

## John 4:1-23

Jesus knew the Pharisees had heard that he was baptizing and making more disciples than John<sup>2</sup> (though Jesus himself didn't baptize them—his disciples did).<sup>3</sup> So he left Judea and returned to Galilee.<sup>4</sup> He had to go through Samaria on the way.<sup>5</sup> Eventually he came to the Samaritan village of Sychar, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.<sup>6</sup> Jacob's well was there; and Jesus, tired from the long walk, sat wearily beside the well about noontime.<sup>7</sup> Soon a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Please give me a drink."<sup>8</sup> He was alone at the time because his disciples had gone into the village to buy some food.

<sup>9</sup>The woman was surprised, for Jews refuse to have anything to do with Samaritans. She said to Jesus, "You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?"

<sup>10</sup>Jesus replied, "If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water."

<sup>11</sup>"But sir, you don't have a rope or a bucket," she said, "and this well is very deep. Where would you get this living water?"<sup>12</sup> And besides, do you think you're greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us this well? How can you offer better water than he and his sons and his animals enjoyed?"

<sup>13</sup>Jesus replied, "Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again.<sup>14</sup> But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life."

<sup>15</sup>"Please, sir," the woman said, "give me this water! Then I'll never be thirsty again, and I won't have to come here to get water."

<sup>16</sup>"Go and get your husband," Jesus told her.

<sup>17</sup>"I don't have a husband," the woman replied.

Jesus said, "You're right! You don't have a husband—<sup>18</sup>for you have had five husbands, and you aren't even married to the man you're living with now. You certainly spoke the truth!"

<sup>19</sup>"Sir," the woman said, "you must be a prophet.<sup>20</sup> So tell me, why is it that you Jews insist that Jerusalem is the only place of worship, while we Samaritans claim it is here at Mount Gerizim, where our ancestors worshiped?"

<sup>21</sup>Jesus replied, "Believe me, dear woman, the time is coming when it will no longer matter whether you worship the Father on this mountain or in Jerusalem.<sup>22</sup> You Samaritans know very little about the one you worship, while we Jews know all about him, for salvation comes through the Jews.<sup>23</sup> But the time is coming—indeed it's here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way.

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## Background

In Jesus' time, Israel was divided into Galilee (north), Judea (south), and Samaria (center). Samaritans were of mixed ancestry due to Assyrian resettlement after northern Israel's fall in 722 BC (see 2 Kings 17). Samaritans practiced a syncretistic religion, blending Jewish law with foreign religious customs. They created their own priesthood and worship site on Mount Gerizim,

near Jacob's Well in Shechem. Jewish people viewed Samaritans as unclean and avoided interaction with them. Yet in John 4, Jesus deliberately traveled through Samaria to meet this Samaritan woman at the well. Jacob's Well still exists today and it's described as "very deep" (v11). This was confirmed by archaeologists, which supports the Bible's historical accuracy.

## Teaching Points

### 1. God does not sell bottled water.

Unlike bottled water that runs out and must be repurchased, the living water Jesus offers never runs dry. In verse 14, Jesus says it becomes *"a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life."* This refers to the eternal, Spirit-given life that truly satisfies. "Bottled water" comes in many forms, like worldly pleasures or empty religion without Christ, but it can't quench spiritual thirst. It's temporary. In contrast, the living water Jesus gives is free, lasting, and truly fulfilling.

## Application

### 1. Let's practice relationship evangelism.

John 4 shows a model of relationship evangelism, that is, sharing the gospel through personal connection. Jesus met the Samaritan woman at a well, overcame social barriers, and engaged in meaningful conversation that led to her salvation. From His example, we can learn some key "dos and don'ts" of relationship evangelism:

#### Do:

1. **Find common ground** – Jesus used their shared need for water to start the conversation.
2. **Spark spiritual interest** – He moved from physical water to "living water" to awaken curiosity.
3. **Address sin** – He gently brought up her personal life to reveal her need for salvation.

#### Don't:

1. **Complicate the gospel** – Keep the message simple: We're sinners, Christ is the Savior.
2. **Promise what God hasn't** – Jesus didn't promise an easy life, only eternal life.
3. **Get sidetracked by religious tangents** – Jesus answered the woman's theological question briefly, but brought her back to the main point: *He is the Messiah*.

**Bottom line:** Build trust, guide the conversation toward spiritual truth, and keep the focus on Jesus.