

Greater Than >

Experiencing Christ in Colossians

Lisa Scheffler, author

Week 3 | John 4:6–26; 39–42

When you read the Gospels, one of the many amazing things about Jesus is his way with people. As we’ve seen so far in this series, John’s Gospel records some intriguing conversations that Jesus had with everyday folks. With love and insight, he always pointed people to the truth. This week, let’s look at a conversation Jesus had with a woman society considered an outcast.

# Day 1

## Read

### John 4:4–9 (NIV)

4Now he [Jesus] had to go through Samaria. 5So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 6Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

7When 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.)

9The 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.)

## Study

* One of the implications of the gospel that shocked the first century was the idea that God’s salvation was in no way dependent on race, ethnicity, class, nor gender. Jesus demonstrates that truth beautifully here. The Samaritans were considered by the Jews to be half-breeds. Centuries before the Assyrians had forced the resettlement of Samaria with foreigners from other conquered lands.[[1]](#footnote-2) Those people had intermingled with the Israelites left there after the Assyrian exile and developed their own take on Jewish religious practices. The Jews despised them, and the feeling was mutual.
* To learn more about Samaria, [read the article](https://biblia.com/books/eastons/word/Samaria) from Easton’s Bible Dictionary — a free resource available on Biblia.com.

## Think about

Just by speaking to a Samaritan Jesus was crossing a significant ethnic boundary, but that wasn’t the only one he was crossing. In that day, Jewish men avoided talking to women in public. They certainly didn’t discuss deep theological truths with them. But Jesus consistently broke with this custom by inviting women to be among his disciples. Simply by talking to her, Jesus was showing love.

What “outcasts” do you see in our community? Who are modern equivalents of the Samaritan woman?

## Pray

Praise God for his great compassion and love for you. The eternal Son of God came to earth to walk among those who rejected his goodness and grace. At Christmas, when we celebrate Jesus’ birth, let’s honor him by showing the same compassion and love to one another. Pray that the Spirit will give you sensitivity to the needs of the people around you and that you will respond like Jesus.

## Talk about

*Have a meaningful conversation about this passage with one of your CF Encouragers, your small group, or join us virtually in the Faithlife Community. (Search groups for Engage God Daily.)*

Depending on our backgrounds and experiences, we may struggle to relate to certain types of people based on stereotypes we hold. Ethnicity, geography, language, socio-economic status, education level and more can all play a part. Talk about the cultural stereotypes you notice in your world. How can you overcome them to reach out to someone who isn’t like you?

# Day 2

## Read

### John 4:10–14 (NIV)

10Jesus 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? 12Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?”

13Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 14but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

## Study

* In Jesus’ day, “Living water” was a way of saying “fresh water.” Like he did in the discussion of the new birth with Nicodemus, Jesus is using a physical reality to teach a spiritual one by shifting the discussion from earthly water that gives life to the life-giving power of Jesus, the Savior.
* Read the Faithlife Study Bible [note on 4:12](https://biblia.com/books/fsb/Jn4.12) to learn more about how the Samaritans connection to the patriarch, Jacob.

## Think about

We’ve lived through droughts here in the Southern US, and although lawns may have suffered, people generally don’t die because of it. For people in ancient times living in an arid climate, having a consistent source of fresh water was life or death. The well Jesus and the woman were standing next to was a vital resource for the community, and visiting it was a necessary, daily chore. By offering her “living water,” Jesus has not only piqued her interest, but he’s given her a picture that she can easily relate to. By talking about water, Jesus speaks to her circumstances and uses them to teach her a bigger, spiritual truth.

## Pray

The image of the Spirit as a spring of life-giving water is a powerful one. In Isaiah 55 the Lord promises to make “an everlasting covenant” with all who come to drink from his well.[[2]](#footnote-3) He calls out:

*“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. 2Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good and you will delight in the richest of fare. (Isaiah 55:1–2)*

Ask the Spirit to fill you to satisfaction because our spiritual hunger and thirst can only be satisfied by him.

## Talk about

Jesus used common, everyday imagery to help people understand his message. He used ordinary concerns to help them see their need for him. How can we use a similar approach when we talk to people about Jesus?

# Day 3

## Read

### John 4:15–21 (NIV)

15The 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.”

16He 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. 18The 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. 20Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”

21“Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.

## Study

We don’t know why the woman had five husbands. She could be a widow several times over, been divorced, or both. In Jesus’ day, only men could seek a divorce and could do so for any reason from a legitimate one (she committed adultery) to a frivolous one (she burned his food). Unmarried women without a father, brother, or adult son to take them in could end up homeless. So, was the woman living with a man who wasn’t her husband by choice or to survive? We simply don’t know why this woman was in the situation she was in, but we can imagine her life had been painful and difficult.

Over the centuries, commentators have made much more of the woman’s living situation than Jesus did during their conversation. He stated the facts and moved on to what really matters — the living water he can provide.

