

Samaritan Woman By The Well

John 4:1-45

Preached by Phil Kayser at DCC on 2021-12-5

Please turn in your Bibles to John chapter 4. We have come to the 28th woman of faith in our series. This is another nameless woman, but she forms a very important part in John's development of this book. Reading verses 1-45.

Background - how the 7 overlaying structures of the book and other Yohannine themes help us to understand this woman

To get a well-rounded picture of this unnamed woman, I think it is helpful to see how John highly values *her* story in the development of *his* overall story. He does after all devote 45 verses to her. And I believe she *perfectly* illustrates some of the central themes of this book. When I did an overview of the Gospel of John in May of 2020, I pointed out that it has at least seven overlays of very sophisticated structure. And the Samaritan Woman plays a vital role in most of those structures. I'll only mention four. (Please bear with me; I do think this is important material.)

First, the book outlines very well as a covenant lawsuit against Israel.¹ On my dating (and the dating of several conservative scholars), this Gospel was written in AD 65,² and John

¹ John Gilmore says, "The Gospel of John is structured after legal interests and studded with sustained legal interaction." John Gilmore, *The Trials of Christ* (Fearn, UK: Christian Focus Publications, 2001), 12. John Gilmore, (Fearn, UK: Christian Focus Publications, 2001), 12. The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology shows how the whole book is a covenant lawsuit against Israel, where Israel is treated as Egypt and the world and the church is being treated as the New Israel. The whole article is helpful, but here is a snippet - "The Fourth Gospel provides the setting for the most sustained controversy in the NT. Here Jesus has a lawsuit with the world. His witnesses include John the Baptist, the Scriptures, the words and works of Christ, and later the witness of the apostles and the Holy Spirit. They are opposed by the world, represented by the unbelieving Jews. John has a case to present, and for this reason he advances arguments, asks juridical questions and presents witnesses after the fashion of the OT legal assembly." NIDNTT, s.v. "WITNESS, TESTIMONY," 3:1,048. Silva says, The Fourth Gospel provides the setting for the most sustained controversy in the NT. Here Jesus has a lawsuit with the world. His witnesses include John the Baptist, the Scriptures, the words and works of Christ, and later the witness of the apostles and the Holy Spirit. They are opposed by the world, represented by the unbelieving Jews. John has a case to present, and for this reason he advances arguments, asks juridical questions, and presents witnesses after the fashion of the OT legal assembly. The same observation is true of the book of Acts, though Luke develops his case somewhat differently from John." Moisés Silva, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 244.

² This conclusion is reached from a number of strands of evidence:

1. It is written as a covenant lawsuit against Israel (see footnote 1). This means that Israel must still be in existence.
2. Biblical presuppositions related to canonicity require that it to have been written before AD 70. See my book on the Canon for details.
3. In John 5:2 John uses the present tense of "is" (ἐστίν) to describe something that was destroyed in AD 70 and no longer in existence after that ("there is in Jerusalem, by the sheep-gate, a pool (the one called Bethesda in Hebrew) which has five porticoes"). This means that it had to have been written before AD 70.
4. John 11:49 and 11:51 both indicate that at the time John wrote this Gospel, Caiaphas was no longer High Priest. Caiaphas was High Priest from 18-37 A.D. This narrows the possibilities to between AD 37 and AD 70.
5. Church fathers say that John was written after the Synoptic Gospels. If Matthew was written in AD 40, Mark in AD 45, and Luke in AD 57, this further narrows the possibilities to between AD 57 and AD 70.

knows that God is about to judge Israel. But since he is an apostle to the Jews, he is doing everything in his power to convince Jews of two things: First, that their Messiah has come and they need to repent for having rejected Him. It's a beautiful Gospel tract, and that's why so many people hand out Gospels of John. It continues to be a perfect Gospel tract. Second, John is trying to convince the Jews that Jesus is the Savior of the World and not just of Jews. Look at how he ends the story in verses 43-45.

John 4:43 Now after the two days He departed from there and went to Galilee. 44 For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country. 45 So when He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things He did in Jerusalem at the feast; for they also had gone to the feast.

So Galilee received Him; Samaria received Him; but Judea would not. Thematically this story is helping to set the stage for God's rejection of Israel because of their rejection of His Son, and of Christ's kingdom going to the Gentile world - starting with Galilee of the Gentiles, moving on to Samaria, and then on to the uttermost part of the world. There's bad news (there's judgment) and then there is good news (there's a way out of the judgment). That's the pattern for preaching the Gospel.

Second, I have a three page outline of the book that looks at it through the lens of the Exodus of Moses and Israel out of Egypt. Jesus is the glory cloud in chapter 1 tabernacling with man and calling the true Israel out of Egypt, with Egypt symbolically representing apostate Judaism. Throughout the book, the Pharisees and other Jewish leaders are treated as unsaved Egypt just as they are in the book of Revelation. And this story starts with a controversy with the Pharisees. Look at verses 1-3:

Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), He left Judea and departed again to Galilee.

They hated both John and Jesus. They hated John because his baptism implied that Israel was apostate and needed to be converted. John treated unconverted Jews as Gentiles. That's what John's baptism meant - that Israel had been excommunicated and needed to come back to the true Israel through baptism. And that offended the Pharisees. They knew the meaning of his proselyte baptism and they were not about to consider themselves pagans. So they were very offended with John's baptism.

6. The Muratorian Canon gives no date for the Gospel of John, but presupposes that John's "fellow-disciples" were still alive when it was being written. This argues against a later date.

