

FPFWC Christian Development



Called from the Margins of Society

March 2023

Spring Quarter

March 18, 2023

Lesson #3 – Jesus Talks with a Samaritan

SCRIPTURE TEXT – John 4:7-15, 28-30, 39-41

ICE BREAKERS-

1. How is the world's need for salvation and eternal life like "thirst"?
2. How can you become more open to Spirit-led opportunities to share Christ?

Key Verse: "Many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did."—John 4:39

LESSON BACKGROUND –

The Gospel of John was written later than those of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, probably in the AD 80s or 90s. The Apostle John likely wrote his Gospel from Ephesus, according to long-held church tradition. John's authorship is established primarily by his identification as the beloved disciple (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20, 24; see lessons 7 and 8).

As our text in John 4 begins, Jesus and His disciples had left Judaea and were heading to Galilee (John 4:3), where He made the headquarters of His ministry (Matthew 4:13–16). For this journey, Jesus chose not to take one of two longer routes in order to avoid Samaria (John 4:4), as some Jews would do (compare and contrast Luke 9:51–53; 17:11). Samaria was the central region of what had been the kingdom of Israel, with Judaea to the south and Galilee to the north. Travel between Jerusalem and the region of Galilee would take about three days on the reliable Roman roads that ran through Samaria.

LESSON COMMENTARY

4:7–8. It was customary in Jewish culture for women to draw water (Ex 2:16) and do it in the evening (Gn 24:11). That this immoral **woman of Samaria** came **to draw water** at noon by herself may suggest her intention to maintain anonymity. Jesus, now without His disciples (v. 8), initiated the conversation, opening with a question. Believers must take the initiative in evangelistic conversations, and questions are often the place to begin. The **disciples** were **to buy food** (v. 8; cf. the cost of discipleship in Lk 14:26–33), in contrast to the woman who will be offered the free gift of "living water" (eternal life, v. 10).

4:9. The **Samaritan woman** was amazed that Jesus spoke to her since (1) in that culture men did not talk to women, especially unknown women; and (2) **Jews have no dealings with Samaritans** (a comment by John and not the woman).

Tradition taught that taking a drink from a vessel handled by a Samaritan woman would make Jesus ceremonially unclean. In reality, the water Jesus wanted to give the woman would make her spiritually and eternally clean.

4:10. Jesus gave the woman three conditions for gaining “living water”: she needed to (1) know the free **gift** of eternal life that **God** gives; (2) know the identity of Jesus, the One who gives this gift on behalf of God; and (3) to ask Jesus for it (i.e., to believe in him). That Jesus claims to be the source of living water indicates that he viewed Himself as the God of the OT and the Messiah (Ps 36:9; Jr 2:13; 17:13).

4:11–12. Nicodemus and the woman both confused spiritual truths with physical realities. How could this unknown Jewish man be **greater than** their patriarch **Jacob** (v. 12)? And how could the water-gift He gives be greater than the **well** Jacob gave that watered even **his cattle**? The woman’s questions reflect her skepticism (the Greek construction of the question **You are not greater than our father Jacob, are you?** anticipates a negative response). Like so many others, the woman did not recognize who Jesus was (1:10, 26, 31, 33).

4:13–14. Jesus contrasted the temporal satisfaction of physical water that needs to be drunk repeatedly with the permanent, eternal satisfaction of the **water** He will give (v. 14). The one who drinks just once of the water (i.e., believes) Jesus gives will **never thirst** again because it **will become in him a perpetual well** (*pege*, an active “spring”) **of water springing up to eternal life**. The Greek word, “springing up” (*hallomai*), is used of the lame “leaping” after being healed (Ac 3:8; 14:10).

4:15–16. The woman asked for **this water**, **so** that she would **not be thirsty nor come all the way** to the well **to draw** water again. The woman’s request was more to gain earthly contentment and convenience than eternal life (cf. 6:34). She had knowledge of the coming Messiah (vv. 25, 29). Jesus’ response (v. 16), **Go, call your husband**, is designed ultimately to lead her to identify Him as the Messiah (cf. v. 39).

4:28–30. In the joy of her discovery, she **left her waterpot** to go **into the city**. That Jesus **told her all the things that she had done** (v. 29) was for the Samaritans the supernatural knowledge of the coming Messiah (v. 25). Her hesitancy (**this is not the Christ, is it?**) was because she needed to be cautious as a woman “teaching” men. By her testimony, the Samaritans started **coming to Him** (v. 30), both physically and spiritually.

4:39–40. **From that city** (Sychar, v. 5) specifies **many of the Samaritans** who **believed in Him**. When Philip later visited the area (Ac 8), many more Samaritans believed, likely because of the impact made by John the Baptist and Jesus before him. When a pastor enjoys great success, he and his congregation need to recognize that much of the credit is due to those who came before him and prayed and worked.

In contrast to Nicodemus (see comment on 3:9), the Samaritan woman boldly testified about Christ. With divine omniscience, Jesus had described **all the things that** the woman had **done**. At the request of the **Samaritans** (v. 40), Jesus stayed

two days in Sychar. Perhaps He stayed at the Samaritan woman's home (cf. Ac 16:14–15).

4:41–42. The wisdom of Jesus' decision to stay in Sychar became evident: **Many more believed because of His word.** God's Word is the stimulus to faith (Rm 10:17; Gl 3:2, 5). The woman's reward (cf. v. 36) was to hear from those to whom she witnessed, now witnesses of their own faith. To **believe** in Christ is to **know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world.** The words "Savior of the world" include Gentiles.

LESSON NUGGET – Because Jesus was truly human, He experienced weariness, hunger, and thirst, but His deepest desire was for the salvation of the sinful woman. He forgot His physical needs and concentrated on her spiritual needs. Patiently He revealed Himself to her: "a Jew", "greater than Jacob", "a prophet", "Messiah". She believed in Him, and her life was so changed that she immediately shared the good news with others.

Sources: *Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, Wiersbe Study Bible and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary*