

THE SON OFFERS LIVING WATER

+ SESSION OUTLINE

1. The Son gives living water (John 4:7-14).
2. The Son enables true worship (John 4:19-24).
3. The Son provides an abundant harvest (John 4:34-38).

Background Passage: John 4

+ WHAT WILL MY GROUP LEARN?

Jesus promised the Samaritan woman that all who believe in Him receive living water—the Holy Spirit—who completely satisfies the longings of the heart and enables true worship of God.

+ HOW WILL MY GROUP SEE CHRIST?

Jesus told the Samaritan woman that a day was coming when worshipers would not focus on the physical location of their worship but would worship God in Spirit and truth. Because of Jesus's death and resurrection, our worship is no longer confined by geography. We worship Jesus as the Savior of the whole world wherever we are, knowing that God indwells us always.

+ HOW SHOULD MY GROUP RESPOND?

Because Christ satisfies our deepest longing, we worship Him as a way of life, praying that God might use us to draw others to Himself so that their thirst might be quenched as well.

GROUP TIME



SCRIPTURE HANDOUT

Scan this QR code for a reproducible handout of this session's Scripture passages.

INTRODUCTION

SETTING: Jesus was returning home to Galilee after some time spent in Judea. Instead of going around the region of Samaria, He went through it. While in Samaria, He stopped at a well and interacted with a Samaritan woman who was known for her immoral lifestyle, seeking satisfaction from the pleasures of the world. Jesus met her and promised that He could give her living water—the Holy Spirit—who would completely satisfy her deepest longings.

EXPLAIN: Last week we looked at Nicodemus, and this week we look at a Samaritan woman. These two people could not be more different from each other. One, a respected leader in the spiritual community, the other probably shunned for her sexual promiscuity.

DISCUSS: Why do we often evaluate people by their public standing or by their actions? (because if we don't know them well, we go by public opinion, whether right or wrong; because sometimes we think people's actions define them and they might not be able to change; because we think good people deserve good and bad people deserve bad; because we are commanded to judge and lovingly confront professing believers by their actions for their repentance, but we mistakenly think we are to judge unbelievers rather than share the gospel with them [1 Cor. 5:9-13])

TRANSITION: Inside of everyone there is a longing for something more, for something greater than ourselves. We long to be satisfied. The problem comes when we look for satisfaction in things of the flesh or things of this world. The problem is those things never satisfy. Jesus explained that He is the only One who can quench and satisfy our desires. Jesus made a promise to a Samaritan woman that all who believe in Him will receive living water—the Holy Spirit—who completely satisfies the longings of the heart and enables true worship of God.

OPTIONAL QUESTION: Would you consider your life before Christ to be more like Nicodemus or the woman at the well? (be prepared to share an answer of your own to jump-start the conversation)

POINT 1

THE SON GIVES LIVING WATER (JOHN 4:7-14).

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.”

READ: Ask a volunteer to read aloud **John 4:7-14** from his or her own Bible.

EXPLAIN: Point out the town of Sychar in Samaria on **PACK ITEM 2: JESUS’S EARLY YEARS MAP** as the location for the events addressed in this session; then use the **VERSES 7-12** commentary to highlight the following point (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

Jesus spoke to a Samaritan woman about the physical need for **water** to explain how, through Him, our spiritual need for **eternal life** is fulfilled.

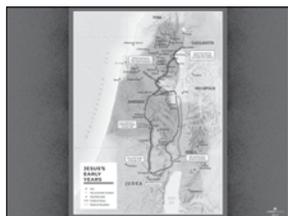
DISCUSS: With what types of people might we find it difficult to share the good news of Jesus? (the homeless; gang members; prisoners; Muslims; the neighbor who puts trash in his yard; the employer who yells or takes credit for your work)

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 13-14** commentary to emphasize the following idea (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

Jesus is greater than Jacob because His **gift** is greater—one sip from the water that Jesus **offers** is enough to never thirst again.

TRANSITION: Jesus revealed to the Samaritan woman that she was looking for the fulfillment of her desires in all the wrong places. Her thirst for satisfaction would not be quenched by chasing after the desires of her flesh but only in the “living water” that Jesus has to offer. This “living water” brings eternal life and satisfaction in God alone. Next, Jesus taught her what the true worship of God entails.