7. The Syriac *History of John* says that Paul and Peter convinced John to write the Gospel before they were slain by Nero. Since Peter was slain between AD 64-68 and since Paul was slain in AD 65, there can be no date later than AD 65.

8. There is much evidence in the book that it was written during a period when all Christians were kicked out of the synagogues and the distinction between "Jews" and Christians was both legal and practically carried out - including the right to kill Christians. This would put the timing between AD 62-68. 9. For detailed arguments against a later date than AD 65 and several other arguments in favor of the date of AD 65, see John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*. Though Robinson is a moderate liberal, and though liberals tend to date everything late (even into the second century), he was forced by the internal and external evidence to come to the conclusion that every book of the New Testament was written before AD 70. For a fun interaction with a person who denies an early date for the Gospel of John, see <https://bible.org/article/john-52-one-more-time-response-andreas-kostenberger>

But now that they heard that Jesus was baptizing more disciples than John had, it makes them even more offended. So Jesus deliberately leaves Israel and goes to Galilee of the Gentiles in verse 3. And then the very next verse shows that he needed to go to Samaria. Samaria was treated as worse than the Gentiles by the Pharisees because their origin. And we will get to that in a bit. Yet Jesus brings a huge harvest of disciples into his bride from that hated people.

And that introduces the third theme- that of bride and bridegroom. In John 2 you have Jesus acting in the place that the bridegroom would normally act - by providing wine. In John 3 John the Baptist explicitly says that he (John) is the best man and Jesus is the bridegroom seeking a new bride. Well, the very next scene is Jacob's well - the place where Jacob met Rachel. And as Andrew Lincoln points out,³ his asking for a drink is very similar to the language used by Eliezer, the steward of Abraham, when he asks for a drink of Rebekah - the woman who would be the wife of his master's son. And for that matter, the Exodus themes would remind Jewish readers that Moses found his wife at a well too. But John explicitly connects all of this to the well story of Jacob, and one author gave nine detailed one-to-one correspondences between the details of this story and the details of Jacob finding a bride at a well. Those nine correspondences cannot be accidental. The point will be that Christ's bride will include far more than simply Jews.⁴ And this woman

³ Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel according to Saint John*, Black's New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 2005), 172.

⁴ Ellen Waite says > First, each story begins with a man journeying and arriving at a well. In Genesis 29 Jacob has been traveling from Bethel, comes to 'the land of the people of the East' and sees a 'well in a field' (Gen. 29:1-2). In John 4, Jesus is traveling from Judea, arrives at 'a city of Samaria, named Sychar', and sits down at the well because he is exhausted (Jn 4:6). > Second, in both stories the time of day when the man arrives is specified. It is 'still high day' in Gen. 29:7; and 'about the sixth hour', that is, noonday in Jn 4:6. These two temporal references may reasonably be considered to refer to approximately the same time of day. > Third, although it is a minor feature, both stories mention the animals who come to drink from the well. In Gen. 29:2, there are three flocks of sheep waiting at the well for the arrival of all the flocks and for the well to be opened; in Jn 4:12, the well is described as the place where Jacob's animals drank. > Fourth, in both stories there are obstacles or difficulties to obtaining the well's water. The shepherds in Genesis 29 object that they cannot water the animals until all the flocks are present and the stone is rolled from the mouth of the well (Gen. 29:8); indeed it is Jacob who rolls away the stone and waters Laban's flocks (Gen. 29:10). This provides the occasion for the targumic speculations on the miraculous spring of water from this well. In Jn 4:11, the Samaritan woman objects to Jesus' promise to give 'living water' by saying that he has nothing with which to draw water. This objection then leads directly to the comparison, 'Are you greater than our father Jacob?' (Jn 4:12), and to Jesus' discourse about the water that he will give, the water that wells up to eternal life (Jn 4:14). Thus, not only is there a difficulty presented in getting the water in each story, in both the resolution of that difficulty comes from the man's (Jacob's or Jesus') action or words.¹⁴ > A fifth and obvious correspondence is that in each story a woman comes to the well and finds the man already there. When Rachel comes to the well in Gen. 29:9, we are already well into the story, whereas in John 4, the woman's appearance occurs soon after Jesus' arrival, but still after the fulsome description of the place. > Sixth, in both stories the man already has knowledge about the woman before she arrives. In Gen. 29:5-6, Jacob has asked the shepherds about Laban and discovered that Rachel is about to come to the well; he, an apparent stranger, is then able to use that knowledge not only to recognize Rachel and to kiss her, but then also to reveal to her his own identity (Gen. 29:11-12). In Jn 4:18, Jesus, a stranger to the Samaritan woman, discloses his apparently supernatural knowledge of her marital history; it is on this basis that she declares that he is a prophet (Jn 4:19) and tells the other inhabitants of the city, 'He told me all I ever did' (Jn 4:29). Thus, this prior knowledge about the woman is also essential to the revelation of the man's identity, whether as Jacob, or as the prophet, and eventually, in Jesus' case as the Messiah (Jn 4:26, 29). > Seventh, the woman rapidly goes to tell someone else. Rachel runs to tell her father Laban that Jacob has come (Gen. 29:12). The Samaritan woman goes (fairly quickly, since she leaves her water jar behind) to the city and tells the people there about this stranger whom she has met at the well (Jn 4:28-29). > Eighth, when this third party whom the woman informs then meets the man, a revelatory sentence is uttered. In each case, moreover, the utterance crowns the narrative. Laban says to Jacob, 'Surely you are my bone and my flesh' (Gen. 29:14). The Samaritans who have come out to meet Jesus say to the woman, 'No longer do we believe through

wouldn't be the bride; she would be a *part* of the bride represented by all the Samaritans who also came to the well to be joined to Jesus. Now, in each of those cases the groom was going to a foreign land to find a bride. So that is a huge structuring element that helps us to understand why John spends so much time on this woman.

