

Will You Give Me A Drink? – John 4:5-15

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Okay, football fans, you know who Tom Osborne is: former coach of the University of Nebraska. One of the dominant powers in college football in the 70s, 80s, and 90s. His teams won 3 national titles during that time. He's the General Neyland or Johnny Majors of Nebraska.

Church attendance is down in Nebraska these days like it is everywhere else. But the worshipping of Tom Osborne has not waned. He continues to maintain almost-divine status throughout the state. That's because he's done so many good things for the state beyond beyond.

Many years ago, he started a mentoring program called Teammates. The program matched at-risk kids with adult volunteers who would spend time with them during the school day—helping them with homework or just chatting about their life and encouraging them amid their own challenges.

The church I served in Nebraska has an annual spaghetti dinner in the spring that raises money for the local Teammates program (or least it did).

One year, we invited Tom Osborne to come and speak at the dinner. And he agreed to come. Needless to say, the crowd that night was the biggest we had had. And I got to spend a few minutes with him before I introduced him that evening.

And it was an interesting conversation we had. He did not at all want to talk about football. Didn't really even let me go there with him. Instead, he couldn't stop inquiring about my family and the church I served. "Tell me about your kids. What does your wife do? How's the congregation? So grateful for all you've done for Teammates. How can we be more supportive of your volunteers?"

I'm like, "Wait. What? I should be the one fawning over you and begging you for ways in which we can help you and your program. But you're asking me all these questions? You're asking us for assistance?"

He was the celebrity. He was the one who helped bring so much joy to thousands of Nebraskans. He was the one we should've been bowing down to in gratitude. Yet, he was the one humbling himself before us. A man of faith, Tom Osborne wasn't afraid to make himself vulnerable before others.

In effect, he was imitating Jesus here in John 4. He was pretty much asking, "Will you give me a drink?"

Jesus meets this woman from Samaria at the well, Jacob's well as it turns out. It's the well, we're told, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. And this woman from Samaria comes to the well to draw water, and Jesus asks her for a drink.

Everything he risks by speaking with her—crossing cultural, religious, and social lines—demonstrates his willingness to be vulnerable. When he asks for what he needs, he shows that even he can't make it alone.

"Will you give me a drink?"

Jesus asking for a drink...What does this say to us?

First, it highlights how human Jesus was. He was thirsty. And who among us has never been thirsty to the point where we have had to ask somebody else to help alleviate our thirst?

It reveals our dependency. It says to the rest of the world, "I can't do this alone."

Within our culture or society, we often bemoan people who seem to need help all the time. It seems like they can never make it without somebody giving them something. A handout, we want to call it. Free stuff. Them wanting somebody to do for them what they should be able to do for themselves.

Yeah, there's cases of this. But when most people are vulnerable enough to ask for help, they're doing it with great reservation. They want to be self-sufficient. It probably pains them greatly to ask for help. But they do it because, at that moment, they can't do it by themselves. They can't make it without somebody's assistance, wisdom, or compassion.

And it's a courageous thing to ask somebody to help you when you're doing all you can to avoid it.

Jesus, the son of God, asked for help.

And he did so from a Samaritan woman! Samaritans and Jews didn't have anything in common, supposedly. They were from different parts of town, believers in different gods, from different rungs on the economic ladder, and hung around different classes of people.

They weren't to associate, much less ask each other for help. But Jesus and this woman find themselves next to each other displaying their common humanity—the need for water. And Jesus humbles himself enough to ask her for some of what she was taking from that well.

He was human. And he was dependent.

Funny thing, too. In his humanity, which revealed his dependency, something crazy happens in this story. His encounter with the woman bonds them and sets the stage for this woman's transformation.

Without him asking her for a drink, she wouldn't have been set to receive the living water Jesus talked about. Turns out, she's thirsty too. And it was for more than what that well promised.

Jesus revealing his humanity, his dependency on others, set up this encounter and, hence, a bond with this woman. Only his willingness to be vulnerable with somebody else caused another person to be greatly blessed.

Isn't there a lesson there for us? Jesus' example should show us how our vulnerability might lead us to connect with someone in a way that changes both our lives. Presenting ourselves humbly to another and showing our need can unlock a door to the person providing for us being changed as well.

As a pastor, there are moments when I know how hard it is for someone to come to me for help. They, like Jesus at the well, just can't find water to quench their thirst without asking for somebody to give them a drink. And so, when they come to me for a drink, they're at the end of their rope most times. They don't want to ask but they have nobody else to turn to.

I can't think of a time when I've had somebody come to me and I thought, "Oh no, there comes so and so again." I don't think it's ever happened, frankly.

I never tire of somebody approaching me for something they need. That's because I'm always eager to help, but it's also because their seeking counsel or comfort from me ends up blessing me two or three times over. I learn something from them, or am inspired by them, or feel a deeper sense of community with them in their asking.

And in turn, I'm more likely to seek another's assistance too. I'm more likely to feel vulnerable, I'm more likely to depend on somebody—who in turn will hopefully do the same in their time of need.

Our vulnerability, our willingness to ask for a drink, bonds us together in ways our confidence, self-sufficiency, and pride might not.

Lauren Wright Pittman's painting, titled "Living Water," depicts Jesus and the woman at the well together. And as you look at it, you can't escape the mutual bond they have formed at the well. With each of their hands open to the other's, they demonstrate how one's willingness to ask opened the door for the other to express a need.

His need for a basic necessity—and his willingness to ask for it—allowed her to hear about and receive something even more life-giving.

It all started with a question: Will you give me a drink? Will you help me?

Jesus was willing to ask for help. It's what got the ball rolling on this incredible gift he gave to the Samaritan woman. And it's a question we all have to answer once in a while: Are we willing to ask for help?

A father watched his son try to lift a heavy stone. He failed with each attempt. After some time, his father came by and asked, "Are you using all your strength?" "Yes!" the boy cried. His father looked at him and said, "No, you are not, I am here waiting, and you haven't asked for my help."

It takes strength to ask for assistance. Jesus did. We should. And when we all do, living water is given and received.