

GOSPEL OF JOHN 5

The Well

Wells really are amazing. Think of all the labor, sweat, heat, and love that goes into making these life-giving wonders. In small towns or villages, where there are no other sources of water, wells are critical. Often, people travel for miles, sometimes hours, to reach a well. As you can imagine, after traveling to the well, there are probably a lot of interesting people to meet upon arrival. In John chapter four, we have another very personal encounter between Jesus and a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. Here is a little information about Jacob's well: It was dug by Jacob, and hence its name, in the "parcel of ground" which he purchased from the sons of Hamor (Gen. 33:19). It still exists, but although after copious rains it contains a little water, it is now usually quite dry. It is at the entrance to the valley between Ebal and Gerizim, about 2 miles southeast of Shechem. It is about 9 feet in diameter and about 75 feet in depth, though in ancient times it was no doubt much deeper, probably twice as deep.¹

Jesus was on his way to Galilee, but He chose to pass through Samaria to get there. Most Jews completely avoided Samaria and would take other routes to get places, but Jesus "had to go" through Samaria. Perhaps the necessity lay in the mission that would meet him there and not so much the geographical advantages. Jews and Samaritans did not mix. When the nation of Israel split politically after King Solomon's rule, Samaria became the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel. In 722 BC, Assyria took the area captive, led most of the population of the ten northern tribes away, and yet left a sizable population of Jews in northern Samaria. "Eventually tension developed between the Samaritans and the Jews who returned from captivity. The Samaritans withdrew from the worship of Yahweh at Jerusalem and established their worship at Mt. Gerizim in Samaria. Samaritans regarded only the Pentateuch (Books of Moses) as authoritative. As a result of this history, Jews repudiated the Samaritans and considered them heretical. Intense ethnic and cultural tensions raged historically between the two groups so that both avoided contact as much as possible."²

These tensions did not stop Jesus. When he got tired from his journey, he sat at Jacob's well to drink right in the center of Samaria. A paradoxical moment, here is Jesus, the Messiah, the "New Israel" sitting at Jacob's (whose name was changed to Israel) well. I think Jesus was very strategic in picking where he was going to get water that day. As the story continues, a Samaritan woman comes by herself to the well in the middle of the day. Women generally drew water together in groups in the morning or at the end of the day. The fact that this woman came by herself, at midday, is evidence of her public shame. Jesus began to talk to this woman, showing no concern for what people would think of Him in that moment as a Jewish man talking to an immoral Samaritan woman. "Here is the Son of God, tired and weary and thirsty. Here was the holiest of men, listening with understanding to a

Pre-Article Questions:

1. If you met with your prayer partner from last week, do you have any thoughts, questions, or comments from last week's study?
2. What are some social "rules" in your culture or society everyone is aware of? Have you or someone you've known ever broken one of these who has? What happened?

1. Dictionary.com
2. McArthur, John.

sorry story. Here was Jesus breaking through the barriers of nationality and orthodox Jewish custom. Here is the beginning of the universality of the gospel; here is God so loving the world, not in theory, but in action.”³

John 4:1-42, NIV

1 The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John, 2 although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. 3 When the Lord learned of this, he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee. 4 Now he had to go through Samaria. 5 So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 6 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. 7 When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" 8 (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) 9 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.) 10 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." 11 "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? 12 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?"

13 Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 14 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." 15 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." 16 He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." 17 "I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. 18 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." 19 "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem." 21 Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 22 You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 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. 24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." 25 The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

26 Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he." 27 Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?" 28 Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, 29 "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" 30 They came out of the town and made their way toward him. 31 Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something." 32 But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about." 33 Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?" 34 "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. 35 Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. 36 Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. 37 Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. 38 I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor."

39 Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." 40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. 41 And because of his words many more became believers. 42 They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

Study Questions:

1. Were you shocked about Jesus' interaction with the woman at the well? Why or why not?
2. In what ways does this conversation impact your heart and devotion to Jesus?
3. Has there ever been a time in your life you could relate to this woman at the well? What was the turning point in your life from feelings of shame and rejection, or living a life you knew you weren't meant to live?
4. How is this conversation with the Samaritan woman similar to that of the conversation Jesus had with Nicodemus? What can we learn from Jesus in the way He presented the truth to Nicodemus and then to the Samaritan woman?
5. Jesus relates the free gift of eternal life and salvation to living water. Jews often spoke of the thirst of the soul for God that could be quenched with living water. Please read a few of the following Bible passages: Jeremiah 2:13, Isaiah 12:3, Isaiah 35:7, Isaiah 49:10, Isaiah 55:1-2, Revelation 21:6, Revelation 7:16-17, Psalm 42:1, Psalm 36:9. How do these scriptures give us a better picture of living water and help us to understand the life Christ offers us both here on earth and eternally?
6. "There is a fundamental truth that in the human heart there is a thirst for something that only Jesus Christ can satisfy."⁴ Describe a moment when you were awakened to the spiritual thirst inside of you like the woman at the well?
7. Describe a time where you felt like the living water that Christ talked about brought satisfaction to your soul.
8. As the Samaritan woman spoke with Jesus, she was suddenly compelled to face herself and the total inadequacy of her life. Instead of being discouraged about her hopeless condition, she continued in conversation with Christ and essentially asked him how to change. When you are confronted with sin in your life, how do you react? What are some spiritual and practical steps that can help us when we face the truth about ourselves?

Prayer Partner Assignment:

Meeting with a brother or sister from your small group over a meal to get to know one another more and answer a few questions:

- Read John Chapter 4 again
- What does this chapter teach us about Jesus?
- What does this chapter teach us about Jesus' Kingdom?
- What specifically from this chapter challenges you and why?
- What questions or comments do you have for Life Group next week about this chapter? (Make note of them to ask at the beginning of next week's study)

End your time in prayer for one another if possible and set up another time to meet again outside of small group.