I'll only mention one more structuring element that might relate, and that is that every chapter of the book is structured around the temple and how the temple points to Christ, and how Christ will replace the temple and remove any concept of one holy place of worship. And of course, rejecting both her mount Gerizim and Jerusalem as the place of worship in verses 21-24 is a big part of this story. There was huge debate between the Jews and the Samaritans on whether Jerusalem or Gerizim was the holy mountain where God met with His people, and Jesus wipes that concern away by pointing out that once the Messiah has come, earthly location is irrelevant, and what matters is union with Him.

And the specific part of the temple that is behind chapters 4-7 is also significant to the story. We saw that chapters 4-7 are patterned around the table of shewbread portion of the temple that had 12 loaves of bread and chalices. In this chapter Jesus will begin to speak of how He is key to nourishment from heaven and water from heaven.

And in all of this John is presenting an apologetic for why the Jews must recognize that the Gospel goes beyond them and reaches to every culture, every problem, and crosses every obstacle in order to win the world for God. And the Samaritan woman is a beautiful example of the Gospel taking people out of the gutter, crossing geographical, social, racial, and other barriers to make a new temple, a new bride, a new people of God. So structurally this story really does fit beautifully into the overall flow of John's Gospel. But even if we didn't know about all those structures, we would know something important is being communicated since John devotes 45 verses to describing the implications of this woman. She will be a pivotal person in the whole book's narrative.

Overview of the story

So let's dive into an overview of her story.

Pharisees offended by Jesus, so He leaves (vv. 1-3)

We see first that Jesus deliberately left the Pharisees and went to the Gentiles. He went first to despised Galilee of the Gentiles, and then to despised Samaria. And I've already commented on the first three verses.

your word, for we ourselves have heard and know that this is truly the savior of the world' (Jn 4:42). > Finally, each story ends with a statement about how the man stays with these people for a certain length of time. In Gen. 29:14, Jacob stays with Laban for a month; in John, in response to the Samaritans' request, Jesus stays with them two days (Jn 4:40), a temporal reference that is specifically reiterated at the beginning of the next pericope, 'after the two days, he departed to Galilee' (Jn 4:43). > Ellen B. Aitken, "AT THE WELL OF LIVING WATER: JACOB TRADITIONS IN JOHN 4," in Craig A. Evans, *The Interpretation of Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity: Studies in Language and Tradition*, T&T Clark Academic Paperbacks (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 346-348.

Jesus “needed” to go through Samaria (v. 4) because He was always driven by a divine purpose

But look at the wording of verse 4: “But He *needed* to go through Samaria.” The Greek word δεῖ is more literally translated, “But it was *necessary* for Him to go through Samaria.” The Greek word δεῖ can be translated as “must,” or “needed,” or “necessary.” Why would it be necessary? After all, the Pharisees and other strict Jews preferred a longer route that avoided Samaria completely - unless like Josephus, they had an army accompanying them. (Yes, tensions were that high - you almost needed an army to be safe traveling through Samaria.) So it wasn’t an absolute “must” in terms of geography. He could have gone a different route. Then why the use of that strong term?

Well, theologians speak of the divine *dei* (that’s the Greek word for “must” - the divine must) as being God’s destiny that controlled every hour of Christ’s time. He *needed* to go because it was God’s time to save this woman and through her to save many Samaritans. This was a very deliberate reaching out to this woman, whom he saved from the gutter. An unwanted and despised woman is being sought by the Father to enter into relationship with Him and to worship Him. What a comfort that realization would have been to her.

This involved crossing racial divisions (v. 5a)

And if you look at your outlines you will see that John is going to introduce several divides that Jesus deliberately crossed over. And each of these divides is an encouragement to those who feel alienated from God. It is also an encouragement to us to evangelize outside of our comfort zones. Anyway, the first divide was a racial divide. Verse 5 says, “So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar...”

Samaria was occupied by the descendants of Joseph in northern Israel intermixed with many other nationalities. But the connection to Joseph is highlighted for a reason. The next phrase says, “near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.” Jacob gave that plot of ground to Joseph in faith because he believed God claimed all Palestine - and for that matter, all the earth. But hundreds of years later the northern tribes had apostatized and God dispersed many of them throughout the empire after they were conquered by Assyria. But Assyria didn’t deport everyone. The king of Assyria brought foreigners into the area of northern Israel, and they intermarried with the remaining Jews. When things didn’t go well, the king assumed it was because the god of that land needed to be worshiped differently, so polytheistic Assyria decided to add Yehowah to that area and created a syncretistic worship that sort of followed the Pentateuch, but not the rest of the Old Testament, and that had a rival temple to the one in Jerusalem. Their temple was on mount Gerizim, and the Jews had previously destroyed that temple. Racial tensions between Jews and Samaritans flared up over and over even into open war. Let me just give you one example. Twenty years before Jesus talked with this woman, a bunch of Samaritans made matters worse by disguising themselves and sneaking into the courtyard of the temple at Jerusalem and scattering human bones everywhere during Passover to defile the temple. You can imagine the outrage that resulted. And the leaders of both communities demonized the

other community in order to inflame the passions of the citizens. Racial tensions were at their height.

