

Jesus Teaches About Living Water

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: Jesus offered the Samaritan woman living water—the Holy Spirit—that would satisfy her forever and produce true worship in her life.

BACKGROUND PASSAGE: John 4:1-42

In J. R. R. Tolkien's famous series *The Lord of the Rings*, a creature called Gollum becomes consumed by an obsession with the One Ring. Gollum was originally a hobbit-like creature known as Smeagol, who murdered his friend to take possession of the ring shortly after he discovered it. Smeagol's family later shunned and exiled him because of his deceitful and disruptive ways when using the ring, which made him invisible. Gollum had an insatiable hunger for the ring and its power. He centered his entire life around owning it and recovering it after he lost it, and it cost him everything.



What are some results you have witnessed from people fixated on their desires and addictions?

Group Time

Point 1: Jesus gives the Living Water that satisfies completely (John 4:7-14).

⁷ A woman of Samaria came to draw water. “Give me a drink,” Jesus said to her, ⁸ because his disciples had gone into town to buy food.

⁹ “How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?” she asked him. For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.

¹⁰ Jesus answered, “If you knew the gift of God, and who is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would ask him, and he would give you living water.”

¹¹ “Sir,” said the woman, “you don’t even have a bucket, and the well is deep. So where do you get this ‘living water’? ¹² You aren’t greater than our father Jacob, are you? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and livestock.”

¹³ Jesus said, “Everyone who drinks from this water will get thirsty again. ¹⁴ But whoever drinks from the water that I will give him will never get thirsty again. In fact, the water I will give him will become a well of water springing up in him for eternal life.”

Though she may not have realized it, the Samaritan woman was needy for a solution to her sin; as with all people today, apart from Christ, we are all enemies of God. Jesus highlighted her need for a permanent solution to her deepest thirst, telling her that she should be begging Him for a drink of the water He was able to offer—“living water.”



What are some ways we are tempted to fill the longing in our hearts with things other than God?

Fortunately for us, God loves His enemies and works toward our reconciliation. He made a way for us to receive the “living water” we so desperately need—the gift of the Holy Spirit, who grants eternal life to those in whom He dwells. Jesus made this gift possible for us by His death on the cross in our place.

Christ as Reconciliation: Sin is an infinite offense against an infinite God.

Thankfully, God loves His _____ and has sent Christ to be the reconciler between us and God. Through Christ’s _____, God provides the means whereby that broken relationship is _____ and renewed.

Point 2: Jesus is the Prophet who enables true worship (John 4:19-24).

¹⁹ “Sir,” the woman replied, “I see that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem.”

²¹ Jesus told her, “Believe me, woman, an hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²² You Samaritans worship what you do not know. We worship what we do know, because salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But an hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth. Yes, the Father wants such people to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and in truth.”

The Jews and Samaritans were expecting the arrival of a prophet who would be like Moses and who would answer all their questions, especially about who was correct in their worship war. But Jesus exceeded these expectations because He is *the* Prophet (Deut. 18:15-19). As God’s Son, Jesus possesses all the knowledge, wisdom, and authority of God to respond to every situation and longing of the human heart. He also made atonement for people’s sin once and for all, thereby forging the path for them to enter into true worship of and everlasting communion with the one true God.



What does Jesus in the flesh reveal to you about the God we worship?

We all have opinions about “proper” worship. Opinions are fine to have, but if we are not careful, our personal preferences can override our understanding of biblical worship. What is important about worship is that it is done in Spirit and truth. Because God is spirit, a nonmaterial, divine being, so must our worship be in spirit, specifically in the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of truth (John 15:26). We can only receive the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus, so it is Jesus who enables us to worship God in Spirit and truth.



Voices from Church History

“The true worshiper is the one who honors him with the right intention and believes with a pure conscience that everywhere he can speak with the one who is incomprehensible.”¹

—Theodore of Mopsuestia
(c. 350–428)



What will it look like to worship God in Spirit and truth?

Point 3: Jesus is the Messiah who brings salvation for all (John 4:25-26,28-29,39).

²⁵ The woman said to him, “I know that the Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”

²⁶ Jesus told her, “I, the one speaking to you, am he.”

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²⁸ Then the woman left her water jar, went into town, and told the people,

²⁹ “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?”

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³⁹ Now many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of what the woman said when she testified, “He told me everything I ever did.”

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus was hesitant to proclaim His identity outright when traveling and teaching amongst the Jews. He likely wanted to avoid the political and military baggage many Jews had attached to their expectation for the Messiah. With the Samaritan woman, however, Jesus came right out and said it. He could not have been any clearer—Jesus is the long-anticipated Messiah, the promised One come to save His people.



What do we need to be aware of as we proclaim to the world the identity of Jesus as the Messiah?

When we receive good news, we often want to tell all our friends and family members, perhaps even complete strangers, so they can share in the celebration. When the Samaritan woman learned of Jesus’ identity as the Messiah, she went back to her town and shared with her people. She did not let anything stop her from being an evangelist, even her past. Through sharing the testimony of her encounter with Jesus, many of the Samaritans believed in Him (John 4:39-42). Her story drew others to His side.

