

John 4:1-26, "Jesus Meets the Samaritan Woman at Jacob's Well"

- ✓ Jesus is growing in popularity. The Scriptures tell us in John 4:1 that He has more followers than John the Baptizer. There were three popular routes from Judea to Galilee, which is where Jesus is going. He chooses the route through Samaria. Some think He may have gone this way to avoid the crowds or reduce the distance to His destination. But verse four suggests a divine appointment: **"Now He had to go through Samaria. So, He came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as He was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour."** John 4:4-6.
 - ✓ Samaritans were a mixed race; they were part Jew and part Gentile. These two groups had feuded for centuries, and most Jews preferred not to even set foot on "Samaritan soil". Jesus chose to go through this town despite the strong possibility of unrest because of the racial tension of the time.
 - ✓ Jesus is about to minister to what many would deem to be the "enemy of the Jews." Both groups had needs that only the Messiah could meet. The sixth hour is nearing noon. At that time wells and water were equivalent to life and survival. If there was a zombie apocalypse, or an "End Times" scenario, water would be more valuable than food to most of us. You may be able to live for 1 to 2 months without food, but you can only survive for 2 days to a week without water.
 - ✓ Jesus, being entirely human, was tired. Please note that the Scripture does not say that He was thirsty, though He probably was. It is here at the well that these unlikely acquaintances could share a special conversation. Jesus speaks and responds to her a total of 7 times. **"When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Will you give Me a drink?' (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to Him, 'You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can You ask me for a drink?' (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans)"** John 4:7-9.
 - ✓ Jesus bridges the gaps between race and culture. The Samaritans were rejected by the Jews unless they could prove their genealogy. Likewise, the Jews were hated by the Samaritans (as a general rule). One story of their disdain for one another occurred when a Samaritan group spread the bones of dead people at God's temple to defile it.
 - ✓ The Samaritan woman mistakenly took Jesus for a "typical" Jew. She came alone in the heat of the day. One can infer from this that she was a local outcast. There was obvious danger for her to be traveling alone, and yet, here she is! Notice that it is Jesus who initiates the conversation. It would be very surprising for a Samaritan, especially a Samaritan woman, to be asked a favor from a Jew. Jesus is closing the gap between them. Just having this conversation, Jesus is breaking sexual taboos (among the strict Jews). Jewish men, especially a Rabbi, were not allowed to speak to women in public, especially strangers. It was not considered proper. Jesus is also breaking an ethnic taboo by speaking to this Samaritan woman. She may have been wondering why this Jewish man would break all of His Jewish rules to talk to her. In asking about a Jew talking to a Samaritan, she may have been rebuking Jesus as a hypocrite. She asks, "How can you ask me for a drink?" In fact, it seems that Jesus is actually asking to drink from the same cup as a Samaritan woman. He has no cup of His own to drink from. Drinking from her cup would have made Jesus "ceremonially unclean" in the sight of the Temple leaders and the current traditions of the time. Jesus does not debate race and culture here; He bridges the gap.
 - ✓ Jesus often ignored "conventional wisdom" and traditions. His compassion for others drove Him to do so; souls were at stake. Though the Jews had always continued commerce with the Samaritans, the Jews had absolutely no friendly dealings with the Samaritans. But Jesus did. Jesus adapts this and every conversation to the hearer's situation and moves to the hearer's "need."
 - ✓ We should do the same. It is certainly okay to memorize verses and a plan to share the Gospel, but it should never come as a "canned" or "rehearsed" sales pitch, though God can even use that. Caring for people is more than "business." It is "Good News" that can completely change people's lives, for now and for eternity!
 - ✓ Jesus doesn't use the same approach with this woman as He did with Nicodemus. The conversation with Nicodemus went from "teacher talk" to being "Born Again." The conversation with the Samaritan woman went from the common need for water to the need for "Spiritual" water.
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- ✓ Jesus shares with a moral Jewish man and an immoral Samaritan woman. Both had expectations and an understanding of the coming Messiah. Both had felt spiritually secure holding on to their teachings of the time, yet both were lost.
