss the issue of interacting and befriending people who are living on the margins in our own city here in Vancouver.

Yeah, so the venue for my exploration of that topic has been an organization called Jacob's Well, which is a Christian community in the downtown east side.

And so I'm very much a learner on this topic, but happy to be part of the conversation here today. And I'd like to have the others who are going to be part of this introduce themselves as well.

There's a number of us that are part of the church community and also part of Jacob's Well or other organizations in the downtown east side. And so we'll hear from a bunch of us.

[1 : 14] So Esther, do you want to introduce yourself next? Hi, I'm Esther, and I work with a group called Siddhartha on the downtown east side as well. So pursuing friendships that keep on the margins.

Sorry, I told you what you want to call next. My name is Esther. Oh, Servant Partners. Servant Partners. Yes. There's another group called Servants and a separate group called Servant Partners. And Esther comes in the evening to church here as well.

And then, yeah. I'm Jacqueline. I'm on staff at Jacob's Well, and I'm also working with an organization called Servants. Different than Servant Partners.

Doing very, very similar work a few blocks apart in the downtown east side. Whoa. I'm Tom. I come to the evening service, and I volunteer at Jacob's Well. And then you guys in the back?

I'm Tanya. I come to the evening service, and I sit on the board at Jacob's Well. Oh, and I also volunteer at my family. Sorry. On Monday night, it's me. I'm Amy Wilson Roberts, and I go to the evening service.

[2 : 29] It's actually Aaron Roberts, who you might know. And I've been a part of Jacob's Well for about 14 years. I'm Kristen. I go to the evening service, and I'm a brand new staff at Jacob's Well since January.

Hi. We're going to work together. Thank you for sharing. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. So we have a few different activities planned for this hour.

But we're going to begin with a look at some scripture. And so there's a handout going around with the passage that we're going to read. And then there's some questions on the back that we will discuss.

Oh, thanks, Amy. That's awesome. So we're going to revisit John 4, the story of the Samaritan woman at the well, which we heard preached on very recently here.

So hopefully it's fresh in our minds. But we're going to look at it particularly with a focus on the issues of power and marginalization in that text.

[3 : 38] So Esther, do you want to come up and read it for us? Thank you. And he asked to pass through Samaria.

So he came to a town in Samaria called Sikar, 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 that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria? For Jews had no dealings with Samaritans. Jesus answered her, If you knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you, Give me a drink, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.

The woman said to him, Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us this well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock.

[4 : 48] Jesus said to her, Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water, welling up to eternal life.

The woman said to him, Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water. Jesus said to her, Go, call your husband, and come here. The woman answered him, I have no husband.

Jesus said to her, You are right in saying, I have no husband. For you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true. The woman said to him, Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet.

Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is a place where people ought to worship. And then Jesus said to her, Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will we worship the Father.

You worship what you do not know. We worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.

[5 : 58] For the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. The woman said to him, I know that Messiah is coming, he is 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 you're 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? Thanks, Esther.

So let's just take a moment in quiet to have a look at the questions on the back of your seat. And jot down some thoughts or just reflect for a few moments and then we'll come together.

Okay, let's come back together. I know that wasn't very much time, but hopefully you had a chance to think a little bit about some of the questions.

- [7 : 07] We're going to just go through them and I'd love to hear your thoughts on each of the questions. And Jacqueline's going to write them out for us here, write some of the ideas that come out of this. So the first question is about the space or setting of the story and whose turf it takes place on.
- Any thoughts about that? The place that's alien to the Jews. The Samaritans were the people that were left behind when the more important people were carried off into exile.
- And then several times they'd come back. But the people that had come back after being away, they despised the accommodations, the people that were left behind.
- Right. And so they were despised and they were separate and there was an untouchability rule. They were displeased, all the kinds of things that happened with a prejudicial perspective of the Shani and Hupinor and the story of economic benefits and so on.
- And he's willing to drink from her something that a dirty semi-American has. Right. Yeah, yeah, exactly. They were displeased.
- [8 : 37] Heretics. You know, they mingled their faith with that of pagans. Or, you know, they learned kind of a mixture. It's called syncretism. And, you know, they had at least different ideas about the center of worship.
- Right. Yeah. Yeah, some really key ideas there. Great. Thank you. So that sort of sets the scene for us.
- And then what do we know about Jesus and the woman that he's interacting with in terms of their social status and power and dignity at the beginning of the story?
- Yes. Can we take one step back? And I'd like to see a little emphasis on what they have in common. Okay. Like the Torah. Mm-hmm.
- Okay. Great. Great. That's true. That's true. Yeah, thank you for that. That's good. Good.
- [9 : 40] Yeah. And so any thoughts on the second question there in terms of whether they are holding equal power and dignity in their interaction? Yeah?
- Well, of course, Jesus, a man, who was also, I don't know if he was, he was considered a rabbi, but he, he certainly was recognized as a teacher.
- Mm-hmm. And had power. Whereas she, the woman, was coming out at noon when nobody else did because she was marginalized.
- Mm-hmm. And so it was a woman in ill repute. Mm-hmm. Yes. Yeah, exactly.
- Thanks, Beth. Yeah, and I think the fact that it was noon, right? Right. And she's on her own are indications that she's, yeah, she's, she's marginalized, she's separated, she's an outcast from her community.
- [10 : 48] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, so there's a very kind of striking difference in their social power and that sort of thing.
- Mm-hmm. All right, number three, who is in need in this story and what do they need? Well, Christ. The Samaritan woman is in need in the story.
- Mm-hmm. Um, and she seems to need repentance. Jesus helps her gently to tell him about her past. Mm-hmm.
- And now she's living with a man she's not married to. Mm-hmm. And she's also living in the past with the traditions of her fathers and believing that going up and worshipping on this mountain will have some beneficial effect, will do some good.
- Mm-hmm. So she needs to be kind of characteristic. Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. Christ needed seemingly water. Yeah. Yeah. He did the day work to do what God wanted him to do.

