

A tired and thirsty Savior's encounters with a woman and a Galilean Official

John 4:1-3 NIV

[1] Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John— [2] although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. [3] So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

Already opposition was rising against Jesus, especially from the Pharisees. They resented Jesus' popularity as well as his message, which challenged much of their teachings. Because Jesus was just beginning his ministry, it wasn't yet time to confront these leaders openly; so he left Jerusalem and traveled north to Galilee.

Snapshot of Pharisees: They were a prominent Jewish religious - political group that clashed with Jesus over interpretation of the Law. They emphasized strict adherence to both written and oral law, but their practices often focused on external observances rather than genuine faith. Although respected by the masses for their piety, Jesus condemned them for hypocrisy and for placing heavy burdens on the people.

Among the Pharisees belief were:

- Life after death
- The resurrection of the body
- The importance of keeping rituals
- The need to convert Gentiles

Because they taught that the way to God was by obeying the Law, The Pharisees gradually changed Judaism from a religion of sacrifice to one of keeping commandments (legalism).

Like the previous chapters (2:6; 3:5), this chapter includes water symbolism and dialogue in which Jesus discloses himself as fulfilling Old Testament promises and institutions.

Unlike Nicodemus in 3:15, the person at the well in this chapter is female, Samaritain, not seeking Jesus, uneducated, socially despised, and immoral. But, they both need Jesus!

John 4:4 KJV

And he must needs go through Samaria.

Background: To go from the territory of Judea to Galilee meant passing through a central territory called Samaria. Most Jews did everything they could to avoid traveling through Samaria.

The reason goes way back into history.

- When the northern kingdom with its Capital at Samaria fell to the Assyrians, many Jews were deported to Assyria, and foreigners were brought in to settle the land and help keep the peace (2 Kgs. 17:24).
- The intermarriage between those foreigners and the remaining Jews resulted in a mixed race, impure in the opinion of the Jews who lived in the Southern Kingdom.
- Thus the pure Jews hated the mixed race called Samaritans, because they felt that they had betrayed their people and nation.

- They had set up an alternate center of worship on Mount Gerizim to parallel the Temple in Jerusalem; but it had been destroyed 150 years earlier.
- While there was long standing prejudice between Jews and Samaritans, Jesus did not live by such cultural restrictions.
- The route through Samaria was shorter, and that was the route Jesus took.

John 4:5-6 KJV

[5] Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. [6] Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.

Sychar: Probably the modern Palestinian city of Nablus in the West Bank, on the shoulder of Mount Ebal and opposite of Mount Gerizim.

The mountain is referred to by the woman at the well as the worship center for the Samaritans.

Jacobs well: Not mentioned elsewhere in scripture; probably associated with Jacobs move to the Shechem area.

Jacobs well was on the property originally owned by Jacob. It was not a spring-fed well, but a well into which water seeped from rain and dew, collecting at the bottom. Wells were almost always located outside the city along the main road.

Twice each day, morning and evening, women came to draw water.

This woman came at noon, probably to avoid meeting people because of her reputation.

Jesus gave this woman an extraordinary message about fresh and pure water that would quench her thirst forever.

John 4:7-8 NIV

[7] When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" [8] (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.

Jesus was tired, identifying him as fully human (1:14; 19:28).

About noon: may indicate that the woman was a social outcast since there is some evidence that women did not normally fetch water during the sun's hottest hours.

Jesus breaches social custom and culture.

- Jesus, a Jewish man, speaks to a non-cultural (Samaritan) woman
- She was a member of the hated mixed, race by the Jews
- She was in a public place.
- No Jewish man would talk to a woman under such circumstances

But Jesus did!

Why did Jesus do it?

He did it because the Gospel is for every person, no matter what his or her race, social position, or past sins.

We must be prepared to share the gospel at any time, in any place.

Jesus crossed all barriers to share the gospel, and we who follow him must do no less.

John 4:9 NIV

[9] The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

The woman did not expect Jesus to talk to her, let alone become ritually defiled by drinking from a Samaritan's water pot.
She does not know that Jesus cannot become ritually defiled, he sanctifies what he touches (Mt. 8:2-3)

Matthew 8:2-3 NIV

[2] A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." [3] Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "**Be clean!**"
Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy.

