

TEACHING NOTES: JOHN CHAPTER 4

“THE BAD SAMARITAN”

Text: John 4:1–54

Theme: Jesus reveals Himself as the Savior of the world. True faith in Him leads to fulfillment, worship, witness, and obedience.

Introduction:

John wrote his Gospel so that people would believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing they might have life in His name.

In John 3, Jesus speaks to Nicodemus, a moral Jewish religious leader.

In John 4, Jesus speaks to a sinful Samaritan woman.

The contrast is intentional:

Nicodemus was respected; She was rejected.

Nicodemus came at night; Jesus met her in the heat of the day.

Nicodemus was religious; She was morally broken.

However, both needed the same thing: **new life through faith in Jesus Christ.**

John 4 shows us that Jesus is not merely the Savior of respectable people. He is the Savior of *sinners*. He is the Savior of *outcasts*. **HE IS THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD.**

I. Jesus Seeks the Sinful Woman (John 4:1–30)

John tells us that Jesus “*had to pass through Samaria.*” Geographically, there were other ways to travel from Judea to Galilee. Many Jews avoided Samaria because of the racial, religious, and historical hostility between Jews and Samaritans.

But Jesus was operating on a divine appointment. He had to go through Samaria because there was a woman there who needed forgiveness. This woman was unlikely, unwanted, and unworthy in the eyes of many people. But she was not unseen by Jesus.

Jesus met her at Jacob’s well and began with a simple request: “*Give Me a drink.*” That request surprised her because Jews normally avoided Samaritans, and Jewish rabbis did not speak publicly with women, especially women with questionable reputations.

But Jesus was not controlled by prejudice, custom, or fear of criticism. Her soul was at stake.

A. She first sees Jesus as “a Jew.” She says, in essence, *“How can You, being a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink”* John 4:7–10? Initially, she saw only the barrier: Jew and Samaritan. Man and woman. Religious teacher and immoral outcast.

But Jesus moved the conversation from physical water to spiritual life. He said: *“If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.”*

- She did not know who Jesus was.
- She did not know what Jesus could give.
- She did not know how desperately she needed Him.

This is where most people are spiritually. They know something about religion, but they do not know Jesus. They know something about life’s thirst, but they do not know the One who can satisfy the soul.

B. She wonders if Jesus is “greater than Jacob” (John 4:11–15).

The woman misunderstood Jesus. She thought He was talking about literal water. She said, *“Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep.”*

Jesus answered: *“Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never thirst.”*

This is one of the great truths of the passage: Everything this world offers leaves people thirsty again:

- Pleasure leaves people thirsty.
- Sin leaves people thirsty.
- Success leaves people thirsty.
- Relationships leave people thirsty.
- Religion without Christ leaves people thirsty.

But Jesus gives living water. He gives eternal life. He gives inward satisfaction that the world cannot produce.

She said, *“Sir, give me this water.”* But before she could receive the gift, Jesus needed to deal with her sin.

C. She recognizes Jesus as “a prophet” (John 4:16–24)

Jesus said: “Go, call your *husband*.” This was not a random change of subject. Jesus was placing His finger on the deepest wound and sin in her life. She said, “*I have no husband.*”

Jesus responded: “*You have correctly said, ‘I have no husband’; for you had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband.*”

Jesus did NOT expose her to shame her. He exposed her to save her. There can be no real conversion without conviction. The sinner must come face to face with the truth. At this point, the woman tried to shift the conversation to religion. She asked about the right place of worship: *Mount Gerizim or Jerusalem.*

This is still common today. When people feel conviction, they often change the subject. They would rather discuss religion than deal honestly with sin.

Jesus told her that true worship was not ultimately about a location. True worship is always about the heart: “*God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.*”

- True worship is not merely outward ritual.
- True worship is not inherited tradition.
- True worship is not religious performance.
- True worship is directed to the true God, through the truth He has revealed, by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

D. She finally saw Jesus as “the Christ” (John 4:25–30)

The woman said: “*I know that Messiah is coming.*”

Jesus answered: “*I who speak to you am He.*” This was the turning point. Jesus revealed Himself plainly. The woman believed, left her waterpot, and ran into the city. She said: “*Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; is this not the Christ?*”

Her witness was simple, but powerful!

