



10

SESSION TEN

Jesus and the Samaritan Woman

SESSION SUMMARY

In this session, we read about a conversation between Jesus and a Samaritan woman, whom He met at Jacob's well. In their discussion, Jesus claimed to have the living water that would satisfy the soul, and He revealed that God seeks people to worship Him in spirit and truth. As Jesus' followers, we resemble the Samaritan woman—we exalt Jesus for who He is, and then tell others about the living water He offers.

SCRIPTURE

John 4:1-42

THE POINT

God seeks true worshipers who worship Him in spirit and truth.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

Consider a time when you experienced a feeling of accomplishment, maybe after finishing a marathon, hiking more miles than you dreamed possible, making an A in your toughest class, or finally hitting all the right notes in a song you practiced every day—the list is endless.

- **When have you experienced the sense of excitement that comes from a job well done?**

After major achievements, people often say things like “soak it all up” or “drink it in”—in other words, enjoy this experience fully. Let the joy from this time, this accomplishment, seep into your bones. So, we drink up the waters of experience and enjoy the wonderful taste that comes with it.

When Jesus offered the Samaritan woman a drink from the well of living water, He extended an invitation to experience a taste far different from any she’d ever known. He offered her a taste of eternal, living water. He called her to “taste and see” that He was good, He was the Messiah, and that even she—an outcast of society who was loathed by the Jews—was invited to “drink it in” and experience the wonderful taste of life with Jesus. We are invited to this same experience—to “taste and see” that He is good and to drink in the living water. And we are called to respond in the same way as the woman at the well, taking this message to those we encounter along the way.

Option 2

Some people really get into celebrating certain holidays. They place elaborate decorations throughout their houses, they have seasonal music playing through their cars’ stereo systems, and sometimes they even place those large, inflatable holiday icons on their lawns. The point is: When their favorite holiday comes around, these people will no doubt let you know what time of year it is. They are all in and their “holiday spirit” is often infectious to those nearby.

- **Who do you know who enjoys “going all out” to celebrate a specific holiday? What are some of the ways they decorate and celebrate?**

Maybe you’re constantly in the “holiday spirit” once that season rolls around. More important than being in the spirit of the holidays is the realization that we are filled with God’s Holy Spirit and He calls us to worship Him in Spirit and truth. He offers to us life and living water that can be found nowhere else. And just like the woman at the well, our spirit should be infectious. We should be “all in” when it comes to celebrating what Jesus has done for us. Those who are “all in” will go “all out” to tell others the good news of Jesus, just like the woman at the well.

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

God seeks true worshipers who worship Him in spirit and truth.

CHARACTERS

- **Jesus** - the eternal Son of God; second person of the Trinity
- **Samaritans** - a socially despised group during the first century. Jesus broke down social distinctions by reaching out to this group of society's outcasts.

PLOT

In previous sessions, we learned about Jesus' ministry—how He met with Nicodemus (a religious man) at night to answer his questions and the way Jesus' ministry intersected with that of John the Baptist. Throughout the Scripture in this session, John revealed more of Jesus' interactions with the people He met during His ministry. This particular interaction demonstrated Jesus' love for all people—even a woman whose ethnicity and past would have made her seem “beyond the reach” of God's grace.

TIMELINE

THE WOMAN AT THE WELL

Jesus reaches out to the outcasts of society.

HOMETOWN OPPOSITION

Jesus makes plain His identity and is rejected in His hometown.

ZACCHAEUS AND THE SYCAMORE

Jesus has come to seek and save the lost.

JESUS ENCOUNTERED THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

The story of Jesus' interaction with the woman at the well began with a couple of geographical details. These details are essential to understanding the dynamics of the conversation about to take place.

¹ Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John ² (although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples), ³ he left Judea and departed again for Galilee. ⁴ And he had to pass through Samaria. ⁵ So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. (John 4:1-6)

The route Jesus selected to travel from Judea to Galilee was quick, but not common. It took Him through Samaria, an area that most Jews would avoid. The Samaritans were considered "half-breeds" whose forefathers were Jewish but had intermarried with Assyrians. A result of their history, they were despised by many Jews.

Jesus rejected the culturally acceptable route that went around the Samaritans. Instead, He took the direct route, and this decision placed Him at Jacob's well around noontime, when the social outcasts came to draw water.