NOTES



SAMARITAN

Samaritans were looked down on by Jews because they only believed in the authority of the Pentateuch, the first five books of Scripture from Moses. They worshiped God on Mount Gerizim in Shechem because that was where the patriarchs worshiped. Their hope in a prophet/Messiah was derived solely from Deuteronomy 18:18, where God promised to raise up a prophet like Moses. Jews and Samaritans were generally hostile toward each other.¹

VOICES from THE CHURCH

“Because Jesus treated this stigmatized woman as someone worth talking to, she became a witness to Jesus, and all of Sychar was brought to him.”²

—Samuel Ngewa

COMMENTARY

VERSES 7-12 / In this conversation with the Samaritan woman, Jesus used the illustration of drinking and needing water to explain a spiritual need. Most people who live in the United States today never have to worry about water; we simply turn on a faucet and we have fresh water to drink. For those who lived in the ancient Near East, however, getting clean drinking water was a chore. They lived in an arid climate and knew the dangers of not having enough water.

Jesus went to Jacob's well "wearied . . . from his journey" and sat down at "noon" (4:6). Noon was not a popular time for people to go to the well to draw water. Yet a Samaritan woman approached to do just that.

Jesus asked the Samaritan woman for a drink, and she was shocked that He would even talk to her. John provided some background to the relationship between Jews and Samaritans: **"For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans."** The city of Samaria was once the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, which led to Jews and Samaritans having a long and troubled history. Don Carson describes their troubled past:

After the Assyrians captured Samaria in 722–21 BC, they deported all the Israelites and settled the land with foreigners, who intermarried with the surviving Israelites and adhered to some form of their ancient religion (2 Ki. 17–18). After the exile [of Judah to Babylon], Jews returning to their homeland . . . viewed the Samaritans not only as the children of political rebels but as racial half-breeds whose religion was tainted by various unacceptable elements . . . About 400 BC the Samaritans erected a rival temple on Mount Gerizim; toward the end of the second century BC this was destroyed by John Hyrcanus, the Hasmonean ruler in Judea.³

Consider all those barriers that Jesus crossed when talking with this Samaritan

woman! He crossed ethnic, racial, and religious barriers in asking her for a drink.

The woman was surprised that a Jewish man would talk to her, but Jesus told her that if she knew who He was, then she would have asked Him for a drink. She responded, **"Are you greater than our father Jacob?"** And of course, Jesus is greater.

VERSES 13-14 / How did Jesus respond to the woman's question? Jesus let her know that the water He offered truly satisfied because **"whoever drinks from the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again."** Jesus was telling her that He could give her a gift that would quench her thirst and satisfy the longings of her soul.

The patriarch Jacob, from the book of Genesis, dug this well, and it had been supplying the needs of the people who lived there in Samaria for about two thousand years at the time Jesus was talking with this woman. In fact, if you go to Israel today, you can go to this site and the well still has water. Jacob provided this well that would give the people enough water for their daily needs. Jesus's gift, however, is greater because one sip from the water that Jesus offers is enough to never thirst again!

Consider the characteristics of this gift Jesus brings: It is living water. If you drink of it, you will not thirst. It becomes a well of water springing up, and it gives eternal life. This living water is a metaphor for the living Holy Spirit, springing up and giving life to all who receive Him. We again see this connection of water to the Holy Spirit in John 7:38-39, when Jesus said, "Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" Now this he said about the Spirit."

The gift of the Holy Spirit that Jesus came to bring is a greater gift than the water Jacob provided because it leads to eternal life and satisfaction.

POINT 2

THE SON ENABLES TRUE WORSHIP (JOHN 4:19-24).

NOTES

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.”

READ: Ask a volunteer to read aloud **John 4:19-24** from his or her own Bible.

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 19-20** commentary to highlight the following point (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

KEY DOCTRINE #90: *Worship:* While many reduce worship to an event or the singing of worship songs, worship is first and foremost something of the **heart** and extends to all areas of **life**. The aim and focus of worship is God, giving Him the exact due of praise and adoration that He deserves. Worship should be carried out not only at a personal level within a Christian’s life but also in joining with other Christians in the corporate act of worship and stewarding our gifts for the glory of God. Corporate worship serves to edify and **strengthen** other Christians, but it also serves as a **witness** to non-believers of the greatness of God.