But despite racial tensions, God's grace had always been designed to carry the Gospel of the kingdom across racial barriers. This was true *even in the Old Testament*. In the Old Testament, missions was centripital. A centripital force draws things in. God wanted the Gospel that was pictured in the temple to be a magnetic force that would attract Gentiles to worship the true God there - and that all nations *were* welcomed there as can be seen by the court of the Gentiles in the temple. They didn't even have to get circumcised and become Jews. God wanted them converted and brought to the temple. In the New Testament Jesus was going to change that centripetal missions to centrifugal missions. A centrifugal force pushes people outwards with the Gospel powerfully spreading out to all the earth. And this story is the beginnings of the evangelization of Samaria that would continue in the book of Acts. What the Pharisees refused to do, Jesus would do. The Gospel was always designed to cross racial lines. And we should not be afraid to cross racial lines in Omaha.

This involved crossing travel taboos (v. 4-5a)

Next, it crossed travel taboos. As I mentioned, strict Jews didn't have any interest in evangelizing the Samaritans, didn't want to be contaminated by the Samaritans, and they certainly wouldn't buy things from them or eat with them. So Jesus is deliberately violating travel taboos that had been set up by the Pharisees.

This involved crossing social boundaries ("city of Samria")

Third, His missions involved crossing social boundaries. The social customs of the city of Samaria would be quite different than the social customs of the Jews. Those differences would make yet another area of discomfort.

This involved crossing gender taboos (v. 7a)

Fourth, His mission involved crossing gender taboos. The scribes, Pharisees, and rabbis had developed very unbiblical traditions that were quite misogynistic. They would never be caught talking to a woman in public or in private. Some didn't even want you talking too much to your wife. Let me read you a few quotes from famous teachers of that period. Philo said, "all public life with its discussions and deeds . . . (is) proper for men. It is [only] suitable for women to live indoors and to live in retirement."⁵ Rabbi Jose ben Johanan 150 years before Christ said, "talk not much with women."⁶ He would have definitely disapproved of what Christ was doing here. The Mishna (which was the oral teachings of the Pharisees of Christ's day) said this: "He that talks much with women brings evil upon

⁵ Philo, *De Specialibus Legibus*, 169, as quoted in James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), p. 64.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

himself, and neglects the study of the Law, and at the end he inherits Gehenna [or hell].”⁷ Rabbi Eliezer said, “If a man gives his daughter a knowledge of the Law, it is as though he taught her lechery” (mSot. 4.3).⁸ In another place he said “It is better that the words of the Law should be burned than that they should be given to a woman” (jSot. 3.4). James Hurley in his book on women claims that this was a common prevalent view in those times and that Christ was bucking against tradition. He did not allow the cultural taboos to stop God’s mandate of missions to women.

This involved drinking from a ceremonially “unclean” vessel (v. 7)

Even drinking from a vessel carried by this woman would have been considered by the Pharisees to make one unclean. Yet verse 7 says,

A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give Me a drink.”

Just try to imagine that statement in the context of the huge tensions between Jews and Samaritans of that day. This was a powerful statement that instantly cut through centuries of suspicion, prejudice, and hatred. If a taboo was not biblical, Jesus ignored the cultural taboos of the day. In fact, He often went *out of His way* to violate those taboos. Anything that hinders obedience to God’s Word must be overcome. And the Old Testament repeatedly commanded Israel to bring the good news to the nations. For example, Psalm 67:2 says, “That Your way may be known on earth, Your salvation among all nations.”

This involved violating the Pharisees’ food taboos (v. 8)

Verse 8 shows that Jesus deliberately violated Pharisaical food taboos. The “for” at the beginning of verse 8 indicates that ordinarily the disciples would have gotten him water. But they were gone to buy food. “For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.” Ordinarily Jews would not have been willing to eat food prepared by Samaritans since it would be considered unclean. But that is not a Biblical rule. It was a man-made rule. So Jesus had no problem breaking it.

This totally surprised the woman (v. 9)

And all of this totally surprised the woman. She was not used to any of this kind treatment from Jews. Verse 9.

John 4:9 Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, “How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?” For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.

Notice that absolute statement - “Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.” Barrier after barrier was being ignored in order to engage in missions. And the very crossing of these barriers must have been amazing to this woman. What Jesus was doing was far more

⁷ In mAb. 1.5, as quoted by Jacob Neusner, *The Rabbinic Traditions about the Pharisees before 70, Parts I–III, vol. 1* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2005), 16.

⁸ As quoted in Michael Card, *Luke: The Gospel of Amazement, Biblical Imagination Series* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2011), 141.

politically incorrect than our violations of mask mandates, vaccine mandates, or our statements that get canceled on Facebook and other forums. It was far more politically incorrect.

This involved talking to an immoral woman (vv. 17-18)

The last obstacle was talking to an immoral woman. It was already hinted at in that she came to well at the sixth hour, which would be noon for us. Jews counted twelve hours from dawn to dusk and then another twelve hours from dusk to dawn. Noon was the hottest hour and not the best time to engage in the tough work of lowering a bucket into a deep well and then hauling it up. If the modern identification of Jacob's well is correct, it is still over 100 feet deep. And then you have the hard work of carrying a bucket of water home through the blazing sun to the village a mile away. Those of you who have plumbing have no appreciation for the hard work of getting your daily water in most third world countries. And ordinarily, people would have gone to the well early in the morning or later in the day when it was much cooler. This indicates that she was likely a social pariah. We'll look at her immorality more in a bit, but let's first of all try to get a better picture of this woman whom Jesus evangelized.