[11 : 54] Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. And especially need that and rest. Right, yeah. Yeah. Thank you. So both of them are in need, right?

And Jesus approaches her with asking her for assistance. Mm-hmm. So that's important. Okay, and then number four, how does Jesus use his social power, both in conversation and in the way he postures himself, and is there a shift there in terms of the power dynamics during an interaction?

He initiates the conversation with the request. Mm-hmm. He starts it off. Yeah. He does. He does.

I think he does. He does. Other thoughts on that? He places them both in the same category.

I mean, saying that, like, there will come a time when we'll both, you know, worship the Lord and Spirit and truth. Yeah. So he places them both from Jew and Samaritan to the whole to the same category. Yeah, yeah, exactly.

[12 : 59] He's speaking of them as we together. Thanks. Yeah, and I think it's quite striking how her reaction and the way that she comes out of their interaction with so much more confidence and encouragement and this freedom.

And she goes back to, she runs off to go tell her community, the people that have kind of rejected her. So there's this huge shift for her as she, that comes out of her interaction with Jesus.

And then let's look at the last question in terms of cost. What does this interaction cost Jesus and is there a cost to the Samaritan woman? His reputation.

You know, people would say, there you go again, mickling with the sinners and the outcasts and people that aren't like us. Yeah, exactly.

I think a lot of Jews would not have even passed through Samaria, right? Like, he took a different route in the first place, and then there he is talking with this woman who is outcast.

[14 : 15] And, yeah, it's definitely something that people would frown on. So that's an important point. So that's time and effort, delayed gratification, water, food.

Yeah, yeah, he's hungry, he's thirsty, he's shouting away. And meanwhile, yes. Well, I would like to interject that today, a lot of people who go to Israel and take a tour will not get to see that part of Israel because it is Palestinian.

So unless you care to get the whole story, you won't miss a big piece of the story. Yeah, I agree. It carries forward.

Yeah. He has broken a social convention by initiating conversation with a strange woman. And even his disciples say, why are you talking to her?

Yeah. Yeah, exactly. Great. Well, thank you for all those thoughts. Let's let this frame the rest of our conversation this morning.

[15 : 21] And as we look to this example from Jesus of kind of crossing social lines and connecting with people who are on the margins. I'm going to hand it over to Jacqueline, who's going to do an exercise with us next.

Thank you. I'm going to invite Kristen to pass out some cups. There may not be enough for everyone in the room. But yeah, so there are 20 or 20 of the buttons in the room to pass you to potentially share.

But we're going to talk now a bit about marginalization. And I'll just wait a moment while the cups, yeah, while the confusion starts out.

We raided the Sunday school supplies this morning. All right.

If I could gather your attention again, please. We've got one more here if anybody wants it. There we go. All right. So as we mentioned when we were introducing ourselves, those of us who are involved in this presentation are primarily involved in the downtown Eastside community in Vancouver.

[16 : 46] But I would like to emphasize that that is just one extreme example of a demographic of marginalized individuals in our city. And so I want to affirm that there's people in this room who have every one of us has experienced things or has life circumstances that alienate us from the rest of society.

And there are people in your church congregation, in your work population, in your neighborhoods, no matter where you are in this city, who are experiencing marginalization. And so we are not here to present a case for everybody to come down to the downtown Eastside because that's the only place where people are marginalized.

Far from it. So we want to just kind of think about how in our own lives we have experienced marginalization and how we fail to see those who are really close to us in terms of geographic location, in circles that we travel in from work to school to church, through family and friends and people on the bus and other people that we interact with, how close it is to home for all of us here.

And so one of those one of the things that we're just going to do today is we're going to use this little cup of buttons or beads that you have and we're going to do an exercise that goes through 25 statements that were chosen not because they are definitive elements of marginalization, but because they are a sampling of examples in the Vancouver context where people find themselves alienated from mainstream society.

And so I'm going to read a statement. And if that statement applies to you, you're going to select a button or a bead from your cup and you're just going to hold it in your hand.

[18 : 39] So I'm going to list 25 statements. There should be 25 or more items in your cup. And then at the end of it, we're going to reflect on how all of us are going to have a different number of beads in terms of if we look at all of those people in our lives, in our circles, we're all coming to the table from a different footing.

Okay. Any questions about what we're about to do before I begin? Okay. So I'm going to read this list of 25 statements. And some of them have some double negatives.

Okay. So forgive our grammar. And just listen carefully to the statement in terms of whether or not it applies to you. And I'll read it slowly.

And if you want me to repeat the statement, just raise your hand and then I'll repeat it again. Okay. All right. So if you have lived most of your life in a country that is relatively powerful on the world stage, pick up a button.

If you grew up in an English-speaking home, pick up a button.

[19 : 59] If you were not raised in a neighborhood or community that has little voice or power in society, pick up a button.

So if you were not raised in a neighborhood or community that has little voice or power in society, pick up a button. So if you were raised in a community that has power, pick up a button.

Double negatives. Double negatives. So that one, I think that one is one more.

Basically, the double negative is if you were not raised in a neighborhood that has little voice or power, pick up a button. So if you were raised in a community that has power, pick up a button.

Yeah. This is relatively speaking. Yeah, relatively speaking. Yes. If you or your parents were never forcibly removed from their communities and taken to residential school, pick up a stone or a button.

[21 : 30] If you or your parents were never forcibly removed from your home and taken to residential school, pick up a button. So if nobody in your recent family was taken to residential school, pick up a button.

If you were raised by somebody who never lost custody of you, pick up a button. If you were raised by somebody who never lost custody of you, so if you were never taken away from your parents and put in foster care or with relatives, pick up a button.

If one or both of your parents have at least a bachelor's degree, pick up a button. If your parents owned the home you grew up in, pick up a button.

If your parents owned the home you grew up in, pick up a button. If you vacationed outside of your home province or state before the age of 18, pick up a button.

If, as a child or teenager, you were never or rarely called names because of your physical appearance, your race, or your sexual orientation, pick up a button.

[23 : 05] If you grew up thinking and being told that the police were not a person.

If the police were people you could trust, not people you should fear, pick up a button. If you grew up thinking and being told that the police were people you could trust, and not people you should fear.

If you grew up thinking and being told that you could be anything you wanted to be when you grow up, pick up a button. If your family was never on government income assistance pick up a button if during your childhood you had enough to eat most of the time pick up a button if you have in your lifetime successfully applied for a bank account pick up a button yeah maybe start tallying in your head if you are able to use a passport to travel freely to other countries pick up a button if you can go shopping and not be followed by security pick up a button if your life has never been directly affected by physical or mental disability or illness whether it was yours or family members pick up a button if your life has never been directly affected by a criminal record whether it was yours or a family members pick up a button if your life has never been directly affected by addiction whether it was yours or a family members pick up a button if your life has never been directly affected by physical emotional or sexual abuse whether it happened to you or a family member pick up a button if you could have a baby and not be immediately contacted by the ministry of family services pick up a button same deal same deal if your parents have paid for or would probably pay for at least part of your post-secondary education pick up a button if you can find band-aids in the store that pretty closely match your skin color pick up a button if you were raised in a home environment where you felt unconditionally loved pick up a button so so the purpose of this exercise we could have asked a hundred different questions that had none that weren't on this list but the point was to reflect on how a lot of us are born into circumstances that we have very little control over

so we think back on those statements there's very few of them that we could have chosen differently that would have affected the outcome of how many buttons we picked up so maybe we could have some choice over whether or not our own personal criminal record history we could have any ability to make choices of that would affect the outcome of how many buttons that we picked up do you agree?

so what we're trying to look at is and you can put those buttons back into the cup now if you'd like to hold onto one as a reminder you're welcome to so what we want to just reflect on is how we often relate best to people who picked up similar buttons similar numbers in total and similar questions or statements so when we have shared life experience we can have greater levels of empathy in a natural way for the people in our lives the more different we are from somebody in terms of life experience the more barriers there are to relationship and so a friend of mine who would pick up two out of the 25 buttons has had a very different life circumstance than me who picks up closer to 20 buttons so we have different life experiences which has shaped our brain in different ways which has shaped our look at our outlook of the world in different ways which has meant we've developed different coping skills different social norms right?

[29 : 49] I think that one of the strongest things and it came up in our scripture reading of how Jesus really broke through the social norms of his day which were really strict in terms of not only traveling through Samaria interacting with a woman interacting with a woman who was a Samaritan interacting with a Samaritan woman who was already outcast within her own community there were so many taboos that he broke and they're really strong even today I would say there are social pressures in our lives that keep us in groupings of people who are like us and it's really uncomfortable often to step outside of those groupings and a lot of things that keep us kind of tucked together are those social norms or a set of expectations that we meet and that the people around us meet and when somebody doesn't meet those expectations you wonder what other expectations are they not going to meet and it triggers a level of fear that creates a barrier between us and another individual that creates a barrier to relationships so if somebody is acting in a way that you consider to be breaking of those social norms they're speaking in a way that is considered odd they're behaving in a way that is considered odd they're dressed in a way that is considered odd those are all indications of a different life experience a different outlook on the world that creates barriers to relationships and so what we want to emphasize is that we see God calling us to be vulnerable to opening ourselves up to relationships across those barriers and that happens right here in your own church you don't have to travel to the downtown you side to do that that means you look around the room in your different settings in life and you think who is it that I just feel like you know what I just avoid eye contact with that person because I really don't want to interact you know when that person kind of speaks up in a room

