



That you may believe... **Leaders Guide for Week 4**

(Times are approximate) – start time: _____

Welcome

- Welcome your group and maybe share something that inspired you in this week's study.
- You may ask one or two in your group to do the same but watch your time.

(+8 min)

Opening prayer

- Some attributes for praising God, He's: accessible, beautiful, creator, divine, eternal, faithful, gracious, holy, immutable, jealous, King of kings, Lord of lords, merciful, near, omnipotent, perfect, quiet, radiant, sovereign, truth, unsurpassed, vindicator, wise, yearning, and zealous.
- All these describe some characteristic of God.
- A good way to begin your prayer is by praising God for who He is.
- This means our focus and our attention is placed on Him and not what He has done for us or needs we might have, just on Him.
- Try it and you may find your prayers become more personal with Him.

(+2 min)

Opening Comments

- Last week Jesus gave a wonderful teaching to the religious leader Nicodemus by identifying his, and all peoples, need to be born again.
- John then followed the account of Nicodemus with the witness John the Baptist gave regarding Jesus (3:22-36) by making the wonderful statement, *"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."*
- Then John brings us to this second narrative where Jesus shares His true identity with this Samaritan woman before anyone else!
- What an example of Jesus' love for everyone!
- One question in this week's study lesson is to identify some of the differences between Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman.
- But we need to also see that they had some things in common too.
- For example, they both thought they were all right spiritually.
- They both had an inner hunger to better understand Jesus and His teachings.
- Nicodemus thought he was all right because of his spiritual education, place in the church.
- The woman because of her superstitions and religious traditions.
- Nicodemus and the woman have a great deal in common with the majority of those who live in our own very self-satisfied time.
- Both Nicodemus and the woman were crudely literal, or materialistic, in their reaction to Jesus' words.
- They did not think in spiritual terms.
- This thinking ties in with Paul's teaching to the Corinthians in 1 Cor. 2:14 where he says, *"The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned."*

- As this relates to today, John R. W. Stott of All Souls Church in London writes, “Authentic Christianity – the Christianity of Christ and His apostles – is supernatural Christianity. It is not a tame and harmless ethic, consisting of a few moral platitudes, spiced with a dash of religion. It is rather a resurrection religion, a life by the power of God.”¹
 - Another similarity is that both had in common the fact that they, like unbelievers even today, were empty spiritually and thus sensed a need for God even though their outlook on life and their intellectual convictions denied it.
 - A final commonality of the two is the fact that they were lost spiritually; that is, in the words of the apostle Paul, they had “sinned and fell short of the glory of God (**Rom. 3:23**).
 - So we have similarities and differences between Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman.
 - As the study lesson says, when we study Scripture, we should ask ourselves these primary questions: Who is being discussed, what is being said to the people by the author, why is he saying it, how does it fit in with his day and ours, what does it say to me, what will I do about it – if anything.
 - Sometimes we read something in Scripture that requires us to take into account, at least in part, the historical significance.
 - Often clues are given in the passage that identifies that for us.
 - For instance in this study, in **4:9** there is a note about that day – (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans).
 - This gives even more emphasis to what Jesus is doing with this Samaritan woman.
 - This passage is so important to all of us.
 - Again, it is the first place in John’s gospel, where Jesus specifically identifies Himself as the Messiah and He does it to a Samaritan woman!!
 - God’s plans and thoughts certainly are not our plans and thoughts!
- (+12 min)

Discussion of the Study Lesson – (~32 min)

This week’s title: The Living Water - **John 4:1-42**

Highlighted verse: “...whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” - **John 4:14**

Day 1: Read John 4:1-42

1. Read **John 4:1-42** at least once, jotting down initial observations.

- As in past weeks, this is a time to let people share.
- You might phrase a question to them, “What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you in these verses?”
- This will help people become aware that when something really jumps out at them, it is most likely caused by the Holy Spirit’s revealing it to them.

(+8 min)

Day 2: Read John 4: 1-18

1. When reading the Bible we should seek to understand the author's original meaning as best we can. Sometimes this involves considering the historical context too.

a) Do you think John meant to show a contrast between Nicodemus in chapter three and the Samaritan woman in chapter four? List some differences between Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman. Why do you think John may have described these encounters with Jesus so close together?

- Nicodemus: man, Jew, learned, powerful, respected, lifestyle viewed as godly, and orthodox
- Samaritan woman: women, Samaritan, unschooled, without influence, lifestyle viewed as ungodly and despised
- All people need Jesus.
- Including those who think they are religious and are respected for being so.
- Also this includes those who are not considered religious and are not respected.

(+2 min)

b) Historically, it was sinful for Jewish men to talk with Samaritan women. What do we learn about Jesus from his encounter with this woman?