The woman He evangelized

She was simple

First, she was simple-minded. A more sophisticated thinker might have caught the significance of Christ's various allusions to the Old Testament spiritual waters (in verses 10-14). He does after all speak of waters that are a gift from God and that result in everlasting life. Obviously not literal waters. But she is a literalist and asks how He can draw water since He doesn't have a bucket, or rope, and the well is deep. This shows that she is somewhat simple in her thinking. When He explains himself in verses 13-14 - that the waters he is talking about deal with deep spiritual thirst, inner renewal, and eternal life, she still doesn't get it, speaking only of water that needed to be carried to the village. She was simple-minded. Yet Jesus needed to go through Samaria to reach this simple woman because she was dear to God's heart. You are not dear to God because of your intellect. He doesn't seek you out because of your intellect. He doesn't need your intellect. After all, He is the omniscient one. The simple and the intellectual are one in God's body once they are saved. It's a huge application of the true Gospel.

She longed for something more than she had

Next, if you look at the way Jesus words Himself, you will see that He knew that she longed for something more than what she had. In verse 10 Jesus says,

"If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."

If you knew... you would have asked. She would have asked because she longed for the very thing that He was offering. What did Jesus know about her that in the 21st century we might miss?

Well, first, He knew that she was a social outcast. In former times she probably had fun going with the other girls to fetch water in the cool of the day. There would be friendly banter, the newest gossip, and perhaps some singing. But once she started sleeping around, everyone turned their backs on her. She was treated as an outcast. Indeed, the talk about her would have been so uncomfortable that she preferred to avoid all company and to travel alone. It was rare for women to ever travel alone. It is pretty clear that she was a social pariah.

She was immoral

Of course, this probably meant that she longed to be accepted and that she was lonely. It was no doubt why she had her first encounter with a guy - the desire to be hugged; to belong; to be told that you are loved; to be needed. Oh, to be needed and wanted! She knew she wasn't needed academically. She knew that the girls didn't need her friendship. And she no doubt knew that fornication and adultery was wrong, but her deep longing to belong and to be wanted helped her to justify that wrong. This is how women many times enter into sexual sin - they don't have their dad's heart; they want to be loved just as they are. The first man to take advantage of her no doubt made her feel good - at least for a while. He wanted her. That felt good. She belonged; she was loved - or so she thought. After all, he did agree to marry her. And then he ditched her. And to get those same longings fulfilled, she moved on to another and another, creating a trail of destruction in marriages and brokenness in lives that left her no doubt feeling guilty. She knew deep down that she was immoral and dirty. But she had a thirst that needed to be filled and she didn't know any other way of filling that longing.

She was evasive

Jesus offers her living waters to quench the thirst that never seemed to leave her, but she is evasive, not wanting to get into spiritual talk. Spiritual talk will make her feel guilty. Yes, he talked about a gift of God and living waters, but she preferred to keep the conversation off the spiritual and on the safer subject of water. Evangelism is always poking through into uncomfortable boundaries - and we need to get used to that discomfort. So she engages Him in a debate on the subject of the well. Some commentators assume that she is just testing to see if he is like the other men she knew - someone insincere and who might take advantage of her - even though the village was a mile away - within sight.⁹ But it is just as possible that she is simply being evasive. Verse 11:

John 4:11 The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? 12 Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?"

⁹ Borchert says, "Yet perhaps the woman was probing in her questioning to determine whether Jesus' conversation with her was actually unusual (cf. the disciples reaction at 4:27 and the comments concerning Jewish practice at that point). Jewish men indeed spoke to prostitutes, who did not fit the reckoning of true people of God, and therefore there was no violation of custom in speaking with them. Did she wonder whether Jesus was like most other men she knew? That question remains unanswered." Gerald L. Borchert, John 1-11, vol. 25A, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 203.

The way the Greek is phrased, her question expects a negative answer. Are you greater than Jacob? No, obviously not. No descendant of Jacob could be greater than Jacob. Anybody knows that! Well, this One *was* greater than Jacob. She just didn't know that yet. But she throws this out because it could be fodder for a discussion that was less convicting. And when you evangelize you will often find people debate you with inconsequential theological or other ideas.

But Jesus doesn't take the bait. He doesn't defend himself. He gets to the heart of the issue by saying,

"Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."

He makes it clear that He is speaking to her spiritual hunger and and her spiritual thirst. She is either dense or evasive or both when she says, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw." It's not a very sophisticated evasion. Again, it highlights her simplicity.

Regarding her husband

But Jesus just ignores her question and starts to bring conviction over sin. She will definitely get that. We can count on the fact that every human has a built-in knowledge of the law and they know that they are sinners. They know it.

He says, "Go, call your husband, and come here." He knew what has been going on in her life and he is going to confront her over her sin. Evangelism must always confront sin. It is not evangelism if there is no confrontation of sin. Though we are justified by faith alone, there is no faith where there is no turning from sin because repentance and faith are two sides of the same coin. You can't turn to God unless you are turning from something. This is why Ray Comfort has always tried to introduce the law into evangelistic outreaches. The law brings conviction, and with conviction people's hearts are opened to the Gospel.