⁷ A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."⁸ (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) ⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) ¹⁰ Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."¹¹ The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock."¹³ Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will 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 will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water." (John 4:7-15)

This dialogue occurred between Jesus and a woman who was likely considered a social outcast. Jesus initiated the conversation when He asked for a drink of water. In Jesus' day, this conversation was taboo. A teacher of the law or a Rabbi would avoid talking to a woman, especially one from this ethnic background and with this social history.

The woman's response included an element of surprise. Don't you realize I'm a Samaritan? She saw herself as "out of bounds" and "cast out" by the Jews, and perhaps devalued because of her ethnicity.

But Jesus advanced the conversation in a way that implied this conversation was God's gift to her. He steered their discussion about water to the need for living water only God can offer—the gift of salvation, the gift of God Himself through the work of Jesus the Son and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. To a woman whose soul longed for satisfaction, Jesus spoke of living water that would quench spiritual thirst.

JESUS EXPLAINED TO HER THE MEANING OF TRUE WORSHIP

As the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman continued, we see a shift toward the woman's personal situation. Take a look:

16 Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." 17 The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; 18 for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true." 19 The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." 21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. 22 You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:16-24)

It is interesting to note how Jesus took the conversation into a personal direction after having engaged this woman on friendly terms. The discussion about water prompted the truth about spiritual thirst that only God can quench. Then, the discussion about the woman's marital history led to a demonstration of Jesus' ability to know the hearts of people. "You are a prophet," the woman said, and she was right.

The way Jesus engaged in conversation revealed His heart. He did not just talk. He also listened. He did not condemn the woman for her past; He continued having a meaningful conversation.

Even when the woman tried to redirect the topic away from her marital history and toward the location of worship, Jesus kept the focus on her heart. He claimed that God sought worshipers in spirit and truth. Don't miss what He implied: This woman was one of the people God sought.

GOING FURTHER WITH THE STORY

Jesus informed the Samaritan woman that worship would no longer be bound by geographic location. God called people everywhere to pursue Him, to worship Him the right way. As Kevin Vanhoozer wrote: “Focusing on the right object is everything in worship. Ignorant worship fails to invigorate or to quench our spiritual thirst. Ignorant worship is a liturgy of death, not life. In Jeremiah God says: ‘My people have committed two sins: they have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water’ (Jer 2:13). Through our own efforts we can attain neither a right knowledge nor a right worship of God... Right worship proceeds from right knowledge of God.”¹

THE SAMARITAN WOMAN RESPONDED TO JESUS BY TELLING OTHERS ABOUT HIM

Through this conversation Jesus taught that He offers living water that satisfies spiritual thirst forever. Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman also showed that Jesus is the prophet who reveals the truth that the Father seeks those who will worship in spirit and truth. Reading further, take note of the disciples’ response when they noticed Jesus talked with this woman, and the woman’s response to this conversation.

25 The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.” **26 Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.”** **27 Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, “What do you seek?” or, “Why are you talking with her?”** **28 So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people,** **29 “Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?”** **30 They went out of the town and were coming to him.** **31 Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, “Rabbi, eat.”** **32 But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.”** **33 So the disciples said to one another, “Has anyone brought him something to eat?”** **34 Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.** **35 Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, then comes the harvest’? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest.** **36 Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.** **37 For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’** **38 I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.”** **39 Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me all that I ever did.”** **40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days.** **41 And**

TIMELINE

**Beginning Summer 2017*

THE SOWER AND THE SOILS

Jesus teaches on people’s responses when hearing the Word.

THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT

Jesus teaches on forgiveness.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Jesus teaches on how to love one’s neighbor.

many more believed because of his word.⁴² 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 4:25-42)

This passage is all about mission! First, the woman made a comment about the Messiah coming to make things right; this was an attempt to put off any decision or claim that Jesus (as a prophet) might make on her. But Jesus instantly revealed to her that He was the Messiah she spoke about!

Then, the disciples arrived at the pivotal moment of Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman, after having ventured into town to find food. They wondered about His motives for breaking cultural protocol, for ignoring ethical and cultural barriers. While they were questioning in their hearts what Jesus was doing, the Samaritan woman left her water jar and ran back into town. As soon as she understood that Jesus was the Messiah, she dropped everything and told others about Him.