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 21-24** commentary to emphasize the following idea (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

True worship comes from knowing the truth of the **identity** and **work** of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, and from being indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

DISCUSS: Pass out copies of **PACK ITEM 10: THE HOLY SPIRIT**; then ask: **Why are truth and the Holy Spirit necessary for our worship of God?** (Jesus said we must worship in Spirit and truth; if we feel the indwelling of the Spirit but lack scriptural truth, our worship lacks depth; if we know the truth of Scripture but lack the work and power of the Spirit, our worship will lack heart; we cannot worship God rightly without knowing who He is and knowing how He has commanded us to worship Him, both of which He has revealed in His Word; the Holy Spirit ensures our fellowship with the Father and Jesus)

TRANSITION: Seeing that the gift the Son of Man brings is living water, we will see He is the One who enables us to worship in Spirit and in truth.



COMMENTARY

VERSES 19-20 / In the previous section, Jesus began speaking to an immoral Samaritan woman. He told her of how He could give her water that would quench her thirst forever. She misunderstood and thought He was only speaking of physical water. In verse 15, she asked Jesus to give her this water as she no longer wanted to have to go to the well to draw water. But in verses 16-18, Jesus told her to go get her “husband,” which exposed her sinful lifestyle since she had no husband but various sinful relationships. She had been drinking from the polluted fountains of sin rather than living water.

The woman then stated, **“I perceive that you are a prophet,”** and said to Jesus, **“Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.”** What was her reason for saying this? Remember, Jews and Samaritans were at odds ethnically, racially, and theologically. The Samaritans once had their temple on Mount Gerizim and the Jews had their temple in Jerusalem on Mount Zion. Samaritans only believed the validity of the books of Moses, the first five books of the Bible, while the Jews affirmed all of what we know as the Old Testament. The Samaritan woman was saying that she understood Jesus was a prophet, but she wanted to emphasize that they were different because they worshiped at different places. Some commentators think she was trying to deflect the conversation to something other than herself and her sin. Others think she truly saw Jesus as a prophet who knew her sin and she wanted to respond in confession and worship but didn’t know where she should do so.

VERSES 21-24 / Jesus responded to this woman’s statement, **“Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.”** Geographical location is not of primary importance to Jesus. He then told her that Samaritans worship what they do not know. Their selective focus on the books of Moses limited their

understanding of God and His mission. So Jesus said, **“Salvation is from the Jews,”** pointing to the full Jewish Scripture as the revelation of God, including the historical books and the books of the prophets that promise a coming Savior to bring salvation to the world. He was indirectly pointing to Himself.

In this text, Jesus repeated the idea of an **“hour is coming.”** The hour is an important theme in John’s Gospel and refers to Jesus’s death on the cross, resurrection, and exaltation. Verse 21 says, **“the hour is coming,”** and then verse 23 says, **“the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth.”** Jesus’s emphasis to the woman, then, is not on where to worship but how to worship because of the when that is **“coming, and is now here.”** An hour was coming when Jesus would die for our sins and resurrect and thus conquer sin and death as prophesied. This hour was coming, and when completed, worshipers would worship in the truth of the gospel and with the indwelling of the Spirit. This worship can only take place in and through Jesus Christ. Previously, John said that Jesus “dwelt among us” (1:14). The word “dwelt” could be translated “tabernacled.” Jesus is the fulfillment of the tabernacle and temple. Because of Christ’s saving work, we worship God not through a building or physical location but through faith in Him.

If we read on, we see that the woman responded, “I know that Messiah is coming” (4:25), and Jesus responded, “I who speak to you am he” (4:26). Most of the time, Jesus was reluctant to call Himself the Messiah, most likely because of the political and military connotations the term held to the Jews. But to the Samaritan woman, He could reveal Himself as such. This woman had gone to the well that day to draw water with her soul’s thirst not being quenched by the passions of her flesh. She would leave, however, knowing the Messiah and the gift of living water that He came to bring.

POINT 3

THE SON PROVIDES AN ABUNDANT HARVEST (JOHN 4:34-38).

NOTES

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.”

READ: Ask a volunteer to read aloud **John 4:34-38** from his or her own Bible.

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 34-35** commentary to highlight the following point (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

Jesus used the need for **food** and nourishment to teach His disciples about the importance of doing God’s **will**, especially in terms of evangelism and mission.

DISCUSS: Why is evangelism so important to God? (because His main mission is to save sinners into His kingdom and family; because He desires love and worship from all; because there is an urgency to save as many as possible; because He wants what’s best for His image-bearers)

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 36-38** commentary to emphasize the following idea (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

Whether sowing or reaping in the harvest of **souls**, all **roles** are important in the mission of God.

