

O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go

Drawing Near: God, I confess that many times my ways are not Your ways and my thoughts are not Your thoughts. Open my mind and heart so I might live and love as You would have me do.

Review John 3:22-26. Then read John 4:1-3.

1. As we begin chapter 4 we read that news of Jesus' growing popularity had made its way to the Pharisees (in Jerusalem). What might be some reasons Jesus decided to go to Galilee?

Read John 4:4-45 making note of the various people Jesus was in conversation with along His journey north toward Galilee. **Find Samaria on your map.** In Jesus' day there was one main road connecting Judea and Galilee, taking travelers north and south along the eastern side of the Jordan River. Between this road and the Mediterranean Sea lay Samaria, an area and people shunned by religious Jews. Earlier in Israel's history the entire land, north to south, had been a united nation. Around 722 B.C. the Assyrians conquered the region of Samaria and removed most of its people into exile. Those who remained intermarried with Gentiles who were brought into the land by its conqueror (2 Kings 17:24). From that time onward there developed a great dislike between Jews and Samaritans who were considered by the Jews to be half-breeds, unclean and irreligious.

Re-read John 4:4-6.

2. a. Jesus could have taken the customary longer north-south route, thus avoiding Samaria altogether. Nevertheless He took a side road that led into the heart of Samaritan territory. What factor(s) could have compelled Him to travel this route?

b. Looking ahead in our lesson to verse 34 and John 8:29, 9:4 what trumped all other factors in Jesus' decision to travel by way of Samaria? (Note: It is only here in John's gospel that we learn of Jesus' ministry to the region of Samaria.)

Read carefully John 4:7-27.

3. From this section of Scripture Jesus challenged the relational barriers that existed between what different groups of people of that day? (See especially verses 9 and 27.)

(Note: It was customary that Jewish teachers did not engage in public conversation with women. They also considered men, not women, as worthy recipients of religious teaching.)

4. **Study Skill:** In Jesus' conversation with the woman and later His disciples, He masterfully used common words (living water, food, harvest) as metaphors to teach deeper spiritual truths. Use a dictionary or other reference guide and explain what a metaphor is.
5. What does this gospel writer tell us that affirms the fact that Jesus was not only fully Divine but fully human as well (John 1:14; 4:6-7)?
6. In this semi-arid region water was in limited supply. Most wells provided stored, murky water from rainfall and ground water seepage while others enclosed artesian springs.
 - a. Contrast Jesus' offer of living water with the water from Jacob's well (verses 10-14). The word for *welling up* in verse 14 has the same meaning as *jumping up* in Acts 3:8.
 - b. Think back to a time when you were physically very thirsty. What similarities do you see between physical and spiritual thirst? (See Psalm 42:1-2; 63:1; Isaiah 55:1-2.)
 - c. Ponder on the imagery from Jeremiah 2:13, 17:13; John's description of living water in 4:13-14 and his explanation in 4:14 and 1 John 1:1-2, as well as John 7:37-39a. Then write a statement describing the spiritual reality you think Jesus was offering the woman by using His metaphor (living water).
7.
 - a. Above all else, what was the critical understanding you think Jesus wanted the woman to know for herself (verse 10)?
 - b. What is her response to His offer in verse 15? (Right response, wrong understanding.)
8. Jesus did not give up on the woman! As He led her into further conversation we learn more about her (verses 16-18).
 - a. How would you characterize Jesus' reaction as she disclosed to Him her history with marriage? (Little is known of the social and moral conditions of Samaritan culture and what was socially acceptable there.)

- b. Up to this point describe the changes in the woman's understanding of who Jesus was. Consider verses 9, 11-12, 15 and 19.
9. The woman didn't back away but moved toward further engagement as she brought up a hotly debated topic that had inflamed tensions for centuries between Samaritans and Jews. What do you think she wanted to know (verse 20)?

Verses 21-26 take us to the very pinnacle of Jesus' conversation with this Samaritan woman!

10. a. Old Testament worship was merely a shadow of things that were to come. What did Jesus say had happened (verses 22-23) that made the debate about *where* to worship irrelevant? (Also consider verse 22b, John 1:14 and 2 Corinthians 6:2.)
- b. Since God is Spirit, what does that mean for those who desire to worship Him? Give an example.

Personal Reflection: Are there times when you tend to worship in practice rather than in spirit? What needs to change so that you worship Him as He desires?

- c. *Truth* is a major theme in John's gospel. What does he say about truth (John 1:17, 14:6; 18:37)?

Samaritan scriptures included only the first five books of the Old Testament (Pentateuch) so their understanding of the promised Messiah was limited. They looked forward to a Messiah who would be a prophet like Moses and would *teach them everything* (Deuteronomy 18:15-18).

11. This conversation had touched the woman's longing heart as she expressed her desire for the Messiah to come and *explain everything* to her. What did Jesus tell her (verse 26)?

The structure of Jesus' statement in the original Greek leaves out the pronoun *he* and reads, *I am-who speaks to you*. Jesus' self-revelation (*I am*) is nothing less than the Divine name of God (Yahweh in the Hebrew language) first given to Moses in the Sinai (Exodus 3:14)!

12. What have you seen in Jesus' encounter with this Samaritan woman that causes you to want to worship Him? Jot down some thoughts and then take some time to worship Him.

Jesus, how exciting it is to witness the growth of this Samaritan woman's faith. Thank you for Your patience in leading her/me into the truth of who You are that we might believe and be saved by Your grace. Thank you for inviting us into relationship with You forever. You are beautiful beyond description. You do all things well.

13. As the disciples arrived on the scene, the woman left her water jug and headed into town. From verses 28-30 and 39-42 what do you see in the woman's witness that led to the successful evangelization of her town?
14. The townspeople's movement toward the well (verse 30) sets the backdrop for Jesus' instructions to His disciples. **Read John 4:31-38.**
- a. What is the meaning of the metaphor Jesus used as He spoke to His disciples about His food? Also see John 5:30, 6:38, 7:18, and 8:50. (Keep in mind the fact that Jesus was weary and thirsty from His journey to Samaria.)
 - b. How might you apply Jesus' teaching to your life?
15. Jesus described the work of God by using two agricultural sayings of that day.
- a. In the first saying (verse 35) *Do you not say...* what did Jesus tell them to do instead of relaxing after the planting, thinking that the harvest was still four months away?
 - b. What do you think is the meaning of the harvest imagery Jesus used?

- c. In the second saying (verse 37) *Thus the saying...* who did Jesus say will be sent out to do the work of God?
 - d. How might you apply Jesus' teaching of the harvest to your life?
16. The townspeople gave testimony to Jesus' identity in the closing scene (verse 42).
- a. What was their final conclusion? (Also see John 3:16-17.)
 - b. From this story about a small outcast Samaritan village and a sidelined Samaritan woman, what can you say about the love of God?
 - c. Is there anyone for whom the gospel is not relevant? (Who might you tend to overlook/discount?)
17. In what ways was Jesus more than each of these people below expected?
- The Samaritan woman--
- Jesus' disciples--
- The Samaritan townspeople--
18. **To Ponder:** Where in your life do you need to allow Jesus to be more than you expect?