Regarding her sin

The woman is evasive with *this* probing of Jesus by saying, "I have no husband." It was a partial truth designed to misdirect. Well, Jesus doesn't let her off the hook. Verses 17-18.

John 4:17 The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband,' 18 for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly."

Jesus is exposing her sins. She no doubt has guilt over broken covenants of marriage and guilt over her current adultery. It may seem rude to point out sin like this in other people's lives, but there is no evangelism without such conviction of sin. True evangelism acts as a scalpel revealing the cancer within.

When Jesus says, "in *that* (τοῦτο) you spoke truly," He was implying that she had evaded the truth earlier; that she was being deceptively evasive earlier; was not speaking the truth earlier. But even here she is not *yet* at the stage of repentance. You can speak truth without having genuine repentance. This can be seen from the fact that she does not admit to

sleeping around, but instead tries to change the subject and to engage him in another theological argument - another evasion. Verse 19:

John 4:19 The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship."

I have seen Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons do this over and over again - when you get to issues they can't answer or that are uncomfortable (such as their lack of assurance - Oh, boy; that's a sore spot for them because they don't have assurance of their salvation), they are trained to engage in a debate on some other interesting topic in order to get you off of their weak point. And many times inexperienced evangelists take the bait and they end up spinning their wheels. Interestingly, Jesus actually *answers* this rabbit trail because it will help in this particular situation to do so. Verse 21:

John 4:21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. 22 You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.

So He is making clear that the Samaritan religion was wrong and that they did not have the way of salvation. That may seem rude too, but without confronting false thinking we also miss true evangelism. He is closing the door to theological dialogue on *her* terms. But He wants to make it also clear that this debate between Jerusalem and Gerizim would soon become irrelevant since the temple would be replaced by Him. He keeps the important things important in His discussions. Verse 23:

23 But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

Jesus shows a Father who is seeking her (v. 23)

But those same verses were an invitation to trade in her false worship of a God whom she could never please and never find acceptance with and to look to this God who is a Father seeking for the lost and seeking the adoration of women just like her. That word "seeking such" was not just a call to repentance; it was a glimmer of hope that she could find someone who sought her in even her condition. She longed for relationship and this Father that Jesus was preaching provided relationship. The Samaritans knew nothing of God as a Father. He was only a god whom you tried to appease.

She knew Messiah was going to come (v. 25)

And as a sidenote, the Samaritans had been looking forward to the Messiah or Prophet that Moses had predicted would come. They did *sort of* believed in the Pentateuch. So as her sins are staring her in the face, she begins to wonder. Verse 25:

John 4:25 The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When He comes, He will tell us all things."

As simple as she was, God's Holy Spirit was at work, and she was beginning to connect the dots. God's Holy Spirit can guide you to use the right Scriptures to open the eyes of even the most obtuse people.

She was the first one Jesus clearly revealed His Messianism to (v. 26)

Well, Jesus makes His identity far more clear to her than He has to any Jew up to this point. Verse 26:

John 4:26 Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He."

That's all that He said, and her world comes crashing down on her. The other disciples came up at that moment and were amazed that Jesus would talk with a woman, but they don't dare question Him.

Her coming to faith

But she appears to have been genuinely converted and the void in her heart completely filled. Her faith can be seen by three things:

Evidenced by leaving her pot (v. 28a)

Verse 28 says, "The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men..." You don't leave waterpots to be stolen, but she is so excited about her discovery that she leaves it there and runs to town to tell the message. And she no doubt plans to come back for the waterpot, but she doesn't want to slow herself down.

Evidenced by sharing her faith with all six men (v. 28b-29a)

And who are the first ones that she shares the good news with? It is "the men" - in other words "all six men" whom she has previously been in sin with. This is frequently the way the Gospel flows. It reaches out to your oikos or web of immediate relationships, and those men at least were men that she could talk to. So she "said to the men, 'Come, see a Man..." She is leading people to Christ. She wants them to see Him too. And this is almost always what happens when people are newly saved. They are compelled to tell other sinners what has happened to them. Oh that our church would regain this sense of urgency for evangelism that *new* believers automatically have. This is our goal for this whole year - to rekindle a passion for sharing the good news with everyone; to give you training, tools, and opportunities to grow in this. And we are going to try to make it as simple and easy as possible. Michael is the elder heading that up and the leadership team for evangelism is the elders, Bill Crilly, John Mayes, and Daniel Noor. Take advantage of these tools and opportunities as they come up.

Evidenced by admission of her sins (v. 29b)

So first, her faith is evidenced with the haste with which she left her pot (which implies that she will come back to Him). It was evidenced by sharing her faith. Third, it was evidenced by admission of her sins. It takes a lot to get people to admit to their sins. She admits to the

truthfulness of what Jesus had said in verse 29: “Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?” The “could” does not have to express doubt on her part. It may reflect the painful past that very few believed her or trusted her in the past and may not trust her in this. She wants to be humble. But either way, doubts do often accompany faith in the initial stages of our walk. Don’t be disturbed by that. But she admits that He knew all about her sinful past. He knew. And she’s OK with that. In fact, it excites her.

