

John 4

Some Background

- The Samaritans had developed their own compromised version of Judaism.
- The Samaritans believed in Yahweh but they worshipped at Mt Gerizim instead of Jerusalem.
- The Jews regarded the Samaritans as ignorant, superstitious, mongrels, impure, outside of God's favor or consideration, and they would not associate with them.
- Jews were forbidden to drink from any vessel they had handled. In addition, for Jesus to share a drinking vessel with the Samaritan woman was considered unclean and very dramatic.
- The route through Samaria is not the usual route taken by Jews

Some points to ponder

1. Jesus leaves Judea

John 4:4 **And he had to pass through Samaria.**

- John Piper: Jesus may have felt a divine impulse to go to Galilee by way of Samaria because God planned a divine appointment there. Do the words "had to" in verse 4 only mean it was geographically shorter? Verse 4: "And he had to pass through Samaria." It was possible to go to Galilee in a roundabout way, which some Jews did because they thought the Samaritans were unclean. But John said that Jesus "had to pass through Samaria." Because he had an appointment to keep?

2. Encounter of the Samaritans women

- Sixth hour is about High Noon in accordance to Jewish time.
- John Piper: Notice what Jesus did. First, he went through Samaria. Second, he sent the disciples to buy food (presumably touched and prepared by unclean Samaritans) so that he could be alone. They didn't all have to go. Third, he sat on the well to be fully conspicuous and unavoidable. Fourth, he asked a woman — whom he knew was an unclean, impure, heretical, disreputable Samaritan — for a drink. Not for permission to get a drink, but for a drink from her bucket.
- Take note of the water Jesus offers
 - o It's a Living Water
 - o It becomes a spring
 - o It gives eternal life
- Like His encounter with Nicodemus, Jesus uses natural examples to explain heavenly realities. By means of the Holy Spirit, Jesus reveals that He is aware of her life challenges and promises eternal life. She not only responds to His invitation, but openly testifies of Jesus resulting in the salvation of many.
- Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman were very different, completely different. Yet John puts these two people side by side in his Gospel and shows that Jesus treated them with equal concern and regard, and he taught both of them precious eternal truths.

3. Healing of the official's son

- Verse 48: "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe."
Are we Sign-Seeker or Savior-Seeker?
You are sign-seekers. You are "wonder-worshippers." You say you believe, but your belief—like those folks in Jerusalem in John 2:23 and like Jesus' brothers in John 7:5—is not real belief that honors Jesus.
- Verse 50 "The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way." The official had asked Jesus to come with him. But when Jesus simply spoke, "Go; your son will live," the man obeyed without a question. He believed and went. He did not insist on seeing the miracle. He did not complain that Jesus would not come with him. And amazingly, he simply left.

Discussion questions

1. When you were growing up, did your parents tell you not to associate with people of certain social classes or ethnicities? How did you feel about it? How have those feeling changed since Christ has become more rooted in you?
2. How does prejudice block the Gospel? Why does Jesus take the time to deal with the contempt that the Jews and Samaritans held for each other? What does Jesus need to show you about how you feel and deal with others who may not look or act like you? (financial status, social status, education, racial and religious barriers etc)
3. John 3:20? "For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed." The Samaritan woman cannot open herself to the living water because her inner life is locked up against everything that might expose it. It is too painful and too dirty. Jesus knows that her blindness and hardness to the inner spiritual meaning of living water is compounded by the effect of years of sexual and relational sin.

Did the woman understand what Jesus was offering initially? Did she understand it at the end of the encounter, how do we know? What does this teach us of our own needs? Share with each other what were the issues that drew us first to church or Christian friends. How did the Lord show you the deeper need and satisfy that?

4. What keeps us from seeing Jesus' glory? The kinds of things that keep us from seeing and savoring the glory of Jesus, not just his signs; also the miracle that he did and what the miracles tell us about Jesus?
5. John shows us examples of what faith looks like. What were the two different reasons by which the Samaritans came to faith? Vv 39-42. What does this tell us about sharing the gospel and our ministry work? how does this challenge us?
6. John places the account of Jesus interaction with both Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman side by side. What purpose did he have in mind? What are their similarities and what were their differences? What does this teach us about how we should reach out? Who are we, do we see part of ourselves in the Samaritan Women or Nicodemus?