

JESUS AND THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

John 4:1-54

STRUCTURE

Key-person: Jesus

Key-location: Sychar in Samaria

Key-repetitions:

- Worship in spirit and truth: true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth (Jn 4:23). God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and truth" (Jn 4:24).
- Believe/faith: Jesus said, "Believe me, woman" (Jn 4:21); many Samaritans believed in Jesus because of the Samaritan woman's testimony (Jn 4:39); more believe because of Jesus' words (Jn 4:41).
- Water: water from the well (Jn 4:13); water Jesus gives (Jn 4:14); spring of water (Jn 4:14); living water (Jn 4:10, 11).
- Drink/drank: Jesus asked the woman for a drink (Jn 4:7); the woman asked how could Jesus, a Jew, ask her for a drink (Jn 4:9); Jacob drank from the well (Jn 4:12); everyone who drinks water from the well will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks Jesus' water will never thirst (Jn 4:13-14).
- Thirst/thirsty: Everyone who drinks water from the well will thirst again (Jn 4:13); whoever drinks water Jesus gives will never thirst (Jn 4:14); woman wanted water that would keep her from getting thirsty (Jn 4:15).
- Worship: Woman's ancestors worshiped on mountain; Jews worshiped in Jerusalem (Jn 4:20); time coming when people will neither worship on mountain nor in Jerusalem (Jn 4:21); Samaritans don't understand what they worship (Jn 4:22); Jews understand what they worship (Jn 4:22); true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth (Jn 4:23); Father seeks that kind of worshipers (Jn 4:23); worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth (Jn 4:24).
- Food/eat: Disciples went to town to buy food (Jn 4:8); disciples urged Jesus to eat (Jn 4:31); Jesus claimed to have food that the disciples didn't know about (Jn 4:31); disciples wondered if someone brought Jesus food (Jn 4:33); Jesus said his food was to do the will of the one who sent him (Jn 4:34).

Key-attitudes:

- Jesus' sensitivity with the Samaritan woman.
- Samaritan woman's feeling that when Jesus first spoke, he was trying to seduce her.
- Disciples' surprise when they saw Jesus talking with a woman.
- Disciples' confusion when Jesus told them he had food they didn't know about.
- Samaritan woman's excitement when she told the village people about Jesus.
- Confidence of many in the Samaritan village that Jesus really was the Savior of the world.

Initial-situation:

Jesus was unknown outside of his hometown of Nazareth when he began his first year of ministry. John the Baptist was popular.

Jesus began his public ministry at the Jordan River when John the Baptist baptized him. Jesus then went to the desert and resisted temptations from Satan. Jesus returned to where John the Baptist was preaching. John the Baptist told his disciples that Jesus was the “Lamb of God.” Two of John’s disciples followed Jesus, and they brought two more men to him. The four men went with Jesus to Cana, where he performed his first miracle by changing water to wine. Jesus then went to Jerusalem for the Jewish Passover. Nicodemus visited with Jesus at night.

After the conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside. Jesus knew that the Pharisees (*legalistic, self-righteous religious leaders*) heard that Jesus was baptizing more disciples than John the Baptist, so Jesus left Judea and went back to Galilee.

Initial-problem:

Jesus left Judea and went back to Galilee. This trip, Jesus had to go through Samaria.

Final-situation:

Many people in the Samaritan village believed that Jesus was the Savior of the world.

BIBLE STORY

Jesus left Judea and went back to Galilee. This trip, Jesus had to go through Samaria. (*Jews despised Samaritians because they were Jewish “half-breeds” whose ancestors intermarried with foreigners who worshiped other gods. Jews usually took the long road from Judea to Galilee in order to avoid taking the shortcut through Samaria.*) Jesus came to Sychar, a Samaritan town where there was a well that Jacob had dug. Jesus was tired from traveling and sat down by the well. Jesus’ disciples went into the town to buy food (Jn 4:1-6).

A Samaritan woman came to draw water from the well. It was about noon. (*It was customary for women to come to the well at sunup or sundown.*) Jesus asked the Samaritan woman, “Will you give me a drink of water?”

The woman replied, “You’re a Jew, and I’m a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink when Jews won’t have anything to do with Samaritans?”

Jesus answered her, “You don’t know what God gives. You don’t know who’s asking you for a drink. If you knew, you would’ve asked him, and he would’ve given you living water.”

The woman replied, “Sir, you don’t have a bucket to draw with. The well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who dug this well and drank from it himself?”

Jesus answered, "Every person who drinks this water will be thirsty again. Anyone who drinks the water I give him will never thirst again. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him an artesian spring of water gushing a fountain of eternal life."

The woman said, "Sir, give me this water. Then I won't ever get thirsty again and won't ever have to come back to this well again to draw water."

Jesus told her, "Go, fetch your husband and then come back."

She replied, "I don't have a husband."

Jesus told her, "You're right when you say you have no husband. You've had five husbands, and the man you have now isn't your husband. You spoke the truth."

The woman said, "Sir, I see that you're a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews insist that Jerusalem is the only place to worship."