The village coming to faith

As a result of her testimony the whole village comes to Christ. And this is not a rare phenomenon today either. The last century has seen many people movements - where entire tribes come to Christ in a matter of days, weeks, or months. In verses 30-38 Jesus looks at the people in white robes coming out of the village to the well and uses an analogy of fields being white to harvest. I won’t comment on these verses other than to read them. But John starts with the issues of bread and transitions into the issues of evangelism. Beginning at verse 30:

John 4:30 Then they went out of the city and came to Him.

John 4:31 In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, “Rabbi, eat.”

John 4:32 But He said to them, “I have food to eat of which you do not know.”

John 4:33 Therefore the disciples said to one another, “Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?”

John 4:34 Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. 35 Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! 36 And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. 37 For in this the saying is true: “One sows and another reaps.’ 38 I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors.”

It’s cool to play any part of another person’s conversion. God has given me that privilege a number of times in my life - not as many as a person with the *gift* of evangelism, but it is cool when it happens. For some, it is introducing people to the Gospel, but not seeing a conversion. For others it is being a prayer support as people share two by two. For others it is leading a person to Christ. But all of them get in on this glorious harvest. And those who play any part enter into the labors of the others. It’s such a cool koinonia. If you play any part in the evangelism of this church, you can share in each others rewards.

Jesus and the disciples establish a believing community among the Samaritans

The next verses show that Jesus and the disciples established a believing community among the Samaritans. It’s so important that new believers get immediately connected with a community. Jesus and the disciples are invited to stay, with many more coming to Christ as a result of this sinful woman coming to Christ. The Gospel often spreads through our networks of relationship - what some have called the oikos principle. There is an entire evangelism training book written on Oikos evangelism.

Though they denied that they believed because of her testimony (vv. 40-42)

Now it is true that because of her reputation, some were reluctant to say that they believed because of *her* testimony. They preferred to say that it was because of Christ's teaching that they believed.

John says that they *did* believe because of her testimony (v. 39)

But John insists that they *did* believe because of her testimony. I'll just read the rest of the story without comment, and then make some final applications from her life.

John 4:39 And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all that I ever did." 40 So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. 41 And many more believed because of His own word.

John 4:42 Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world."

Further applications

Our testimony doesn't have to be articulate to be used by God to save (v. 39)

What are some final applications? First, we often get nervous about what we will say, thinking that we don't have the gift of gab, and therefore say nothing. But verse 39 shows that many believed in Jesus "because of the word of the woman who testified, 'He told me all that I ever did.'" That's not much of a testimony, yet it resulted in them believing Jesus. They saw that Jesus knew her sins. They saw that she was forgiven of her sins. And they wanted the same for themselves. Be encouraged - God knows how to use even the simplest testimonies. Just be willing to testify. My dad told the story of a retarded man who handed a tract from his church to a businessman, asking him, "Do you want to go to heaven?" The businessman rudely said, "No." The retarded man said, "Well, go to hell then." He didn't know what else to say. And I don't recommend that form of evangelism, but God can take even the times we blow it to convert people. And He did in this case. For some reason the man grabbed the tract as he hurried on. But all day long those words haunted him - "Well, go to hell then. Well, go to hell then. Well, go to hell then." And he knew he was headed to hell. So he read the tract, got converted, and because the address of the Baptist church in Atlanta was on the tract, he started attending that church. He eventually told the pastor what had happened. The point is, God is not limited by our limitations. Just get involved however fearful and stumbling your testimony might be.

Be a true friend to sinners

Second, be a true friend to sinners. Many times we have mistaken ideas of what a true friend does. I have talked to people who have overlooked the rebellion, fornication, lies, and other sins of their friends because they think that's what a friend does. They have a false idea of unconditional love. But love does not enable sin. True love wants the holiness

of the person we love. Thus true love rebukes just as Jesus did. He said, “As many as I love, I rebuke” (Rev. 3:19). If we would be true friends of sinners, we need to preach the law and Gospel to them. We need to push past barriers to true friendship. We need to push past the barriers of sin and pride to true friendship. Be a true friend of sinners, not a fake friend.

Be a true friend to the outcast

Third, be a true friend of the outcast. This doesn't mean wallowing in the pit they are in. It means pulling them out of the pit. Others may cast them back in, but we can be those who reach out to the pariah's of this world and help them to change their lives by God's grace and His Biblical Blueprints for rebuilding. Many of the men are going through mercy ministries class and seeing that deacons are not called to do all the work of mercy ministries - they are called to stir up the body to do that work. When those in the gutter of sin know that they are loved, sought out, and accepted despite their ugly past, they can make huge progress.

Now, Jude does warn us to take precautions. It says, “And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.” Not hating the person, but hating the garment that is defiled - in other words the sins that accompany that person.

When pushing past some barriers, you don't want to set yourself up to fall into the same sin or to get a false accusation and a bad testimony. So Jude says, “others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.” Jesus was not in a closed building all alone with this woman. He was in a public place quite visible from the village a mile away. But He was a true friend by pulling her out of her former lifestyle.

We must learn to drink from Christ and not constantly be searching for water in broken cisterns (vv. 13-14 with Jer. 2:13)

Fourth, we must learn to drink from Christ and not constantly be searching for water in broken cisterns. You are not going to be a very convincing witness to a thirsty unbeliever if you are not drinking of Christ yourself. This lady was looking for love, acceptance, approval, and belonging in all the wrong places. Some people try to find it by joining a teenage gang. Others find it in sex. Within the church, some think that marriage will fix their emptiness, but even a good marriage is no substitute for the waters that Jesus supplies. Some try to find acceptance by going along with uncomfortable things that other teens are doing so that they won't be judged. Others find it in getting attention. But Jesus says that all creational waters will still leave you thirsty. Let me repeat that. Jesus says that all creational waters will still leave you thirsty. They are not intended to fill the void. The gift of God that He supplies is different. It will provide a spring of water from within that never needs to go dry. And there are several Old Testament passages that He no doubt had in view, but Jeremiah 2:13 is likely one of them. It says,

“For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water.