I just kind of cringe and I think oh goodness that person speaking up again and what level of vulnerability do I need to reflect on in myself to be able to think of what is it that it's triggering in me that I'm responding to this other person in that way and there's legitimate impulses within ourselves and in our own intuition for keeping ourselves safe that are really important to listen to but there's also times where it's different than keeping ourselves safe in terms of a physical safety or an emotional safety and we need to step beyond that into opening ourselves up into learning about another person and that's one of the things that a lot of us experience in an extreme way in the downtown east side is we open our lives up to people who have had really different life experiences from us and who therefore manifest really obvious physical differences from us and so it happens in the most minute ways right somebody can stand before you and you can think oh yeah they're kind of part of my tribe but really there are hidden things in their lives and they may be picked up 10 stones whereas you may be picked up 23 and there's a lot of things that happen in our lives that we are really good at hiding behind the surface and it's not until we get to know the people around us and we invite them into our lives in a more vulnerable way that we learn from one another and I think that when we learn from people who are really different from us when we open ourselves up to relationship with people who are really different from us that's where we find the deepest level of our own healing and our own personal growth because it shines a light on the places that we don't want to shine a light on within ourselves we look at the things in ourselves where we might have thought I'm a really open-minded person with no prejudice well I don't think that anybody in this room including myself has no prejudice and when we interact with people who challenge us and who maybe evoke some of those you know like oh you know I'm going to turn the other way and just talk to that person over there there it's triggering something within ourselves and I think when the more we examine that and the more we examine what is it that I'm afraid of in interactions with this person that we find the most transformation within ourselves and we become more and more like the character that Jesus is demonstrating to us in Scripture so I'm going to invite Amy to come up now and she's going to continue the conversation with some of her own experiences so I'm going to share some stories of my experience of doing this and as a way of doing that talk about maybe some tips on how we can all start doing it

I am one of the ways that I kind of think about and I can't decide if it's a really great metaphor so if you see faults in the metaphor let me know but a way of kind of beginning to do it is you know when you first start learning to swim in the ocean and so at least I have little small humans three of them seven five and three and so each of them interact with the ocean quite differently so but some of them one of them would walk and just put toes that's all I'm going to do just toes this is where I'm comfortable with this is what I can do and so you start with toes the first time and then when you get comfortable with toes you move up to your knees and then sometimes a wave might come crashing and you're back to your toes but each time you get more and more comfortable with what the ocean has and the different ways that it may interact and so I'm going to use that as an analogy of like how you begin to engage with those on the margins and with the uncomfortability or the discomfort that may happen or just unknown like we when we interact with people that we don't know we don't know what's going to happen to us or what they may do and we get frightened by that and so we have to take little steps get comfortable with that maybe go up to our knees and believe me a wave will come crashing and you go back and go what's happening here?

so that's my metaphor we're going to try and use it so my first engagement I grew up in Birmingham, Alabama and my dad worked with Young Life and so we constantly had people in our home our home was a place where you just engaged because Young Life works with high school students and so we that are I grew up with my home being like you just have people in your home and that's how you engage and then he started Urban Young Life so in Birmingham, Alabama that meant black people and so I lived in an all white neighborhood and my dad would go and get van full of black teenagers and plop them down in our neighborhood which was not what you do in Birmingham, Alabama and so but for me growing up in that I didn't I didn't know anything was different until neighbors started asking why are you doing this or we would get calls to say get the niggers out of the neighborhood and so that was my excuse the language there that was it was to prove a point but that was my interaction of one how you use your home and how you begin and then my dad actually moved us directly into the all black neighborhood because people weren't doing well with that and he thought well I'm going to make myself marginalized and my family and put them in the middle that was an interesting experiment in Birmingham, Alabama we had some really good experience like good and bad as a family doing that all on your own

I probably wouldn't recommend that we did one year and then we went back but I as a kid I'm incredibly grateful now looking back on being able to grow up with one I think my home being a place where that happens so where you engage people of all walks in your home and two just that you do that that you think of how do I live this out in a different way and certainly my dad did that from the get-go because of his faith and so we as kids have learned that but then as I grew up I went to Regent College and lived in a community house and so one of the ways that I think you begin to one tip is to kind of think of knocking on or going against some of the norms of culture so one of the norms of culture is that you all live in your family in your own home and that that is your own home and so mine had already been knocked from growing up with my home being quite open and so when I went to Regent I lived in a community home and that's a way of interacting with people in your daily life you learn how to share, how to cook meals, how to fight and so community can be a way of helping you do that and I've lived in a community for most of my adult life when Erin and I got married we chose to live by ourselves for one year to be married and learn how to be married not that you learned to do that in one year and then we moved back into a community house and have lived with people most of our marriage now when we have our third child we ran out of space and so we have, we live in our home and then for the last four to five years we've invited refugee families to live in our suite and engage kind of how do we invite refugee families into our home and that's been a whole new realm of how do you do this with people who don't know anything about this country or English and so that's been a really good new but living in your home and knocking on things that seem