Jesus declared, "Believe me, a time is coming when you will neither worship the Father on this mountain nor there in Jerusalem. You Samaritans don't understand what you worship. We Jews understand what we worship because salvation is made available through the Jews. The time is coming, it has now come when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. The Father seeks that kind of worshipers. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

The woman said, "I know that the Messiah, called Christ, is coming. When he comes, he'll explain everything to us."

Jesus declared, "I am he" (Jn 4:7-26).

Just then, Jesus' disciples returned; they were shocked to find Jesus talking with a woman. But no one asked Jesus, "What do you want from her?" or "Why are you talking with her?" (Jn 4:27).

The woman left her water jar and went back into the town. She told the people, "Come, meet a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" The Samaritans left town and made their way toward Jesus (Jn 4:28-30).

Meanwhile, his disciples urged Jesus, "Teacher, eat something."

Jesus answered, "I have food to eat that you don't know about."

His puzzled disciples asked each other, "Has someone brought him food?"

Jesus said, "My food is to do what the one who sent me wants me to do and to finish his work. As you look around, you would say, 'Four more months and then the harvest.' I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! It's harvest time! The harvester isn't waiting. Even now the reaper draws his wages, gathering in grain that's ripe for eternal life. The one who plants the seed and the one who harvests can celebrate together. The saying is true, 'Some plant the seed and others reap the harvest.' I sent you to harvest a field you never worked. Others have done the hard work, and you reap the benefits of their labor" (Jn 4:31-38).

Many Samaritans believed in Jesus because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." The Samaritans came to Jesus, urged him to stay with them, and Jesus stayed two days. Many more Samaritans believed in Jesus because of what they heard him say.

They told the woman, "We first believed in Jesus because of what you told us. Now we've heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world!" (Jn 4:39-42).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What did Jesus and the Samaritan woman say to each other?
2. Jesus crossed racial prejudice lines when he spoke to a Samaritan, and he violated Jewish tradition when he spoke to a woman about spiritual things. Why did Jesus violate the customs of his people and go through Samaria, and talk with a Samaritan woman?
3. Who are some people that Jesus wants to reach, but our community considers them as inferiors and outcasts?
4. How did the Samaritan woman desire to benefit from Jesus?
5. What kind of people does God desire to worship him?
6. How can we worship God in spirit and in truth?
7. If Jesus were to stop by your "watering hole" where you hang out, what do you think he would talk to you about?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **Jesus is omniscient.** Jesus has supernatural knowledge about people and events, without being informed (Jn 2:25). Jesus knew about the Samaritan woman's marital situation without being informed (Jn 4:17-19).
2. **Jesus is the source of living water for people's deep unsatisfied thirst.** The Samaritan woman had a thirst that was not satisfied by constantly swapping one man for another. Seeking to satisfy her thirst turned her into an outcast who came to the well at noon when she could avoid other women who came at sunrise or sunset. Jesus offered himself as the source for satisfying her thirst (Jn 4:10-14). This living water flows into eternal life, that consists of Christ himself living within a person in the form of the Holy Spirit (Jn 7:37-39).
3. **A double result comes from having within one's heart living water. Living water is a reference to the Holy Spirit. One result is interior and the other is exterior.**

- Internal results: the Holy Spirit continues refreshing and renewing the believer's spiritual life, as a spring gushing inside his heart, so that he never will thirst again (Jn 4:10).
 - External results: the Holy Spirit flows from the believer in Jesus, like an artesian well gushing forth a river of blessings to all who surround him, in order to satisfy the thirst of many (Jn 7:38).
4. **True worship is determined by attitude; it's not determined by location nor ceremonial rituals.** God is worshiped in spirit and in truth (Jn 4:23-24). God is spirit. He is not a physical being limited to one location; so he can be worshiped anywhere, anytime.
- Spirit: Worship depends upon the internal condition of one's heart and mind. It doesn't depend on external things such as location, ceremony, or rites.
 - Truth: Worship depends on a person being honest with himself and God, and truly desiring to have an encounter with God as revealed by Jesus. Worship is transparent, free from acting a part.
5. **Jesus wants people to worship him because of who he is instead of seeking what he can do for them.** The Samaritan woman became interested in Jesus' message when she thought it would make her life easier, because she wouldn't have to daily fetch water from the well (Jn 4:15). Jesus didn't come to make life easy, but to change the way people think and act, and to empower them to deal with life from God's perspective. People need to come to worship God with the attitude of Prophet Habakkuk. Even if Habakkuk had nothing, he would rejoice in the Lord (Habakkuk 3:17-18).
6. **Jesus wants his followers to open their eyes to see people ready to be harvested for eternal life.** The Samaritan woman was bringing people to meet Jesus (Jn 4:30), and Jesus saw fields ripe for harvest (Jn 4:35-38). A continuous harvest waits for Jesus' followers to reap. Jesus' followers need to open their eyes, look around, and they will find people ready to hear God's word.

LEARNING ACTIVITY

Role-playing Drama:

Ask two people to imagine that they were Jesus' disciples who grew up in good Jewish homes. They despised Samaritans, those "half-breeds" whose ancestors intermarried with foreigners who worshiped other gods. Talk about how you feel about Jesus taking the shortcut through Samaria instead of taking the longer route around Samaria, like most Jews did. And furthermore, Jesus visited with that Samaritan woman, who was an outcast in her own village.