- **When was the last time you broke “social protocol” to minister to someone? Why is it important that Christians be seen as breaking cultural barriers instead of creating them?** (p. 74, PSG)

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

God is Infinite (p. 73, PSG)

God's infinity means that there are no boundaries on His qualities and existence (Job 11:7-9; Ps. 147:5). For instance, God is infinite when it comes to space and time, meaning He is not confined by material space nor is He restricted by time since He is timeless (Ps. 90:1-2). God's infinity also extends to His knowledge of things as well as His power to do all things according to His will.

CHRIST CONNECTION

Through the ministry of Jesus, worshiping God is no longer bound by geographic location, gender, or ethnicity. Salvation is open and available for sinners from every imaginable background (Gal. 3:26-28). Jesus told His disciples that the harvest was great, meaning that there were many people who needed to hear about Him. For us, the same is true. There are still many people who need to hear the truth of the gospel message. We need God to open our eyes to see those people around us and open our mouths to speak His truth and lead them to Christ. And like the Samaritan woman, we say, “Come and see!”

YOUR STORY 10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **How does the gospel speak to the forms of segregation our society has created? What do we learn from Jesus' model of breaking down cultural barriers in His search for the lost?** *Answers will vary.*
- **What are some examples of "earthly" water that people drink from in order to quench their spiritual thirst? How do we know that these other sources of water do not satisfy?** *Answers may include things like relationships, praise from others, talents and abilities, hobbies, sports, social influence, and so on.*
- **Jesus taught that worship isn't tied to a place, but is something first and foremost of the heart. Why is this important in our daily lives?** *One of the reasons this is important is because it reminds us that worship isn't something that just takes place on a Sunday morning or Wednesday night, but rather something that involves all of life. Whatever we find ourselves doing on any day of the week, we are to do it to the glory of God.*
- **How does the Samaritan woman's response challenge us when it comes to pointing those within our own lives to Jesus?** *Answers will vary.*

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

We see in this account that God desires people to worship Him rightly, and to worship Him rightly means to worship Him in Spirit and in truth. To worship in spirit and truth means we must be born again—of the Spirit—and be satisfied with all God is in the person of His Son, Jesus. Our worship must be saturated in the Scriptures and must focus our attention on Jesus—God in flesh.

- **Why does God emphasize the importance of worshiping in both spirit and truth?**
Because worship involves both components.
- **What happens when only one of these is present?** *Genuine worship of God requires an accurate understanding of who God is and what He has done for us, which is why truth is essential. Likewise, knowing the truth of God without being born again wouldn't amount to genuine worship, which is why both components are essential.*



HEART

There's something about that incredible passion at work in the Samaritan woman. She had just met Jesus, and she was ready for everyone else to meet Him, too. Some of the greatest and most passionate evangelists are people who have recently embraced Jesus. They are filled with excitement to tell others about the good news of what God has done. Unfortunately, it's easy to lose that initial awe and wonder at God's salvation. And with that loss of passion, we share the gospel less and less. For this reason, it's vital that we see people like the Samaritan woman and ask God to rekindle our hearts and refresh us with a desire to share His love with the world.

- **Why is it easy for us to lose our passion for sharing the good news of Jesus with the lost?**
Answers will vary.
- **What are some things we can do to counteract this loss of passion?** *One thing to do is to tell others about Christ, believing that greater joy will be found in talking to others about Him than remaining silent.*



HANDS

Through the ministry of the Samaritan woman, God brought many in that city to trust in Jesus. The woman's words piqued their curiosity, but when they encountered Jesus the Messiah, they believed. This is the model for evangelism. The contents of our conversations with nonbelievers should make them curious about Jesus. Then it is our responsibility to unpack the glorious riches of the gospel to them in ways they can understand. As we walk them through the Scriptures, they encounter the God who gives us living water.

- **How did the Samaritans respond to the woman's testimony?** *Answers will vary.*
- **What can we learn from this account regarding what aspects of a personal testimony are compelling to people? How can that knowledge equip us to share with others?**
Answers will vary.

► ADDITIONAL INFO

LEADER PACK

For this session, refer students to pack item #10, containing an artistic quote poster of Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman.

SOURCE

1. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Pictures at a Theological Exhibition: Scenes of the Church's Worship, Witness and Wisdom* (Downer's Grove: Innervarsity Press, 2016), 114-115.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to lifeway.com/TGPRescueSpr17)**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at

GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources

And for **free online training** on how to lead a group visit

MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject