

Our Lord's Conversation with a Samaritan Woman

John 4:1-23

John 4:1-23 - *"Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John ² (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), ³ He left Judea and departed again to Galilee. ⁴ But He needed to go through Samaria.*

⁵ So He came to a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. ⁶ Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

⁷ A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." ⁸ For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

⁹ Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.

¹⁰ Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."

¹¹ The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? ¹² Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?"

¹³ Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."

¹⁵ The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw."

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here."

¹⁷ The woman answered and said, "I have no husband."

Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband,' ¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly."

¹⁹ The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. ²⁰ Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship."

²¹ Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. ²² You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. ²³ But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him."

Background Notes

At the time of Christ, the land of Israel was divided into three main regions: Galilee to the north, Judea to the south, and Samaria in the middle. The region of Samaria was populated by a people group who were not fully Jewish.

The Samaritan people began in Old Testament times, when the Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom of Israel. The capital of city of the northern kingdom, Samaria, fell to the Assyrian Empire in about 722BC, and the Assyrians captured and deported a number of Israelis. Then they repopulated the land with captives from other nations, who brought their foreign gods with them. These foreign peoples intermarried with the Israelis who had been left in the land. (You can read

all about this in 2 Kings 17.) As a result of the intermarriage, the Samaritan race was born, and the Samaritan religion was started.

The Samaritan religion was a mixture of Old Testament Law and elements from the religions of the foreign nations. The Samaritans set up their own priesthood and their own place of worship on Mount Gerizim, a mountain near Jacob's Well in Shechem. Mount Gerizim is the "mountain" to which the woman referred in verse 20.

The Jewish people considered the Samaritans to be outside Judaism and ceremonially unclean. Because the Samaritans were thought to be unclean, Jews would usually not associate with them in any way. *"Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, 'How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?' For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans" (v9).*

The first few verses of this chapter tell us that the Lord left Judea to avoid friction with the Pharisees, and He traveled to Galilee. Normally Jews would not even travel through Samaria, but verse 4 tells us that the Lord Jesus **needed** to go through Samaria! As God, Jesus knew that He had a **pre-planned** meeting with a Samaritan woman.

The meeting took place at Jacob's Well in Shechem. Many years before this time, Jacob purchased this area and gave it to his son Joseph. (Read about that in Genesis 33 and Genesis 48.) Jacob's Well, by the way, still exists today. Notice that the woman of Samaria said the well was "very deep" (v11). When archeologists excavated this well in 1935, they discovered that it is 138 ft deep. (Notice that modern archeology supports the accuracy of the Bible!)

Doctrinal / Teaching Point

God does not sell bottled water!

Bottled water is bought and sold. It runs out, and you have to buy more. But not so with the **living water** that the Lord Jesus offers! *"Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life" (v14).*

The living water that the Lord Jesus was talking about was new spiritual life. Divine life, eternal life - life brought about through the Holy Spirit. In John 7:38-39, the Lord Jesus said, *"He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*" Do you have that living water that the Lord Jesus offers?

When you travel in the Middle East today, you purchase lots of bottled water – primarily because of purity, but also because it's extremely hot in the summer, and you must have water with you wherever you go. But bottled water gets used up quickly, and you have to constantly buy more – just like the Samaritan woman, who had to come back to the well again and again.

What a contrast to the living water that the Lord Jesus offers! The living water that Jesus Christ offers is free. It will never run out, and it will quench your spiritual thirst **forever**.

Are you spiritually thirsty? Is it possible that you are still trying to quench your spiritual thirst with the world's "bottled water"? The world offers all kinds of "bottled water," with colorful and attractive labels, and a variety of promises that it will quench your thirst. Even "religion" - without Jesus Christ - is bottled water that will never satisfy your thirst!

Our relationship with God through Jesus Christ is what counts. The world's bottled water is temporary. It cannot really quench your spiritual thirst – you'll always be looking for more. Only the **living water** from the Fountain of Life can quench your spiritual thirst. Remember, God does not sell bottled water!

Practical application

Let's practice relationship evangelism!