The two evils are: 1) forsaking fellowship with God, who alone can provide the fountain of living waters - the very thing Jesus was referencing, 2) and constantly trying to find satisfaction in some facet of creation - what he likens to cracked cisterns that can never hold water.

We must get out of our comfort zones to share the Gospel

Fifth, we must get out of our comfort zones to share the Gospel. Traveling to a Samaria may simply involve going to Benson, or downtown, or the St. Patrick's Day Parade, and sharing the Gospel with those whom God has prepared to listen. It may mean talking to nasty people with smelly breath. It may mean taking a drunk to a restaurant for his first square meal in days. It may mean sharing your testimony of what God has done in your life with the church - that's a kind of sharing the Gospel, albeit with fellow believers. It's showing that God's grace continues to work in you day by day in helping you to overcome fears, anger, and other sins. We must get out of our comfort zones and break past the barriers that Satan sets up.

We haven't fully shared the good news until we have also shared the bad news by exposing sin

But sixth, we haven't fully shared the good news of the Gospel until we have also shared the bad news of exposing sin. Many approaches to evangelism are simply feel-good psychology, and they only produce what Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones calls psychological conversions, not genuine conversions. They are not the true Gospel. The true historic Gospel applies the law to expose the need for grace and after thoroughly exposing sin applies the Balm of Gilead. And I think Ray Comfort does a brilliant job of showing the importance of the law in preparing the way for the Gospel.

The plague of divorce and remarriage

Another application of this woman is that she represents the plague of divorce and remarriage that we see in our broken country. But (and this is an important but) she was welcomed into the church despite past divorces. There are too many churches that will not accept divorced people into membership. It's sad.

Now, its true that God intended marriage to be between one man and one woman. Obviously there are exceptions when there is a guilty party who has broken the covenant, but the "d" word (or divorce) should not even be on our lips or in our conversation as a serious option. This woman had bounced from one husband to another (or as Jeremiah 2:13 words it) from one broken cistern to another, and tired of the hassle of marriage, was now just sleeping around without the commitment of marriage. No true believer should find themselves in this place. She became a convert who repented and presumably changed.

Fornication does not equal marriage

But just as a side-note, there is a false theory out there that sex equals marriage - that if two young people have sex they are automatically married. No, it does not mean that. Jesus clearly distinguishes between the five previous husbands (not just the first one - the previous husbands - so there were five marriages) and the one that she was with *not* being her husband. Sex with that sixth one did not constitute marriage. The law of God provided for marriage as a *possibility* for young people who have had premarital sex, but it is not a foregone conclusion. The father can forbid it. If the person is an unbeliever, it's probably best to forbid it because two wrongs don't make a right. Just to illustrate how wrong-headed this theory is, if the person you have slept with is married, divorcing their spouse and marrying the adulterer does not make it right. There is a clear difference between sex and marriage. Marriage is a covenant, not an act of lust. And this bad theory of marriage has messed up many a person.

Worship is not about going to church; it's about communion with God

A ninth application is that worship is not simply about going to church - something that all Samaritans did. It's about communion with God. What a wonderful word to a woman who longed for fellowship, acceptance, and belonging. This God is not about mere externalities. He is about a heart engaged with His. He seeks and He wants us to seek Him as a daughter would seek a Father and commune with him - that is, if she had a good father.

The significance of Jacob's well - antithesis

And I'll end with the significance of Jacob's well. Jacob built an altar on this site and called it "El Elohe Israel." That means "the God of Israel" (Gen. 33:18-20). This was the second piece of property in Palestine owned by an Israelite. The first was a graveyard purchased by Abraham and this was a life-giving well provided by Jacob. Those two properties represented God's claims on Israel from life to death.

Before dying, Jacob deeded this plot of land to his son, Joseph (John 4:5; Gen. 48:21-22). That shows huge future orientation. None of them were in the land, and wouldn't be for hundreds of years, but he deeded it to his son anyway. It later became the place where Joseph's bones were buried (Josh 24:32). Hebrews 11:22 says that Joseph had asked that this be done *as a statement of faith* that his descendants would inherit the land. And God's saints can inherit the land generationally or by conversion. In this case, it was by conversion. And to make it symbolically clear that they were indeed leaving the Samaritan religion for the one true church of all ages, Jesus made them come out to this well - to the place of El Elohe Israel, or the God of Israel. He was requiring them to become a part of the true Israel. The Samaritans were engaging in antithesis by coming out - they were rejecting their god, their worship, their corrupted Scriptures, their traditions, for the one true faith of the Old and New Testaments. Sitting on Jacob's well represented antithesis between Samaria and the God of Israel.

When preaching in India, we realized that Indians are polytheists. They are willing to "accept Christ." In other words, they are quite willing to add new gods to their household

pantheon. The more the merrier. Maybe one will protect them better than another in various circumstances. But we made them insult their gods by publicly destroying their gods idols and publicly declaring their faith in the one true God. The church must restore a belief in antithesis like this woman did at Jacob's well. And may that antithesis be maintained without compromise throughout our lives. Amen.