DISCUSS: How can we have a stronger sense of urgency in sharing with others the good news of Jesus? (praying for more opportunities for boldness; reading Scripture and seeing God’s heart to see people come to Him; putting time in our schedule to seek out people who need to know the gospel message)

TRANSITION: Jesus explained the living water that He brings in order to give eternal life, and He revealed His identity as the Messiah who leads to worshiping in Spirit and in truth. Now we are tasked to sow and reap the fields of unbelievers before us.

COMMENTARY

VERSES 34-35 / The Samaritan woman had gone and told others about the man she met at the well. Now we see Jesus interact with His disciples in order to teach them about the abundant harvest of evangelism.

After the Samaritan woman left the well to go and tell others about Jesus, the disciples returned with food for Jesus. They told Him to eat, but He told them of food “that you do not know about” (4:32). This puzzled them, so Jesus went on to explain, **“My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.”** Just as Jesus used the physical illustration of water to explain the spiritual reality of everlasting satisfaction in Him, here He used the physical illustration of food to explain the spiritual reality of full satisfaction in doing God’s will.

Jesus likely was alluding to the Old Testament passage of Deuteronomy 8:3-6, but specifically verse 3, “Man does not live on bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.” He was speaking of the importance of keeping God’s commands (Deut. 8:6) and how it satisfies. Jesus told His disciples that there was greater nourishment in doing the Father’s will than in any food they had to offer Him. And what was the Father’s will? To save people from every nation, tribe, and tongue—all humankind—and bring them into the kingdom of God. Jesus, in revealing His identity to the Samaritan woman and telling her of the good news of living water, did just that. And she in turn would share that good news—the gospel—with others. For Jesus, there was greater satisfaction in doing that than any meal this world has to offer.

Jesus then said, **“Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, then comes the harvest?’”** Jesus was saying that the harvest that comes from doing the will of God was already upon them. The fields were ready for harvest. The disciples were still young in learning what Jesus wanted of them. They were starting to understand

but possibly were hesitant in their mission, as many Christians today are. But Jesus wanted to throw them into the deep end, telling them the harvest was now, not later: “Your work begins now, not later when you’re more skilled or more mature or know more. Share with others like this Samaritan woman about who I am. Good news must be shared.”

VERSES 36-38 / Jesus continued, **“Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper can rejoice together.”** In teaching His disciples about the fields being “ready for harvest,” Jesus shows us our need to be urgent in the task of sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now is the time for every disciple to be sharing the gospel. Both sowing and reaping are happening at the same time and both are necessary. The one who reaps is not more important than the one who sows. Sometimes we are given the task of sowing, other times we get to experience the joy of reaping the harvest. Sometimes we will experience the hard, ground-breaking work of taking the gospel to somewhere it has not been preached only for it to fall upon deaf ears. But other times we may experience the joy of seeing some come to saving faith.

So as Jesus was sent to do the will of the Father, so too must His disciples do the Father’s will by reaping the harvest that **“others have labored”**—the prophets of old as well as John the Baptist and those before them. The disciples would benefit from their labor.

When Jesus revealed His identity to the Samaritan woman as the Messiah, and she went forth to tell others in town, this was the beginning of the movement of the gospel going forth to the nations. Is Jesus greater than Jacob? Yes, Jesus is greater than Jacob because He is the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham, Jacob’s grandfather, that through his offspring “all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 22:18).

MY RESPONSE

Because Christ satisfies our deepest longing, we worship Him as a way of life, praying that God might use us to draw others to Himself so that their thirst might be quenched as well.

HEAD:

Where most Jewish men would have seen the Samaritan woman as a person to be avoided, Jesus saw an opportunity to gather one of His scattered sheep (John 10:16). We can easily look at people outwardly and make a judgment upon them. However, this is not right and it is not meant to be this way for those who follow the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus's speaking to this social outcast and immoral woman was a picture of the gospel going forth to the nations. The message of the gospel is not simply for one people group or even for people whom we like but for all people that they may believe in Christ as their Lord and Savior.

How will knowing that Jesus Christ talked with all types of people help you live on mission for Him this week?