John 4:10 NIV

[10] Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

- In the Old Testament many verses speak of thirsting after God as one thirst for water.
- God is called the fountain of life (Ps. 36:9), and the fountain of living waters (Jer. 17:13).

In saying that he would bring living water that could forever quench one's thirst for God, Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah.

- Only the Messiah could give this gift that satisfies the soul's desire.
- On a spiritual level, it is the "gift of God", the eternal satisfying life that Jesus provides through the Spirit, who produces spiritual life.
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John 4:11-12 NIV

[11] "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? [12] Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?"

Like Nicodemus, the woman misunderstands Jesus.

The woman thinks Jesus is a charlatan, but she is twice wrong:

1. Jesus' living water does not come from an ordinary well
2. Jesus is far greater than Jacob

John 4:13-15 NIV

[13] Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, [14] but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life." [15] The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

Many spiritual functions parallel physical functions.

As our bodies hunger and thirst, so do our souls (mind, will, emotions), but our souls need Spiritual food and water.

The woman confused the two kinds of water, perhaps because no one had ever talked with her about her spiritual thirst before.

We would not think of depriving our bodies of food or water when hungry or thirsty. Why then should we deprive our souls?

The living Word, Jesus Christ, and the written Word, the Bible, can satisfy our thirsty souls.

(V. 15) The woman mistakenly believed that if she received the water Jesus offered, she would not have to return to the well each day.

She was interested in Jesus' message because she believed it would make her life easier.

But if that was always the case, people would accept Christ's message for the wrong reasons (natural rather than Spiritual).

Christ did not come to take away challenges, (in the natural), but to change us on the inside and empower us (by the Holy Spirit) to deal with problems from God's perspective.

John 4:16-20 NIV

[16] He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." [17] "I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. [18] The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true." [19] "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. [20] Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

When the woman discovered that Jesus knew all about her private life, she quickly changed the subject (v.20).

Witnessing Protocol: As we witness we should gently guide the conversation back to Christ. His presence reveals sin and makes people squirm, but only he can forgive sins and give new life.

John 4:21 NIV

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

Jesus addresses the question she asked in V.20 to take the conversation in a different direction.

The woman brought up a popular theological issue; That being the correct place to worship. But her question was smoke and mirrors to keep Jesus away from her deepest need; and out of her business 😞.

Jesus directed the conversation to a much more important point; the location of worship is not nearly as important as the attitude of the worshipers.

John 4:22 NIV

[22] You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. "When Jesus said salvation is of the Jews," he meant that only through the Jewish Messiah would the world find salvation.

God promised that through the human race the whole earth would be blessed .

Genesis 12:3 NIV

[3] I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

The Old Testament prophets called the Jews to be a light to the "other nations" of the world, bringing them to a knowledge of God, and they predicted the Messiah's coming.

The woman at the well knew of these passages and was expecting the Messiah, but she didn't realize she was talking to him!

John 4:23-24 NIV

[23] Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. [24] God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

"God is a Spirit" means he is not a physical being limited to one space. He is present everywhere, And he can be worshiped anywhere, at any time. It is not where we worship that counts, but how we worship.

Self-analysis time: is your worship genuine and true? Do you have the Holy Spirit's help? How does the Holy Spirit help us worship?

- The Holy Spirit prays for us (**Rom. 8:26**)
- The Holy Spirit teaches us the Words of Christ (**Jn. 14:26**)

The Holy Spirit tells us we are loved (**Rom. 5:5**)

John 4:25-26 NIV

[25] The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." [26] Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—"I am He!"

Jesus reveals himself as the "promised" Messiah.

The term "Messiah" did not have the political overtones in Samaria that it had in Judea.

John 4:27 NIV

[27] Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?"

Returning from buying food in the town. The disciples are surprised to see a Samaritan woman, speaking with a Jewish religious teacher; and in public at that. Yet no one made mention of it to Jesus.

John 4:28-30 NIV

[28] Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, [29] "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" [30] They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

The woman eagerly witnesses to the townspeople, whom she previously had reason to avoid, and they decide to come see Jesus for themselves. She was emboldened by her certainty of Jesus being the long anticipated Messiah, in the flesh.

John 4:31-33 NIV

[31] Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something." [32] But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about." [33] Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?"