[39 : 53] I mean inviting people in your home but knocking on what might be the norm so for the norm is this is your immediate family and you don't, you kind of put walls around that so for me that's been a place of I can do this here and that's somewhat safe for me now so get your feet wet one of the ways that I learned to slowly take steps was Jacob's Well so if you're thinking, not that I want everyone to run to Jacob's Well but it is a great place to learn I remember the first time I went, so I started in 2004 at Jacob's Well and what Jacob's Well does is build relationship so the core is you just learn to get to know each other and you're building relationships with everyone and they, when I was going we would go and visit because you build relationship with, but then people get sick or they're having a rough week and so they're housebound and so we would go and visit them and so my first visit was to, and you go in pairs or threes or groups because we learn from one another and how everyone does it and so I went with this woman who had been a part of Jacob's Well for a long time and we showed up and the building outside was a disaster like things being torn down, elevator didn't work so we had to get up and walk up floors of stinky steps and a lot of people can't walk up steps and so when an elevator is broken, which it frequently was in this building those people ended up being housebound because they couldn't use their elevator so this woman was one of those and she, so we knocked on the door and she said, come in and she was a lovely First Nations woman and so I, of course, this was my first visit and I'm, kitty, she's laying, it's a studio, like there's no rooms she's on her bed in the middle of the room

I'm slightly uncomfortable by that because you don't normally walk in with someone in the bed and so automatically you acknowledge, like, okay, this is different this is not what I'm used to when I go visit someone normally we go and we have a nice conversation over coffee or tea and this was, I'm meeting you in your bed and, but she was wonderful and so she shared, and then my next, like, round of, oh gosh, what do I do with this is she had had a smudging ceremony the night before because she's ill and she's trying to, for First Nations, smudging is a way of kind of clearing and so she asked if we wanted to be, like, a piece of that because it was still, you know, so this was a piece of bark and what looked like incense and so for me, everything went up again like, oh gosh, this is like a cultish thing, can I do this?

where will this go? You know, I'm not saying that but this is what's going on all those fears and anxieties and is this right or wrong is what goes on and so I just took cues from the person who was with me because that's what you do, you learn from those who have done it before and she, she actually said, oh, feel free to do this or not and I said, okay, I don't think I will this time but she had been around that community for a long time and so she said, I'm happy to do this with you and so they did that and they talked and so then watching her just have conversation like, how you ask conversations so I learned a lot about like, everyone just wants to have normal conversations we're all, it's not a special conversation that you have it's, it's the conversation about your family it's the conversation about the weather it's like, everyone wants those conversations so for me, it was like, oh, oh yeah, that's what you talk about you, you bring your life and they bring their life and you talk about it like you do with your friend when you go have coffee or tea and if you don't know how to do that our friend Tanya back here is one of the best conversations she could talk to a wall, I promise you she's amazing, if I ever have to, because I'm still learning how to do that well it doesn't come super naturally just to start conversations with anyone she can do it, go with her on like, just a walk around the neighborhood she'll teach you how to talk to people, it's amazing but, so, and then, in the end, we always ask if people want prayer and that's one of the major things with Jacob's Well is that prayer, and that you invite people into prayer and you invite people before Jesus together and I've never been a part where people turn prayer down that's never happened to me in my 16 years at Jacob's Well most people actually would love prayer and so, even if they are not people of faith blatantly, they'll want prayer and want to be a part of prayer and so, that was my first Jacob's Well interaction and there's been many, but you do

I think part of that is learning how to and you were talking about this earlier what comes up, and how you interact with it and part of it is doing it together that's a huge part of Jacob's Well is you learn together, in community, how you do these things you don't just always do it on your own although I think sometimes you do have to do it on your own so that's one, or get your feet wet do it, even if it, and Jacob's Well is a great place to get your feet wet there are plenty of places to get your feet wet I'll give two more things because I know we want to have question and answer and another one is the willingness to suspend your agenda or your values in order to engage other this is a really hard one for me because I really like efficiency and I really like competency and so to slow down and have conversation that might go slower than I want it to go and might not be about what I want it to be is hard and so I've had to learn the beauty of allowing conversation to go at the pace that it can go and at about what it can be about and at about what it can be about has been, because there's beauty in that and so tasting that has been good for me but it's still hard because I really want to get things done

One of the examples of this right now is our, so we have, our dryer's broken and it has been for like six months and we're just kind of waiting to get it fixed but that means that we have to use the downstairs dryer which is open to the family that's living down there and every time I go down there she opens the door and says do you want to come have some tea?