- ✓ To Jesus, these were not two people groups. These were just two people. We find a great paradox in Jesus', our Savior's, question. He is the fountain of life, asking an outcast for a drink. Jesus starts with a question about physical water and moves quickly to offering her spiritual water.
- ✓ **"Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God and Who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water.' 'Sir,' the woman said, 'You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can You get this living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?'" John 4:10-12.**
- ✓ The idea of "Living Water" is synonymous with running water and water of the spirit, that is, spiritual water. If you knew: the gift of God; His grace and offer of salvation. He is saying I am the promised Messiah and savior of the world. Living water is compared to a picture of running water, as in springs, creeks, and rivers. These are superior to wells in quality and access.
- ✓ The Samaritan woman was ill-prepared to get this living water from here. She wanted to know where to get it from.
- ✓ Her statement, "Our father, Jacob," indicates this woman laid claim to the lineage with the Jew who dug this well while the Jews rejected the Samaritans in almost every way.
- ✓ The well is probably around 100 feet deep and only has water during the wet winters. Jacob's well was a longstanding and consistent source of water, yet Jesus says He can do better than this great source. **"Jesus answered, 'Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.'" John 4:13-14.** Jesus is the "Bridge" to "Eternal Life."
- ✓ Does it seem that this woman balks at Jesus' request for a drink? Perhaps, but the Bible never says He received the requested drink. Perhaps she was serving Jesus as the conversation progressed. Perhaps she held out until later. Regardless of her decision, Jesus counters with a much better offer, and she is interested! **"The woman said to Him, 'Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.'" John 4:15.** This is the right attitude; accept what Jesus is offering!
- ✓ Jesus then invites her to start the application process. **"He told her, 'Go, call your husband and come back.'" "I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true." "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet." John 4:16-19.** Jesus begins by revealing Himself as a person of great knowledge and insight. Jesus is showing superhuman knowledge. He knows the unknowable.
- ✓ Jesus reveals the woman to herself. He shines a light on who she is without being judgmental. Jesus shines a light to help this woman look at herself and her life. In doing so, Jesus is leading this woman to discover her deepest need, and it isn't marriage counseling. It was spiritual and eternal. Faith in Jesus as the Messiah is always the number one need in an unsaved person's life. Honest self-evaluation in the light of Jesus' words leads her and us to repentance. We have gotten it all wrong and have now come to what is right. We now see the light.
- ✓ Care, insight, and rebuke without being judgmental open the doors of ministry for Jesus. He meets people right where they are. He earns the right to be heard. This open and loving behavior seems to invite her to inquire, and she does! **"Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." John 4:20-24.**

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- ✓ She focuses on their differences; Jesus focuses on truth. Truth always unifies those who dare to accept it. True worship is "Spirit to Spirit," "Heart to Heart." Our Spirit to God's Spirit, our heart to the very heart of God. Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit when we believe in God and His Son. We well up, and He flows out. **"Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'" John 14:6.**
 - ✓ She asks, "Are you greater than our mutual ancestor?" Jesus reveals Himself, **"The woman said, 'I know that Messiah' (called Christ) 'is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.' Then Jesus declared, 'I who speak to you am He.'" John 4:25-26.** Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ? If not, I pray that today is the day you see who Jesus is and believe in Him. Jesus is still bridging gaps and revealing Himself.
 - ✓ To the believer, I encourage you to bridge the gaps and reveal Jesus to others as you allow the Holy Spirit to well up within you. The woman said yes to Jesus and went on to tell everyone who would listen!
 - ✓ Mary, the mother of Jesus, had waited for this! However, there is no crowd. There was just a "one on one" quiet conversation. Jesus reveals Himself to one person who welled up with joy and shared the good news with others! That is how our lives are designed to work!
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