HEART:

The Jews looked down upon Samaritans for a variety of reasons. Jews believed the Samaritans were unclean and impure. Then adding to the list that this Samaritan woman lived an immoral life, she would have been seen as the lowest of the low. Jesus knew the depth of sin in her heart, but instead of passing her by, He extended His saving gift to her in order that she might come to know and worship the one true God. While most would have thought she was beyond the saving grace of God, Jesus saw her as someone needing to be saved from the polluted fountains (sinful relationships) she kept drinking from. We are wrong and sinful when we behave and think that some people are beyond the saving grace of God.

What hurtful attitudes toward a particular person or people group will you confess to God that He may restore you with the truth of His grace?

HANDS:

Jesus said that the fields “are white for harvest” (John 4:35). There are countless times when we fail to see the same truth that Jesus tells us here. Instead of being so discouraged by what is going on in the world around you, may you see it as an opportunity to pray that the Lord would give you opportunities this week to sow the seeds of the gospel.

With whom will you sow the seeds of the gospel this week in hopes of seeing a harvest for Christ?

NOTES

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

“Jesus calls the quickening gift of the Spirit ‘living water’ because mere human nature is parched to its very roots, now rendered dry and barren of all virtue by the crimes of the devil. But now human nature runs back to its pristine beauty, and drinking in that which is life-giving, it is made beautiful with a variety of good things and, budding into a virtuous life, it sends out healthy shoots of love toward God.”⁴

—Cyril of Alexandria
(c. 376-444)

POINT 1: THE SON GIVES LIVING WATER (JOHN 4:7-14).

+ COMMENTARY

“That Jesus and the woman are alone at the well may indicate that this woman who has had five husbands and is now with a sixth man (John 4:18) has come for water at a time when she knows she will not encounter other people. She had no idea she would meet Jesus at the well and is clearly surprised when this Jewish man speaks to her. She was a woman, a Samaritan, and her history with men granted her no esteem in that culture. Not only does Jesus ask her for a drink (v. 7), he does so in spite of the fact that no one else is present (v. 8; cf. v. 27). Jesus would do what was right, no matter the circumstances, even if the circumstances lent themselves to misinterpretations, suggesting he might be in the wrong (cf. v. 27). So often people see the right they should do, recognize it could be misinterpreted, and allow fear to prevail over courage. One aspect of Jesus’ greatness of character is that fear of man never prevailed over what virtue prompted him to do.”⁵

+ COMMENTARY

“In spite of all the risks of misunderstanding and the social stigma attached to talking to a woman in public, especially to one he did not know, Jesus, moving in God’s plan, asked her a natural question. He requested her help in drawing some water to quench his thirst (4:7b). While this was a genuine request, he was also wanting to share with her and her people the gift of living water that would quench their spiritual thirst. This encounter highlights God’s love for the Samaritans whom the Jews considered outcasts . . . The woman was astonished that Jesus, a Jew, not only spoke to her but even asked her for a drink (4:9). Jesus was breaking the centuries-old socio-ethnic barrier of Jewish-Samaritan prejudice. He was also crossing the gender barrier generally prescribed by his society. As God’s Messiah, Jesus came to draw all people, including those ‘the Jews’ considered outside of God’s favour.”⁶

+ ILLUSTRATION

Music reveals the heart of a person or a society. Songs like “I Can’t Get No Satisfaction” from the Rolling Stones and U2’s “I Still Haven’t Found What I’m Looking For” reveal a society shaped by longings and desires that don’t satisfy. Jesus is the only thing that truly satisfies. In a culture that always wants more because the latest fix is only a temporary one, our need to point others to Jesus Christ is not only imperative because of our obedience to Him but also because of our love for our neighbor. People need something that truly satisfies. Point them to Jesus.

EXTRA

POINT 2: THE SON ENABLES TRUE WORSHIP (JOHN 4:19-24).

+ COMMENTARY

“The Samaritans did not believe that there were prophets such as Amos and Isaiah in the biblical period. Since they embraced only the Pentateuch, they understood the expectation of Deuteronomy 18:18, which said a great prophet would follow Moses (“I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him”). But this was to be the messianic figure of the final day. Therefore in referring to Jesus as a prophet (the prophet?), the woman unwittingly has opened the subject of messianism for Jesus. This is a common Johannine technique, in which characters operating on an earthly plane not only fail to understand spiritual things, but occasionally use language that bears a meaning more profound than they realize (cf. 11:50; 18:37, 39; 19:19–22).”⁷