[46 : 25] They're from Syria, they've been here five months His English is quite well, quite good, but hers isn't but no matter what, and they have little kids so the kids get along like a house on fire, it's great but it's been one of the beauties of having kids and watching kids do this so much better than we do because they don't have those same inhibitions so I've learned a lot from my kids on how to do this well but so now when I have to be uncomfortable when I do my laundry because I know that question of do you want to come have tea?

and it ruins my day because I'm ready to get my laundry done and get the rest of my list done and it means that I have to be willing to say what can I, how can I sit?

even if it's for five minutes and be present to someone who has no one being present to her right now and is incredibly uncomfortable and it's been a great joy like she, it's been really wonderful for me not just because I am doing something for her but because in the midst of it I slow down and I get to see Jesus show up in our conversation and I get to be a part of something that's not all about me and my day which is sanctification 101 for me so those are some stories and some little tips of be willing to be uncomfortable engage your discomfort like Jacqueline said like ask yourself why does this feel?

what's going on for me? be attentive to it sometimes it is your body giving you healthy boundaries so I'm not saying blow those off but be attentive to it and learn together I'll give one more example I know a church it's led by women down in San Diego and they have, what do they call it?

got it, oh they have a dinner I think it's like guess who's coming to dinner and it's a dinner that they set up so you don't know who's coming to your table but someone sets it up where you know there's differences that are going to interact and so you eat purposefully uncomfortably with people that might have differing views come from different cultures and that will make an awkward moment I guarantee you it will be awkward and it might be brutal and it might be hard but again you take baby steps and you learn okay, how do we do conversation around the table when we don't know what we have in common but you find what you have in common and you find how do we talk about our differences in a healthy way in a way that honors Christ how do we do this well and so this church sets up those dinners purposefully to practice how we do hospitality how do we welcome how do we engage parts that are hard for us to cross over those lines and so there's lots of different ways you can do that as a church and I hope that we get to we have like three minutes so we wanted to have question and answer but I also can I take one minute

[49 : 45] I want to take one minute where you just stop and are quiet and ask what at this moment after hearing different stories what might God be asking you to engage in your own life right now whether it's do I need to be attentive to someone in my work that God's been kind of prodding me and so it means that I ask them out to lunch because even though it could be an awkward lunch but I need to learn to do this or do I need to join something that will help me take little steps or do I just need to practice being on the outside and so hang on once again so let's take one minute listen and see if there's any people that come to mind or things that you can do right now in your own life that to engage what God might be calling you to right now and then we'll have question and answer and then we'll have to answer at all our of this

Okay. I know we wanted a little bit of space for questions. So if anyone has questions, we'll give it maybe, I know we're over time, but five minutes.

No, no, you're not over time. Oh, we're not? Usually we go until about 10 for talking and then we have 10 or so minutes. Oh, great. Oh, nice. Great. So, questions. And everyone answer these. I already do what you guys do anyways, the lady in the back, but I'd love to be, I see like a Roman Catholic nut in me.

I am not. We know a living. That's interesting. But sometimes the worst groups for treating that are churches and Christians.

For sure. If you've had a divorce or something like that. Yeah. You get your own relatives and, or if you have relatives from a perfectionistic family. Yeah.

[52 : 30] Oh my God. Yeah. And those are sometimes the worst ones to deal with. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. What do you do, eh? Yeah. Yeah.

In reference to boundaries, if people who are marginalized, you know, it's different for me, unsavory, and unsavory impression, if they just come up and talk with me, what have I learned? They're not doing it for the fun of it.

Because they're not compatible. Mm-hmm. It's either to take advantage of me, if they can, and or harass me. Mm-hmm. You know, conversation that's unwanted in and of itself, or annoying opinions, annoying demeanor.

Uh, maybe point, knowing me pointless arguments, requests, or annoying requests, you know. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. And, I guess that's maybe guarded, and, plus, you know, maybe I've tried to help such people without success.

Mm-hmm. Not a natural social worker, and, by any means, and some other handicaps. Mm-hmm. Also, you're dealing with people who aren't open. Mm-hmm. Yeah.

[53 : 33] That's a really great point, and I think a lot of us have really healthy ways to gain social interaction in our lives. So, maybe we have a family that we live with or interact with on a regular basis.

Maybe we have coworkers that we have good relationships with. Mm-hmm. And, a lot of folks actually have nobody. Mm-hmm. And, so, oftentimes, you'll get, particularly in the neighborhood where I live and work, a lot of folks live on their own and have very few healthy interactions in their day.

Mm-hmm. And, so, you're far more likely to have an interaction with that individual because they're seeking connection. Wow. And, so, when an individual is completely void of, you know, people and situations in their life where their need for relationship and connection is being filled, oftentimes, that can be sought after in ways that break social conventions, right?

So, those seemingly, why are you talking to me? We have nothing, you know, like, why are we having this interaction right now? Yeah. So, in my experience, oftentimes, somebody is seeking connection. And, a lot of us, if we've had particularly difficult lives, a lot of people living with the after effects of trauma, the level of social skill to engage in a healthy way to meet that need of connection is quite limited.

And, so, I think my strategy is to assume the good intention of the other person. Yeah. To maintain my boundaries, to be like, really, right now, there's nothing that I can give you except to be present with you.

[55 : 10] Mm-hmm. So, I'm not gonna try and solve your problems. Yeah. I'm not gonna try and give you anything other than to listen to you with compassion and openness to see, you know, if you fit, if you actually, tangibly ask me for something, it's okay to say no.