- Jesus loves all people. Jesus was more concerned with caring for people than he was concerned with what was considered socially appropriate.
- A brief note here about how women were viewed in Jesus' day.
- To understand, we must look to Genesis where God created both 'male and female' (**Gen. 1:27; 5:2**)
- Both were created in God's image and both were given the responsibility of exercising authority over God's creation.
- From man (Adam) He created woman, "a helper comparable to him" (**Gen. 2:18, 20**).
- Man is incomplete without woman.
- Because she is called a "helper" does not imply that she is inferior to man.
- The same Hebrew word translated as "helper" is used of God in His relationship with Israel (**Ps. 33:20; 70:5**).
- From this beautiful relationship created by God man corrupted!
- In Jesus' day it was so bad that one of the Jewish prayers in that era declared "I thank Thee that I am not a woman."
- A woman was thought of more as a "thing" and should be entirely subordinate to man.
- On top of the view of women, the view of a Samaritan was even worse.
- There is not room or time enough to fully discuss Samaritans but here are a couple of key things:
- Samaritans were a "mixed race" contaminated by foreign blood and false worship stemming from when Samaria was overtaken by the Assyrians in 722-721 B.C..
- Sargon replaced the deported Israelites with foreign colonists (**2 Kings 17:24**).
- These newcomers intermarried among the Israelites and eventually, the Samaritans took part in their pagan religions/rituals.
- As a result, Jews had a very negative view of the Samaritans.
- The Samaritans eventually broke their relationship with the Jews during the time of Eli.
- So by Jesus' day, Samaritans were viewed very much like pagans.
- Hopefully, this helps you appreciate even more how preposterous it was to the disciples that Jesus would be talking to a Samaritan woman.

(+4 min)

2. What do you think Jesus meant by "living water"? How do you understand the thirst Jesus talks about?

- See also **John 7:36-48**.

- Quote from D.A. Carson The Gospel According to John. “The water is the satisfying eternal life mediated by the Spirit that only Jesus, the Messiah and Savior, can provide”.
- God’s grace.
- God’s love.
- The transforming power of the Holy Spirit.
- From the Old Testament: **Jeremiah 2:13** speaks to His divine activity.
- From the hymn: “I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say”
I heard the voice of Jesus say, Behold, I freely give
The living water; thirsty one, stoop down, and drink, and live.
I came to Jesus, and I drank of that life giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived, and now I live in Him.

(+3 min)

Day 3: Read John 4: 18-42

1. What decision did the woman face?

- She needed to acknowledge her need for living water
- She need to believe that Jesus is the Messiah
- She needed to make a decision to repent

(+2 min)

2. Read **John 4: 35-38** and **Matthew 9:36-38**. What is the harvest and who are the harvesters?

- This is a good discussion question.

(+2 min)

Day 4: Read John 20:31

1. Consider how **John 4:1-42** relates to John’s purpose in writing this Gospel. “...that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (**John 20:31**). What do we learn about Jesus from his declaration in **John 4:26**?

- Try to get two to four responses to this question.

(+2 min)

2. Read **John 4:39-42**. Notice how often the word *believe* appears in these verses. What did the Samaritans believe about Jesus?

- Again, try to get two to four responses.

(+2 min)

Day 5: Read John 4:1-42

1. Jesus speaks of living water in this passage. How has Jesus quenched your thirst with living water?

- This is a personal question and you may ask one or two people as they come in if they would help you on this particular question if no one wants to share.
- It’s a good on personal questions to do this sometimes.

(+5 min)

2. Jesus was willing to speak with a person others would have avoided. Can you think of some people that may be viewed as despised by the church today? How can we follow the example of Jesus?

- There are many possible examples of “despised” people: LGBT, drug dealers, human traffickers
- Model of Jesus: he did not avoid those considered “sinners”; He wanted to enter into a conversation, he responded in love, he started a dialogue. He also spoke the truth and did not avoid saying what sin is.

(+2 min)

Closing Comments

- As we read this narrative of the Samaritan woman we can see how her knowledge of Jesus increases until she is thinking of Him as the Messiah (**4:28**).
- What was her learning process in this brief encounter?
- She knew He was a Jew (**7-10**) and the relationship between Jews and Samaritans.
- The note John placed in the passage (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans) can be translated “ask no favors from the Samaritans,” or “use no vessels in common with the Samaritans.”
- Jesus pointed out that she was ignorant of three important facts: Who He was, what He had to offer, and how she could receive it.
- She questioned if He was greater than Jacob (**11-15**) and of course He didn’t answer the question directly but continued by stating that the *water* He offered would quench her thirst for eternity!
- She immediately asked for His *water*.
- She didn’t realize what she was actually asking but she was making progress.
- Next she perceived Him as a prophet (**16-24**)
- To quote Warren W. Wiersbe, “[Jesus knew] the only way to prepare the soil of her heart for the seed is to plow it up with conviction.”²
- So Jesus confronted her about the life she had lived.
- She tried to change the subject by discussing the difference between the Jewish tradition and the Samaritan’s.
- Jesus again revealed her spiritual ignorance: she did not know who to worship, where to worship, or how to worship (**21-24**).
- Finally, in spite of her ignorance, there was one truth this woman did know: the Messiah was coming and would reveal the secrets of hearts.
- And we come to that awesome statement by Jesus, (**26**), “*Then Jesus declared, “I who speak to you am He.”*”
- He didn’t tell Nicodemus who He was, the disciples weren’t even sure at this point, and John the Baptist had his doubts but our loving Jesus revealed the truth of who He was to a woman who had no authority, and shouldn’t even have had the conversation with Jesus!
- What a marvelous Savior!

(+5 min)

Closing Prayer

(+1 min)

¹ John R. Stotts, *Christ the Controversialist* (London: Tyndale Press, 1970), pg 64.

² Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary New Testament Volume 1* (Cook Communication Ministries, 2001), pg. 300