WHAT ARE SOME REASONS WE MIGHT HESITATE TO SHARE THE GOSPEL?

Daily Study

Day 1: Read John 4:1-6

Had to are two small words with plenty of power behind them. Jesus “had to” travel through Samaria (v. 4). He was required to. He was obligated to. But why?

Although Jesus was traveling between Judea and Galilee and a straight route between the two would have required Him to pass through Samaria, we know that the Jews of the day would often take a circuitous route in order to bypass traveling through the land inhabited by people they could not stand. It is likely that Jesus had to travel through Samaria because of the woman He would encounter there.

We too have been sent on a similar mission, to reach all people from every tribe and nation with the gospel. Like Jesus, we are to go out of our way—geographically, culturally, and socially—to take the gospel to anyone and everyone God prepares for us to reach.



To whom might God be sending you as His agent to share the gospel? How will you obey Him and go this week?

Day 2: Read John 4:7-14

If you have ever been thirsty—really thirsty to the point of being parched—you understand what it is like to need a drink of water. Imagine you had to walk to a community well, lower a bucket, and hoist that bucket back up. Then you had to fill the pitchers you had brought and haul them back home. The Samaritan woman did not have to imagine this because this was real life for her. Imagine, then, the woman’s surprise and great interest when Jesus told her that He had living water—cool, fresh, clean water—that would leave a person never to thirst again.

Of course, we understand what the woman missed—that Jesus wasn’t talking about water but life in Him. All people are parched spiritually, always struggling to find what satisfies the deepest cravings of their soul. But nothing ever does. Except, that is, for Jesus. He alone is what quenches our spiritual thirst, and He alone is what satisfies it completely for good.



In what ways do you try to satisfy the desires of your soul apart from Jesus at times? Why?

Day 3: Read John 4:15-18

Up to verse 16, Jesus and the Samaritan woman were having a nice conversation about water. But then Jesus threw the woman, and us reading this account, a curveball. When she asked for the water Jesus spoke of, He responded by telling her to get her husband. Where did that come from? It seems to be out of nowhere; their conversation, let alone her preceding request for water, had nothing to do with her husband.

In this we see the heart of Christ for the woman. That might be odd to say considering this statement by Jesus identified a habitual pattern of sin in this woman's life. But don't miss the impact it had on the woman. Because of this statement from Jesus, the woman was able to see, at least in part, the omniscience of Christ. She was able to see that He was not just a kind Jewish teacher. Jesus' knowledge of her sin was precisely what drove her toward what she needed to know—that she was talking with the Messiah (vv. 25-26).



What can you learn about addressing others' sins from this account?

Day 4: Read John 4:19-24

It has been said that everyone is wired to worship—the issue is that we often worship the wrong things. We see this desire in the woman's question to Jesus.

The Samaritans worshiped in Samaria rather than traveling to Jerusalem. This was, in part, why the Jews detested the Samaritans and saw them as compromised ethnically and spiritually. But notice that the woman seemed to have a hunger to worship God rightly. This mattered to her so much that she spent what could have been her only question to ask Jesus that day on this topic.

Many of us understand worship better than the Samaritan woman did that day. However, we also often struggle to worship the way Jesus prescribed: in Spirit and truth. While location may not be relevant today, music style, time of day, and many other factors might impact our practice of worship. Our prayer should be that we might push past all of the peripheral items that could impede worship and be the worshipers the Father wants.



What can sometimes hinder your worship of God? What can you do to move past these hindrances and instead worship in Spirit and truth no matter what?

Day 5: Read John 4:25-42

No person is unworthy of His attention, as the parables in Luke 15 teach. And while Jesus would have traveled through Samaria just for the sake of the woman at the well, He did not. This woman was a first domino with others to follow.

After her encounter with Jesus, the woman left her water jar, went into town, and told all the people about Jesus. The people then left the town and went to meet Jesus. The result is that many of the Samaritans believed in Jesus (John 4:39-42).

We see here that our faith is not our own. Even if we are like the Samaritan woman—new in our faith in Jesus—we are called to share what we have experienced with others. It's never too early to start. It's never too late to begin.

-  What can you do to become more comfortable, and perhaps more obedient, to share your faith with others?

Encourage One Another

Join together with 2-4 people from your group, or with your family, sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and you are responding.

Share your thoughts and reflections on the truths from Scripture in this session:

- Jesus gives the Living Water that satisfies completely (John 4:7-14).
- Jesus is the Prophet who enables true worship (John 4:19-24).
- Jesus is the Messiah who brings salvation for all (John 4:25-26,28-29,39).

-  How have you responded to these truths from Scripture?
-  What does Jesus' disposition toward the Samaritan woman teach us about the posture we should hold toward one another and toward unbelievers?
-  What can we do to help one another meet Jesus afresh on a weekly basis so as to maintain genuine excitement about sharing our faith?