For me to say, I don't think I can do that for you. I'm sorry you're having a rough day. But, just to be present, to listen, and to look somebody in the eye, and recognize that they are a human being trying to get a need met. Um, and it's okay that, you know, I can say no.

You know, I think that's the... I mean, I don't suspect this, because that's not my way. Yeah. If you don't, or guilty of ourselves, you tend to assume others are innocent. It's just what I've heard through the grapevine.

Yes. From those same people. Yes. Yeah, and that, you know, yeah. Yeah, yeah, thanks for bringing that up. Can I just also add to that, of, yeah, I think it also takes a lot of discernment, and, like, listening to the Holy Spirit, what is happening in your heart, and also to ask, like, oh, why am I acting this way?

Why am I annoyed? Because I'm really busy, and I can't handle it right now. And, um, also honoring yourself, but also honoring the other person, because they're also made in the image of God, too, and they have things to offer.

[56 : 18] Um, so, I think, in that posture of, like, mutual, like, relationship, and, yeah, like, having a listening presence, because maybe they don't have that presence right now for them.

So, I think, discerning what is the Holy Spirit, like, working in you in the moment, and to, like, be listening as you interact with the person. Someone did write a poem that ended with, and he who suffers most has most to give.

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Yeah. Something more I would add on that. Um, uh, so, by contrast, a lot of the folks who, um, I've hung out with at Jacob's Well, like, I feel like I actually received more from them in terms of hospitality than, than I managed to give, a lot of them are, are very gracious at, at, at, like, drawing me in, making me feel welcome with them.

Mm-hmm. Um, which is actually a real need, I, I feel in that context. So, um, yeah, so it's also, like, even if the, the folks who are, like, reaching out, um, uh, are making you feel uncomfortable, that doesn't necessarily apply to all of the inhabitants of the neighborhood.

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Yeah. I, I just wanted to say, I really appreciated your talk, and I, there are so many points I could say that have been really helpful to me, but one is just recognizing my own culture.

[57 : 39] Mm-hmm. So, when you say, to be able to say to someone, I'm sorry, I just, you know, I don't think I can, that's really hard for me. Yeah. Right? Because I'm in a position where I always feel that I, if a person asks you a question, you have to answer it.

Mm-hmm. If a person asks you for something, you have to, have a reason to say no. To just be able to be, to listen, like, that is a gift, and to be able to say to that person, I hear you, it's, it's, it's a real stretch.

Mm-hmm. And I think for a lot of us that grow up in a Christian community, we have so much to learn about, Jesus wasn't just handing out money, or he wasn't, you know, buying everybody meals. Mm-hmm.

And maybe, gosh, that's just, like, so much for me to, to think about. I really appreciate it. Mm-hmm. I just, like, the comment you made about making assumptions about people. Mm-hmm. I remember being terrified on a train in Paris, because I'm getting further and further out towards my hotel, which I didn't know where it was, and there's a sketchy looking guy with long hair by the door.

And I get up to my stop, and I realize it's an old lock. I, I don't know how to open it. And I'm, you know, vibrating. And the man jumps up and helps me with my bag and opens the door, and I went, oh, yeah, okay.

[58 : 46] I'm just there. It's so easy. Yeah. It's great. I really like your comment on feeling like you have to try to meet somebody else's needs, because I think that's, I agree that I think a lot of us were raised that if somebody asks for help, you help them.

And we, I think, are also raised to believe that we should never ask for help. Yeah. So if somebody actually does ask for help, it means they really do need it, because they've broken that whole, like, you don't ask other people for help thing.

Mm-hmm. So when you're, when you're interacting with somebody who very readily asks things of you, because of their own life circumstance, you know, you might have an interaction with an individual who, every second sentence they're asking something of you.

Mm-hmm. I think it's very uncomfortable if you're raised in that mindset of, anytime somebody asks something of you, you give it. Mm-hmm. Because it feels like now you are in the wrong for saying no, whereas actually exerting a healthy boundary and still remaining present with an individual is a really healthy thing.

Yeah. So thanks for bringing that up. Mm-hmm. Yeah. And then I think, too, I think what Tom is touching on, too, that, that, yeah, knowing that we don't need to meet people's needs and being friends with them, but also recognizing that they, they may be able to meet your needs and that they're, these friendships can be really mutually beneficial in a way that I think we don't anticipate.

[60 : 15] Mm-hmm. I was, a couple of years ago, I went on vacation to Hawaii with some friends and we just had this amazing time and flew back in and the next day went to Jacob's Well and I was like, oh, like, I don't want to tell them about this.

Like, so many of these folks are never going to be able to go to Hawaii and like, what a luxury to have this vacation. And so I kind of like snuck in and was like, you know, people ask me how my week was and I was like, oh yeah, it's good.

But this one woman, our friend Val, sat down with me and, and I told her, you know, the reason for my tan. And, and she was like, do you have any pictures?

And I was like, well, I haven't like gone through, I have like 642 on my phone. And she was like, I want to see them. And she sat with me and like, we went through like 600.