+ COMMENTARY

“The issue was clear. If Jesus had entered the age-old argument of which was the ‘right’ temple (like our arguments about the ‘right’ church), the woman would not have had to face herself and her sin. Christians who seek to be ambassadors for Christ must always be wary of falling into the trap of arguing about the ‘right’ place of worship or the ‘right’ denomination. Just as Jesus did not argue with the presuppositions of Nicodemus (John 3:2) and the paralytic (5:7), Jesus did not argue with the woman here. The point is not winning arguments but introducing people to the dimension of God in their lives. The model of Jesus is thus very instructive. He turned the conversation away from place of worship to nature of worship. In so doing, he modeled a correct evangelistic perspective. But Jesus did not leave the woman with a vague witness about God. He pushed her to think about the personal God who acts in history. First, he called her to an eschatological reality (the coming hour) that would affect all worship (4:21). Because God has acted primarily through people in the world, he is not basically building-oriented. The mention of ‘hour’ here is a Johannine theme that encapsulates the decisive moment in history of the crucifixion and resurrection that transformed and continues to transform human reality. Second, Jesus reminded her that salvation is directly related to God’s working in history (4:22). The issue was not a matter of national or tribal pride. That was the woman’s perspective on God and religion. It is also a familiar theme among many Americans. The issue, however, was understanding how God had chosen to reveal the divine purpose in history. Worship devoid of understanding God’s activity in history operates within a vacuum. To make this point clear, the evangelist employed his theme of knowledge. Jesus said that Samaritan worship lacked knowledge, the critical relational aspect of genuine worship. Third, Jesus defined acceptable worship as participating in two revealed aspects of divine reality: “spirit and truth” (4:23).”⁸

+ OPTIONAL TEACHING ACTIVITY

Pick out a few common worship songs, current or from the past, and print out copies of the lyrics for your group members. Break up into small teams and have people dissect the songs to see if they think the songs could be sung in Spirit and in truth. Answers may vary and may be graciously debated together.

POINT 3: THE SON PROVIDES AN ABUNDANT HARVEST (JOHN 4:34-38).

+ COMMENTARY

“Jesus came to do the Father’s will (5:36; 6:38), and always did no less (8:29). His works were the works of God (9:3–4; 10:25, 32, 37–38; 14:10; 17:4). No-one has ever exemplified the truth of Deuteronomy 8:3 in anything like the degree Jesus has: man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord . . . If in his dealings with the Samaritan woman Jesus was performing his Father’s will, there was greater sustenance and satisfaction in that than in any food the disciples could offer him. Indeed, all of Jesus’ ministry is nothing other than submission to and performance of the will of the one who sent him (a frequent designation for God: e.g. 5:23–24, 30, 37; 6:38–39; 7:16, 18, 28, 33; 8:16, 18, 26, 29; 9:4; 12:44–45, 49; 13:20; 14:24; 16:5). Once the cross is firmly in view, Jesus can pray, ‘I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do’ (17:4 . . .). This sense of the mission of the Son . . . becomes a dominant theme in 5:19–47, making the present passage an anticipatory link.”⁹

+ COMMENTARY

“The long walk from the south to the north, the disciples’ pressing [Jesus] with endless questions, the incessant crowds, and the constant questions and badgering made him a tired man. Then the woman came to the well. After the initial verbal sparring, the conversation began to pick up, and so did he. He was exhilarated in the service of God. He was feasting on the potential he saw in that woman’s life. He was so absorbed in what could happen to her that he forgot himself. Jesus found sustenance by being consumed by God’s work.”¹⁰

+ ILLUSTRATION

“During the drought conditions a few years ago, much of the seed that had been planted did not come up. The seed that did produced runty plants that promised a scanty yield, if any at all. Grass burned up in the intense heat, and the cattle nearly starved. Many farmers were forced to sell their cattle. Except those who faced bankruptcy or foreclosure, few farmers were giving up. In many cases they could be seen plowing up hopelessly lost crops and planting other seed. They worked in hopes of refreshing rain and an eventual harvest. If they were so persistent, should sowers of the seed of the Word of God do less? Yes, many will reject our witness. Others will receive it superficially, only to show their true colors when the going gets rough. Some will truly be saved but will yield little or no harvest as they get caught up in the temporal things of this age. But we must persist, knowing that others will be saved and will give themselves wholeheartedly to the service of the Lord, yielding an abundance of souls led to Christ (see Mark 4:1–20).”¹¹

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