

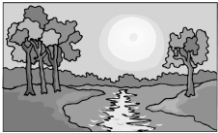
# Living Water

John 4:1-42



## *Woman at the Well*

- ❑ After some time in the Judean countryside (*John 3:22*),<sup>1</sup> Jesus “left Judea and went back once more to Galilee” (*4:3*). Read John 4:4-26.<sup>2</sup>
- ❑ It is significant that Jesus talks with this Samaritan woman. When he asks her for a drink, she is surprised. Jews considered Samaritans to be unclean.<sup>3</sup> This is a *woman*, and apparently a woman who lacks honor. Jesus crosses cultural and social boundaries in reaching out to her.
  1. The woman and Jesus both talk about water, but different kinds of “water.” What is the difference between these two kinds of “water?” (*4:10-14*)<sup>4</sup>



📖 “Jesus...said... ‘Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.’ By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.” (*John 7:37-39, NIV*)

- ❑ The things of this world, even the *good* things of this world, will never truly satisfy the deep desires of the heart. “Everyone who drinks [physical] water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water [Jesus gives] will never thirst” (*4:13-14a*). As believers, this does not mean we cease to thirst after God, but the source of living water is ever-present with us.
  - 📖 “Indeed, the water [Jesus gives] will become in [us] a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” (*John 4:14b, NIV*)
- 2. What does the woman’s response in verse 15 show about her understanding? (How may her response represent people in general?)
- 3. Why do you think Jesus mentions the woman’s husband(s)?<sup>5</sup> (*4:16-19*)

<sup>1</sup> Connection is made between Jesus’ baptizing activities in Judea, his rising popularity relative to John the Baptist (*3:22-26*), the Pharisees’ knowledge of this (*4:1*), and his departure from Judea thus avoiding unnecessary trouble.

<sup>2</sup> Jesus was on his way from Judea to Galilee, and Samaria was in-between. Some commentators note that Jews often avoided Samaria, but the shortest route was through Samaria, and that route was common, especially for Galileans. Some say Jesus ‘had to go through Samaria’ because of geography and timeliness; while others say it was because of mission. Certainly God had a purpose, and Jesus went.

<sup>3</sup> After the Assyrians captured Samaria in 722 BC, they deported all Israelites of substance, and settled the land with foreigners (*2 Kings 17:23-24*). These foreigners intermarried with the surviving Israelites, and a mixed religion developed. When the Jews returned from exile, they considered the Samaritans half-breeds with a tainted religion. The Jews refused the Samaritan’s help in rebuilding the temple. In about 400 BC, the Samaritans built their own temple on Mt. Gerizim, but the Jews later destroyed it. There was much dislike between the Jews and Samaritans. Some translators say that ‘For Jews do not associate with Samaritans’ (*NIV*) should be translated ‘For Jews do not use dishes (vessels) Samaritans have used,’ consistent with their belief that the Samaritans were unclean.

<sup>4</sup> Jesus speaks of ‘living water’ – flowing water, water that is pure. Of course, water is connected with life. The ‘living water’ here is spiritual, and refers to the eternal life brought by the Holy Spirit, which only Jesus can provide.

<sup>5</sup> It helps her understand more about who Jesus is. He is no ordinary person! (*4:19*) It also helps change her focus from the physical to the spiritual. As Jesus shines his light on her dark life situation, her spiritual need is revealed.

- ❑ Jesus gives “living water.” This “living water” carries us beyond this visible and temporal (yet *real*) world, with all its difficulties, disappointments and deficiencies, into the eternal and not-yet fully visible kingdom of God. This eternal perspective gives meaning to life, and peace and hope, even in the midst of trouble.
- 4. Concerning “worship,” what seems important to the woman? (4:19-20)<sup>6</sup>  
How does Jesus respond? (4:21)
- 5. What does Jesus mean when he says “true worshipers will worship [God] the Father in spirit and truth?” (4:23-24)<sup>7</sup>
- ❑ The woman was impressed by Jesus, but she had not yet grasped his identity. She thought Jesus couldn’t know more than the Messiah.<sup>8</sup> When *he* came, he would explain everything. But Jesus told the woman, “I, the one speaking to you – I am he” (4:26).
- ❑ Here is one way to summarize the points of John 4:4-26:
  - † The living water Jesus gives crosses cultural and social boundaries.
  - † The living water Jesus gives transcends (goes beyond, surpasses) the visible & temporal.
  - † The living water Jesus gives fills our deepest need – a relationship with the living God.



### *Woman Goes to Tell*

- ❑ Read John 4:27-30, 39-42.<sup>9</sup>
- 6. After the woman’s interaction with Jesus, what does she do? What results and why? How may this apply to us today?

### *The Light & You*

- Are you feeling thirsty or dry in your inner being? *Where* are you looking for satisfaction and fulfillment? Do you know Jesus? Have you experienced the living water that only Jesus can give? If you haven’t, remember what Jesus said, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink.” Come to Jesus and receive him as your Lord and Savior.
- Brothers and sisters, are you being refreshed by the living water, by fixing your eyes on the eternal, and worshipping God in spirit and truth in your daily lives? Are you sharing the source of living water with others? Are you crossing boundaries with the love of Christ?

<sup>6</sup> The Samaritans believed that the temple belonged on Mt. Gerizim, whereas the Jews believed it belonged in Jerusalem. The woman is concerned about the proper place of worship (forms of religion).

<sup>7</sup> The NIV translates *en pneumatikē kai alētheia* as ‘in the Spirit and in truth’ but it is literally ‘in spirit and truth’ as most translations reflect. In this context, ‘spirit’ and ‘truth’ belong together. True worship must be ‘in spirit’ because God is spirit (4:24). Worship must be of a spiritual kind, and this is made possible by the gift of the Holy Spirit. Worship in spirit is marked by sincerity, not mere outward expression. In this context, ‘truth’ is not merely intellectual content but is associated with the reality of the one true God whom Jesus reveals. Jesus said, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life’ (John 14:6). True worship is not about geographical location. Jesus is *where* we meet with God. He is the fulfillment of the temple. In Revelation 21:22, in describing his vision of the new Jerusalem, John said ‘I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.’

<sup>8</sup> Or Taheb, as the Samaritans called him.

<sup>9</sup> To keep our focus on the woman’s actions and the results, we are skipping verses 31-38. Nonetheless, these verses indicate what is happening. Jesus’ ‘food’ (sustenance, satisfaction) is to do the will of the Father (4:34). Jesus has ‘sowed’ and now the ‘harvest’ is being realized in the response of the Samaritans. Jesus’ disciples are to reap.