"Relationship evangelism" is evangelizing by building a relationship with a neighbor, friend, or co-worker who needs to know the Lord. When you build a good relationship with someone, you "earn the right to be heard," and then you are more readily able to share the gospel. Relationship evangelism can be done over the course of weeks or months - but it can also be done in a relatively short amount of time, as we see here in John 4. The Lord practiced relationship evangelism with this woman of Samaria. In fact, we could say that John 4 is a short course on relationship evangelism!

Let's look at a few "dos and don'ts" of relationship evangelism that we see in the way our Lord interacted with the woman of Samaria. First we'll look at three "**Do's**."

"Do #1" - Do look for common ground. The Lord and the Samaritan woman were complete strangers, and there were many barriers between them. He was a Jewish man - she was a Samaritan woman. Totally different backgrounds and lifestyles, with seemingly nothing in common.

But there **was** common ground – **water**! She was coming to draw water. He was weary and thirsty (which, by the way, shows the true humanity of our Lord). The common ground was water. There will always be some common ground between you and any person you meet, on which you can start to build the relationship. **Do** look for common ground.

"Do #2" - Do try to create an interest in spiritual matters. Notice that the Lord not only began the relationship with common ground, but He creatively used that common ground by talking about "living" water. He went from ordinary water to "living" water. At that point the Samaritan woman was interested, and she wanted to know more.

The Lord triggered an interest in spiritual matters, and we should do the same. For example (and this is a 1990's illustration), now that the OJ Simpson double murder trial is over, you could certainly use that as common ground, because everyone knows about it. So you could use that as common ground to create an interest in spiritual matters. Move from that common ground to a question like: "What is the ultimate basis for right and wrong, anyway?" Before long, you could begin to talk about the standards from the Bible! **Do** try to create an interest in spiritual matters.

"Do #3" -- Do bring up the subject of sin. Look at verse 15: *"The woman said to Him, 'Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw.'"* What did the Lord say? *"Jesus said to her, 'Go, call your husband, and come here.'"* The Lord was strategically bringing up the problem of sin. When a person comes to the Lord for salvation, the masks must come off. We cannot be saved if we refuse to acknowledge that we are sinners and we need salvation. **Do** bring up the subject of sin.

Now what about three “**Don’ts**”?

“**Don’t #1**” -- **Don’t** complicate the gospel! God is holy. We are sinners. We need to be saved. Christ is the Savior. Believe and commit your life to Him. That’s the gospel. The Lord was asking this woman to believe - and she did! Look at verses 25-26: *“The woman said to Him, ‘I know that Messiah is coming’ (who is called Christ). ‘When He comes, He will tell us all things.’ Jesus said to her, ‘I who speak to you am He.’* And she believed! Leave the complicated questions of Church doctrine and eschatology for later. **Don’t** complicate the gospel!

“**Don’t #2**” - **Don’t** offer more than what is guaranteed. The Lord didn’t tell the woman that all her problems would be instantly solved. No, the Lord told her “you will have eternal life, and your spiritual thirst will be quenched forever.” What could be better than that? **Don’t** offer more than what God has guaranteed!

“**Don’t #3**” - **Don’t** get sidetracked by “religious tangents.” When the Samaritan woman realized her guilt, she tried to divert attention from herself by going off on a religious tangent: *“Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship”(v20).*

Just like people today! When people start feeling the pressure of their guilt, they go off on questions like, “Why does God allow innocent people to suffer?” or “What happens to people who have never heard of Jesus?” Those are religious tangents.

Notice how the Lord dealt with the woman’s religious tangent. He gave a concise answer, but He did not get sidetracked. He essentially told the woman that the worship at the Temple in Jerusalem is more biblically based because “salvation is of the Jews.” In saying that, He didn’t mean that all Jews are saved. He meant that the Messiah would come through the Jewish people - and that time had come. *“The woman said to Him, ‘I know that Messiah is coming’ (who is called Christ). ‘When He comes, He will tell us all things.’ Jesus said to her, ‘I who speak to you am He’(v2-26).*

When the woman tried to go off on a religious tangent, the Lord answered her question, but He didn’t get sidetracked. **Don’t** get sidetracked by religious tangents!