

Initial Steps

Intro:

This week is looking at initial steps, it's about encountering Jesus and starting the journey with Him.

Too often we can end up more focussed on what Jesus has saved us from and we stop there, Jesus is more focussed on what He has saved us into.

Hebrews 12:2 NIV² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

The joy set before Him was you, was me, was enabling us to have an intimate relationship with God.

Watchman Nee puts it this way:

“Mans thought is always of the punishment that will come to him if he sins. God's thought is always of the glory man will miss if he sins. God's purpose for redemption is glory, glory, glory.” Watchman Nee

God loves you, He has amazing plans for your life. He wants to reveal His goodness, His intimacy, His glory to you. He wants to reveal His goodness, His glory through you!

Do you actually believe this?? AMEN

In His amazing love God sent His son Jesus over 2000 years ago to die to take the punishment of all sins past present and future.

Why? Because he love you and want intimate relationship with you! The price has already been paid for all sins to be forgiven. Now He is not thinking about punishment, He is thinking about how much of His goodness and glory He can share with you! He's thinking about and longing for intimacy with us!

There's a story I want to share which shows how Jesus goes out of His way to not judge and condemn, but to invite, to welcome and to love.

[John 4:1-42](#)

It says in vs 4 Jesus had to go through Samaria - this was not geographical as Jesus could have bypassed going through Samaria - many Jews would have bypassed. Jesus had to go through because He had a mission, He had His Fathers purpose to fulfil.

Jesus cuts across cultural barriers

race - Samaritan/Jew relationship gender - female in a male dominated society - rejected and ostracised/excluded from her own society - going to the well (41m 135ft) at the 6th hr (midday when hottest) - Explain from African perspective - didn't want to be around other local women - also put her in vulnerable position as alone so no protection from being in group

Jesus comes in humility - doesn't come demanding, doesn't lord it over the woman, He instead invites her into relationship, asks her for water and shows tiredness, shows weakness and vulnerability,

Jesus however has something to offer - living water - water bring life to dry land (Africa wet season - around stream)

Holy Spirit

[Isaiah 44:3](#) For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.

Offers it whilst already knowing who she was! - doesn't expect her to be perfect before she can receive.

Reveals he knows her without condemning her

Show spokenwordwoman.mpg 4mins30

“To be loved but not known is comforting but superficial. To be known and not loved is our greatest fear. But to be fully known and truly loved is, well, a lot like being loved by God. It is what we need more than anything. It liberates us from pre-tense, humbles us out of our self-righteousness, and fortifies us for any difficulty life can throw at us.” Timothy J. Keller

Jeremiah 1:5a Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart;

Psalms 139:1-4 1 You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. 2 You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. 3 You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. 4 Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely. 17 How amazing are your thoughts concerning me, God! How vast is the sum of them! 18 Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand— when I awake, I am still with you.

God knows us fully, who we are, what we have done, the good the bad the ugly... yet still loves us completely.

He sees us, He knows us, He loves us

John 3:16-17 16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to **condemn** the world, but to save the world through him.

Yes, God did not send Jesus into the world to condemn anyone

God motivated by love sent Jesus to pay the price for the bad stuff we have done on the cross so we could enter back into relationship with him.

It is only from a place of intimate relationship with God that we can start to see life differently, that we can start to see that God's plans and ways are for us and not against us, will give us greater freedom and contentment than we have ever experienced, will give us a new identity and purpose for life.

This is why in the bible to the woman caught in adultery that Jesus said:

John 8:11 NIV ¹¹ "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

Jesus isn't condemning the woman for her past, but He does want her to lead a life going forward which is a life of freedom, a life which includes God. AMEN

Now if we accept Jesus we can receive his living water, His Holy Spirit and through the Holy Spirit experience this close loving relationship with God.

For the woman at the well who went through men looking for acceptance and love, she at last found true acceptance and love in Jesus.

Her response was both joy and a desire to tell everyone she knew.

End:

Do you feel condemned by other people

Do you feel isolated in any way - that you don't quite fit in

Do you feel weighed down by guilt for things in the past

Are you seeking true acceptance and love

Do you want to be known and loved by God?

Today you can take that initial step of receiving the free gift from Jesus

If you already know God, has time passed and other stuff got in. Has the spring of water welling up just become a small trickle, have you started to get thirsty for more of God's Spirit?

We all need more of God's Spirit, we all need to know Him more

Let's pray.