## Think about

Tired of long, hot trips to the well, the Samaritan woman was definitely interested in the water Jesus was offering. What she didn’t understand was that while Jesus cared about her earthly needs, he was even more interested in meeting her eternal ones. This woman needed her spiritual thirst quenched because she was drawing from an empty well.

In verse 20, the woman brings up a source of tension between the Samaritans and the Jews, the proper place for worship. It was a long-standing feud, centuries in the making. And if Jesus was a prophet, she wondered if he could settle that dispute.

But Jesus’ reply did not settle the question, it showed how unnecessary it is. God can’t be contained by a place and his salvation will break through the boundaries of geography, ethnicity, or status.

## Pray

We can imagine that the Samaritan woman had endured tragedy. We don’t know if it was of her own making, or if she had been wronged. The answer is likely some combination of both. At least, that’s how it is for most of us. Bring your hurts before the Lord today. Seek forgiveness where you need it and pray for the strength to offer forgiveness to those who have hurt you. Let your heavenly Father comfort you in your pain and assure you that he will right any wrongs. You can release your cares to him.

## Talk about

What can we learn from Jesus about having meaningful conversations with people who are engaging in behaviors or living in situations that we believe are contrary to God’s word?

# Day 4

Do you know what the most common reaction we hear from people who listen to our [Pastors Pregame podcast](https://subsplash.com/christfellowship-tx/lb/ms/%2Bhg732gk)? “It’s way better than I thought it would be!” We’re choosing to take that as a compliment. Give it a listen and let us know if it exceeds YOUR expectations. You can find it on our website, [cfhome.org/pregame](https://subsplash.com/christfellowship-tx/lb/ms/%2Bhg732gk) or subscribe through the Apple Podcast App.

## Read

### John 4:21­–26 (NIV)

21“Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 22You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. 24God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”

25The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”

26Then Jesus declared, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he.”

## Study

* Read the Bible study notes for [John 4:25­–26](https://biblia.com/books/fsb/Jn4.25) from the Faithlife Study Bible.
* In John’s Gospel, it is this woman, an outcast from Samaria to whom Jesus first proclaims his true identity. “As their conversation concludes, he discloses that he is the expected Messiah and more — for the words “I AM link his very being with the one revealed to Moses in the burning bush (Exodus 3:14). This is the first time these striking words appear in the Fourth Gospel, and the Samaritan woman is the first to hear them.”[[3]](#footnote-4)

## Think about

It matters who we believe Jesus to be. If he is who the Bible says he is — the son of God who came to take away the sins of the world — then we need him more than we know. Because of his sacrifice on the cross, he can wipe away all our sins and bring us into a right relationship with God. We can admit all the mistakes we’ve made, no matter how bad, and Jesus will forgive us. When we confess that we need him and place our faith in Jesus, our sins are forgiven and we are set free.

## Pray

Praise God for his mercy and forgiveness! Pray that the Spirit will reveal to you more and more who Jesus is. Isaiah 9:6 is a familiar verse at Christmas. It foretold the coming Messiah. Let it guide your prayers today “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

## Talk about

What do you think it means to worship God “in the Spirit and in truth”? How should we worship God, especially during this season?

# Day 5

## Read

### John 4:39–42 (NIV)

39Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I ever did.” 40So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. 41And because of his words many more became believers.

42They 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

“In accepting Jesus as Saviour the Samaritans had accepted the thrust of Jesus’ earlier statement to the woman that ‘salvation is from the Jews’ (22). They were now convinced that he was ‘the Saviour of the world’, i.e. he came to bring the water of life to all people, Samaritans as well as Jews. While the evangelist uses the word ‘saviour’ (*sōtēr*) only here in his Gospel, he speaks elsewhere of Jesus coming to save the world (3:17; 12:47). It is an important theme he wants his readers to understand and believe.”[[4]](#footnote-5)

## Think about

It’s not clear how much the woman really understands about Jesus before she rushes off to town, leaving her jar behind. But she’s excited enough to tell people about him. And they came out to see him. That’s how the gospel always spreads. People telling other people about Jesus. Who are you planning to tell?

At this point, the Samaritan woman becomes a good example for us to follow. She tells people what happened when she met Jesus.

## Pray

In a spirit of prayer, reflect on how you met Jesus. Praise God for his grace and thank him for the people in your life who helped you find Christ. Ask the Spirit for opportunities to be like the Samaritan woman and share your Jesus-story with someone else to encourage them to find out more about him.

## Talk about

Share your Jesus-story with one another. Or encourage one another by sharing something that Jesus has done for you. This week, let’s all have a meaningful conversation about Jesus!

1. M. G. Easton, *Easton’s Bible Dictionary* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1893). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Carson, *John*, 220. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Frances Taylor Gench, *Back to the Well: Women’s Encounters with Jesus in the Gospels*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 117. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Colin G. Kruse, [*John: An Introduction and Commentary*](https://ref.ly/logosres/tntc64jnus?ref=Bible.Jn4.42&off=539&ctx=em+like+nonsense%E2%80%99).%0a~In+accepting+Jesus+a), vol. 4, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 143. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)