I mean, I, I skipped through a bunch, but, but she had this, she had the gift of time and she loved me in that way. And, you know, my friends who are, um, more like me and have more buttons in their hand don't, didn't necessarily have that time to sit and, and listen to me and, and look at my pictures and talk about my trip.

[61 : 28] And so that was just one example for me of ways that these friendships can really be meaningful for us too. Yeah. Yeah. I just wanted to comment on that story and that is, that might be the only trip she takes is the one that you share with her.

Hmm. Yeah, maybe, uh, mm-hmm. I think you're uniquely placed in a way to go beyond the boundaries that would apply to some of the professional people that they are dealing with in their lives.

Mm-hmm. You know, that, um, because the professional people will all be there because of a certain role relating to a certain need, usually. Mm-hmm.

And if you are the person who might have to help them be a better parent or recognize that they can't do that and there are children here that need to be rescued, then it's really difficult to get at the level that you're talking about.

Mm-hmm. And if you are the nurse that has to, you know, make sure that the bed bugs don't leave and that they have immunization and that they're not spreading their germs around the community, it's hard to sit down and have a cup of tea and talk about your holiday, you know.

[62 : 38] Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. It's, um, there are things that would prevent others from going in the directions that you are able to bridge and I think that's great. Mm-hmm. I really love that comment and I think one of the unique things about, um, the communities that we're involved with, with certain partners and servants and Jacob's Well, is that they're relational ministries, they're based on being in mutually transformative relationships and so most, um, Christian organizations in the downtown Eastside specifically but also a lot of outreach organizations are service providers which are really needed.

Um, you know, we need housing, we need showers, we need clothing, we need food, but it is a client-service provider relationship that is not mutual. There is a power imbalance there. Mm-hmm.

Um, so that's not at all what we're talking about here. Today we're talking about how do we include people who are in our midst in our personal lives, which is really hindered, I used to be a public school teacher and I'm not sure that's not a public school teacher and I would have some of my students in foster care and I just wanted to like wrap them in my arms and bring them home with me, you know, and there was really strict boundaries over my relationship with those students and I found that really difficult.

Um, and so there's, those roles are important and those boundaries are important in those types of clinical relationships. So I think that, um, what we're talking about today is, is very separate, um, from those types of clinical relationships and I'm really glad you brought that up.

Yeah. Okay, next question. You know what, I think, uh, it's, I notice about you and how you do it, learning how to not let things have power over you. Mm-hmm.

[64 : 11] Learning how to stay calm inside. I deal with the same thing as you guys, but working on that, and ways in which to work on that. Mm-hmm. And sometimes escaping into the forest for a couple of hours and coming home.

Mm-hmm. Then, that's just as important as when you're working. Absolutely. Could I just have one question? Oh, okay, only because it's you. Uh, it's very interesting for me to see in number three, Christ's needs, water and rest.

Mm-hmm. And, you know, it, that really struck me because I, I never thought of him being needy in any shape or form. Yeah. Because he's who he is.

Yeah. So that was, that's a really interesting takeaway. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Unfortunately. Not as a one. Oh! I just think that not only downtown east side people, they are living on a marginal society.

Yeah. Also downtown west side people. Mm-hmm. Um, they are also living in a marginal society through professional experience. I noticed, I work for a financial institute and a long, long time ago I started my career as a talent.

[65 : 28] Mm-hmm. And you can notice so many people who are retired, maybe age like 65 plus. They live by themselves in the downtown west side, like West End.

They have nobody to talk with. Mm-hmm. The only people who can talk is during the daytime is the bank teller. Mm-hmm. They come in the morning to withdraw some money for their breakfast, then come back.

Mm-hmm. And for the lunch money. Mm-hmm. They get the money. Mm-hmm. They get the money. They get the money. They just want to use the opportunity to talk to that teller. Mm-hmm.

And one real example is this lady. Mm-hmm. And, uh, she put one of the teller's name on her way instead of her children. And she said, my children, I hardly see them.

But the teller is the one who interacts with me with my daily life. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. That's awesome. So, on that note, like, one of the things I think that's beautiful is encouraging all of us to stop in the different places we are.

[66 : 37] You don't have to go to the downtown inside. And ask God to continue to reveal, who am I missing? Like, walk around your neighborhood.

Walk around where you live. God, what do you want me to see? Who do you want me to see? How do you want me to see places that, walls that we build, or places that you want me to invite?

Um, God will show up. Yeah. He will show you. Yes, definitely. In your own neighborhood. Yeah. Because in Europe, like, Mesopotamia, France, they get rid of the tellers many, many years ago.

And they replaced the teller with ATM. With ATM. Mm-hmm. So, Canada, we still cannot have the tellers. Yeah. They are ideas to get rid of the tellers. Yeah.

But our point is, this is not just a transaction. Yeah. Yeah. It's like a customer service. Mm-hmm. Yeah. Yeah. It's a fascinating topic.

[67 : 36] Yeah. But, uh, I just, I think you'll all join me in thanking them for a fascinating talk in the program. I've been going to come here to come here too. Right. Okay. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, I love you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. You're going to come here today. Thank you.