- She did not have a seminary degree.
- She did not know much about theology.
- She did not have a polished testimony.
- **But she had met Jesus.**

When a person truly meets Jesus, faith becomes witness through word and deed

Application: Some people think their past life disqualifies them from being used by God. John 4 teaches the opposite. Jesus saved a woman with a broken past and immediately used her to reach others.

II. Jesus Teaches the Disciples (John 4:31–38)

When the disciples returned, they were surprised that Jesus was speaking with the woman. They urged Him to eat.

Jesus said: *“I have food to eat that you do not know about.”*

The disciples misunderstood Him, just like the woman misunderstood the living water. Jesus explained: *“My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work.”*

For Jesus, obedience to the Father was not a burden. It was nourishment. His deepest satisfaction was doing the Father’s will. Then Jesus said: *“Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest.”*

The disciples had gone into the village to buy food. The woman went into the village to bring people to Jesus. They saw Samaria as a place to avoid. Jesus saw Samaria as a field ready for harvest: They saw barriers. Jesus saw souls.

This is a needed lesson for believers today. We often assume some people are too hard, too far, too sinful, or too different. But Jesus says, *“Lift up your eyes.”* The harvest may be where we least expect it!

Application for Witnessing: Jesus teaches us several truths about evangelism:

1. We must go where people are—Jesus did not avoid Samaria.
2. We must start conversations naturally—Jesus began with water.
3. We must speak to deeper needs—the woman needed more than water; she needed life.
4. We must not ignore sin—Jesus dealt truthfully with her condition.
5. We must point people to Jesus—the goal is not better behavior. The goal is faith in Christ.

III. The Samaritans Believe (John 4:39–42)

Many Samaritans believed because of the woman's testimony.

Then many more believed because they heard Jesus for themselves.

They said: *"It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is truly the Savior of the world."*

That statement is important. They do not merely call Jesus the Savior of the Jews. They call Him: *"The Savior of the world."*

This is one of the great themes of John's Gospel. Jesus came not only for one nation, one race, one class, or one kind of person. **HE CAME FOR THE WORLD.**

The woman's testimony brought them to Jesus, but their faith became personal. Secondhand faith is never enough. Every person must come to Christ personally:

- Parents can tell their children about Jesus.
- Pastors can preach Jesus.
- Friends can witness about Jesus.
- But EVERY PERSON MUST BELIEVE for themselves!

Application: A testimony can open the door, but people must individually hear and believe Christ for themselves.

IV. The Nobleman Believes (John 4:43–54)

The chapter closes with a nobleman whose son is dying. He travels from Capernaum to Cana to ask Jesus to heal his son. This man likely had status, money, and influence. But none of that could save his child.

Crisis brought him to Jesus. He begged Jesus to come before his child died.

Jesus simply said: *"Go; your son lives."* The man believed the word Jesus spoke and started home.

That is faith: taking Jesus at His word.

Later, his servants met him and told him that his son was alive. When he asked when the boy improved, they told him the fever left at the very hour Jesus spoke.

Notice the **PROGRESS** of His faith:

- First, he had **CRISIS** faith — he came to Jesus because of urgent need.
- Then he had **CONFIDENT** faith — he believed Jesus' word and goes home.
- Then he had **CONFIRMED** faith — he saw that Jesus' word was true.

- Finally, he had **CONTAGIOUS** faith — he and his whole household believed.

Jesus did not need to be physically present in Capernaum to heal the boy. He showed His power over distance—**HIS WORD WAS ENOUGH!**

Conclusion: John 4 shows several *kinds* of people coming to faith:

- A sinful Samaritan woman believed.
- A Samaritan village believed.
- A nobleman believed.
- A household believed.

Different people. Different backgrounds. Different needs. **BUT THE SAME SAVIOR.**

- The woman was morally broken.
- The disciples were spiritually shortsighted.
- The Samaritans were religious outsiders.
- The nobleman was desperate for his son.

BUT JESUS MET (AND MEETS) NEED.

- He gives living water to the thirsty.
- He gives purpose to His disciples.
- He gives salvation to the world.
- He gives life by the power of His word.

THE MESSAGE OF JOHN 4 IS CLEAR: JESUS IS THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD, AND EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM RECEIVES LIFE.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Do I really know Jesus personally, or only through someone else's testimony?
2. Am I still trying to satisfy my soul with what can never satisfy?
3. Am I lifting up my eyes to see the harvest around me? What am I doing about it?
4. Am I taking Jesus at His word?