Jesus discipled his disciples:

Jesus, though doubtless still tired and thirsty, and probably hungry, apparently dwells on the conversation with the Samaritan woman to teach his disciples about “his” own priorities. Once again people misunderstand Jesus: Jesus’ disciples think of physical food as Nicodemus thought of physical birth, and the Samaritan woman thought of physical water.

John 4:34 NIV

[34] “My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.”

Likely alluding to (Deut,8:3) “Man does not live by bread alone”; which Jesus exemplifies.

Jesus was performing his Father’s will in the exchange with the Samaritan woman, and that was greater sustenance and more satisfying than any food the disciples could offer him.

He came to do the Father’s will (5:36; 6:38), and he always did it (8:29). His works were the works of God (9:3-4; 10:25,32, 37-38) and he successfully completed his mission (7:4; 19:30).

John 4:35-38 NIV

[35] Don’t you have a saying, ‘It’s still four months until harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. [36] Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. [37] Thus the saying ‘One sows and another reaps’ is true. [38] I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor.”

The harvest has already begun in the history of salvation. Jesus himself is engaged in that harvest, which is part of the work the Father gave him to do.

The “wages offered” are the joy of working for him and seeing the harvest of believers. These wages come to the sower and reaper alike, because both find joy seeing new believers come into Christ’s Kingdom.

The phrase “other men labored” may refer to the Old Testament prophets and John the Baptist, who paved the way for the gospel.

John 4:39-42 NIV

[39] Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I ever did.” [40] So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. [41] And because of his words many more became believers. [42] They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.”

Many Samaritans believe in Jesus because of the Samaritan woman’s testimony, and because of Jesus’s words which confirm her testimony.

Jesus is the Savior not just of the Jews but of the Samaritans as well .

Jesus’s mission anticipates the church’s mission of Acts 1:8, going from Jerusalem, to Samaria, to the Gentiles.

(Jesus heals an official’s son)

John 4:43-44 NIV

[43] After the two days he left for Galilee. [44] (Now Jesus himself had pointed out that a prophet has no honor in his own country.)

Galilee represents Jewish land over against Samaritan land.

[45] When he arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him. They had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, for they also had been there.

Their superficial welcome was actually a kind of rejection because they were kind of only interested in Jesus's miracles, not in Jesus as the Messiah and Savior. They were miracle driven.

46] Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum.

The Royal Officials encounter with the Messiah.

Evidently an officer of Herod Antipas (Lk. 3:11,19).

[47] When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death.

Come: unlike the centurion of (Mt. 8:5-13), not until after Jesus's miracle does the official display faith that goes beyond desperation.

[48] "Unless you people see signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe".

Jesus detects in the Royal Official a faith that desires a miraculous cure but does not truly trust him.

Jesus's rebuke addresses the people at large because the Royal Official exemplifies what's wrong with Galileans as a whole.

[49] The royal official said, "**come** down before my child dies."

He could not see with eyes of faith.

[50] "**Go,**" Jesus replied, "your son will live." The man took Jesus at his word and departed.

Now the Official not only believed Jesus could heal; he also obeyed Jesus by returning home, thus demonstrating his faith.

It isn't enough to say we believe Jesus can take care of our problems, we need to act as if he can, and will. When we pray about a problem or need, live as though we believe Jesus can do what he says.

[51] While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living.

[52] When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, "Yesterday, at one in the afternoon, the fever left him."

Jesus's miracles were not mere illusions.

Although the Official's son was twenty miles away, he was healed when Jesus spoke the word.

Distance was no problem because Christ has mastery over space.

We can never put so much space between ourselves and Christ that he can no longer help us.

[53] Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." So he and his whole household believed. [54] This was the second sign Jesus performed after coming from Judea to Galilee.

Notice how the nobleman's faith grew.

First he believed enough to ask Jesus to help his son.

Second, he believed Jesus's assurance that his son would live, and he acted on it

Third, he and his whole household believed in Jesus.

Faith is a gift that grows as we use it.

Takeaways:

- Jesus reaches beyond social and ethnic barriers
- True worship is a matter of the heart and spirit, not location
- Personal testimony is powerful in spreading faith
- Faith in Jesus's words and promises are central.

Study Bibles: Life Application Study Bible - kjv,
NIV ZONDERVAN STUDY BIBLE,

The Full Life Study Bible - kjv

- CHTGPT-AI
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