

Fix Your Eyes on Jesus the Evangelist: “Where do you get that living water?”

Focus Passage: John 4:1–35

Larger Context: John 3:22–36 in which John mentions Jesus’ disciples baptizing people not far from where John the Baptist was also baptizing. Jesus and company were drawing larger numbers than John the Baptist, which upset the Baptist’s disciples.

Other Passages Referenced: Deuteronomy 18:18; Isaiah 55; Ephesians 2:4

Sermon Recap

Jesus and His disciples had been in the southern region of Judea when Jesus decided it was time to go to the northern region of Galilee. John said that Jesus “had to go through Samaria” although it wasn’t physically or culturally necessary for Him to go through Samaria. The Samaritan people and the Jews had an ongoing disdain for one another. The Samaritans had their own blended version of Judaism. They only accepted the first five books of the Bible and rejected the prophets, psalms, and the rest of the Hebrew Bible. They taught it was proper to worship on Mt. Gerizim in Samaria, rather than at the Jerusalem temple.

John notes the humanity of Jesus in saying that he was tired and thirsty. As Jesus sat by a well, a Samaritan woman came to draw water at midday. This was in the heat of the day and a very unusual time to be drawing water. It turns out she was marginalized because of her immoral lifestyle. She probably chose the hot hour to avoid others who would draw water earlier. Jesus asks her for a drink, which was culturally very out of character. For one thing, she was a woman and for another, she was a Samaritan. Most Jewish people would have avoided contact with her, but Jesus drew near to her and invited it. He offered her living water, which she most likely interpreted as fresh running water as from a spring or stream. Like Nicodemus, she took Jesus’ words literally and missed the spiritual truth He was communicating. She would have been unfamiliar with the living water and the water of life promised by the prophets.

Jesus revealed to the woman that He knew she had lived an immoral lifestyle, having had five husbands or partners, and was not married to the man she was living with. At this, the woman turned the conversation to religion and surmised that Jesus must be a prophet. She spoke of Mt. Gerizim as the place of worship. Jesus said that where one worships isn’t as important as worshiping in spirit and truth. She then asked if Jesus were greater than Jacob. Jesus indirectly told her that He was greater than Joseph. When she mentioned her knowledge of a coming Messiah who would make everything clear, Jesus responded, “I who speak to you, I AM.” She likely would have recognized this phrase from YHWH’s interaction with Moses in Exodus, a book the Samaritans did accept. The woman who had avoided interaction with others became an unlikely evangelist. She left her water pot and went into the city to tell others about her encounter with Jesus and invited them to go with her to meet Him.

The sermon noted the stark contrast the Gospel of John made in describing Jesus’ evangelistic interaction with the very religious and morally upright Nicodemus as compared with His encounter with an unnamed Samaritan woman who was religiously confused and morally lacking. In spite of their outward differences, both had a great need to know and receive Jesus. As with Nicodemus, when Jesus spoke of wind and the birth experience, with the woman Jesus spoke about common subjects to draw the woman into an evangelistic conversation — water, religion, and husbands. Jesus shared Himself as the good news of the gospel. He had to go through Samaria to meet the woman and to show the merciful heart of God for sinners. Like Nicodemus, this woman was a sinner needing a new life. Even when we sin, Jesus does not recoil but draws close and comes to us in times of need. Jesus has a merciful heart for sinners.

Interpretation Helps

- “The Samaritans were regarded by the Jews as despised half-breeds, the offspring of the resettlement policies of the cruel Assyrians, who after sacking the Northern Kingdom in 722 B.C. transported large groups of conquered Jews to other conquered sites and repopulated the partially vacated sites with other conquered peoples (2 Kgs 17:5–6, 24)”¹ Those groups intermarried and thus a distinctly Israelite identity in Samaria was lost, forming the people group the Samaritans. However, like the Jews, Samaritans worshiped Yahweh and used a version of the Pentateuch as their Scripture. Jews and Samaritans typically had a mutual hostility based on ethnic, religious, and political barriers.”²

Group Gathering

Group Check-in — Care, Celebration, Encouragement (About 1/3 of meeting time)

1. Informal conversation to allow individuals to catch up with one another.
2. Ask if anyone would share how they’ve been hearing and obeying God’s direction.

Allow the Word to Speak — Be Hearers of the Word (About 1/3 of meeting time)

READ John 4:1–35

1. What from the passage or sermon was most impactful to you?
2. Were you left with any questions or confusion about the passage or sermon?
3. What does John allude to in John 4:1–4 as a reason for Jesus returning to Galilee? Why might that be? Reading John 4:1 in light of 3:24 may give more insight.
4. The woman has an impure understanding of Judaism as well as an impure life. What does 4:25 reveal about her understanding of the Messiah?
5. In 4:26, we have the first and one of the clearest declarations by Jesus in John’s gospel, that He, Himself, was the Messiah (the Christ). What makes Jesus’ self-revelation to the woman so surprising?

Put the Word into Practice — Be Doers of the Word (About 1/3 of meeting time)

1. What does it mean for you to “worship the Father in Spirit and truth”?
2. How might you respond to someone who says, “I do not need to be part of a church. I can worship God in spirit and truth alone with nature.”
3. The Samaritans had picked and chosen parts of biblical faith while rejecting others, sort of “Samaritanizing” Judaism. Do you see any dangers of “Americanizing” Christianity, by picking and choosing some parts of biblical teaching while ignoring others? ... Explain.
4. The sermon suggested that it was not necessary for Jesus to travel through Samaria to get to Galilee. In fact, Jewish travelers often preferred to go the extra distance to avoid coming in contact with Samaritans. When John 4:4 says, Jesus “had to pass through Samaria,” “had to” has to do with missional necessity more than geographic necessity. Is there someplace you “have to go” to fulfill your gospel carrying ministry to someone you and other Christians might normally avoid?

The Big Question: What do you sense God's Spirit saying to you and what concrete action will you take in response? Share your answer with the group or another trusted Christian and ask them to pray for you.

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES: Click [here](#) for some good opportunities.

¹ Gerald L. Borchert, [John 1–11](#), vol. 25A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 199–200.

² John D. Barry et al., [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016), Jn 4:9.

**“The time is fulfilled,
and the kingdom of God is at hand;
repent and believe in the gospel.”**

Mark 1:15



**I will raise up for them a prophet
like you from among their brothers.
And I will put my words in his mouth,
and he shall speak to them
all that I command him.**

Deuteronomy 18:18

They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."

John 4:42

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ —by grace you have been saved.

Ephesians 2:4-5