

Pursue the Person (Samaritan Woman)

February 27, 2022

PURSUE

BUILDING FOR PEOPLE. BELIEVING FOR MORE.

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

John 4:4-26

Session Outline

1. An Intended Encounter (John 4:4-8)
2. The Awful Truth (John 4:9-24)
3. Christ, the Hope (John 4:25-26)

Theological Theme

God is the sovereign King of the universe. He is drawing people to the Son from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. Even something as mundane as going to draw water from a well (and all the circumstances that led to that occasion) have eternal significance.



Leader Guide

Samaritan Woman

Introduction

- ❓ Have you ever experienced a time where it seemed that everything was chaotic and confusing, but you later realized how God was working those things out for your good and His glory?
- ❓ How did you come to that realization? How did you respond when you saw that clearly?

We are limited in our knowledge, which can make it very difficult to rest in the wisdom of God. It is hard even for seasoned Christians to release control and walk by faith. We cannot see the future and we cannot read minds. We are left with the bits of information that we do have and the promises of God. Those who are in Christ cling to those promises of God in Scripture and learn to rest in the power and sovereignty of God because He does know the beginning and the end, and He is trustworthy.

Toward the end of the book *The Horse and His Boy* by C. S. Lewis, there is a scene in which Aslan helps Shasta see how he has been at work secretly to guide Shasta throughout his journey:

*[T]he Voice continued. "I was the lion who forced you to join with Aravis. I was the cat who comforted you among the houses of the dead. I was the lion who drove the jackals from you while you slept. I was the lion who gave the Horses the new strength of fear for the last mile so that you should reach King Lune in time. And I was the lion you do not remember who pushed the boat in which you lay, a child near death, so that it came to shore where a man sat, wakeful at midnight, to receive you."*²¹

The boy was stunned to find out that all through his life, Aslan had been there, governing each event. And so it is with Christians today. Though they often are unaware of the hand of God in their lives, He who knows all things is accomplishing His purpose in them. As William Cowper wrote in his hymn, "God Moves in a Mysterious Way":


*Deep in unfathomable mines,
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works his sovereign will.*

Session Summary

John clarified the purpose of his account of Jesus's life toward the end of his gospel saying, "Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:30-31). So, this Gospel (along with the other Gospels) was not written to serve us as a blueprint for ministry or the Christian life—though it certainly can teach Christians in those areas. The purpose of John's Gospel is for people to read and believe in Christ wholeheartedly. Thus, when Christians study the Gospels, their hearts ought to stand at the ready to read, understand, believe, and rejoice in the person and work of Christ.

The story of the Samaritan woman is a perfect occasion to do that. Here we see the application of Christ as our Prophet, Priest, and King. Christ sovereignly governed the woman's life. He spoke the truth to her. And He pointed her to Himself as the One who could intercede for her and who would ultimately be sacrificed for her. Let's consider the glorious work and person of Christ pictured in John 4.

1. An Intended Encounter (John 4:4-8)

 This is a familiar account for many in the church. What do you know about the woman Jesus met in this passage?

Generally, women would go to the well in the morning or evening hours. This was common practice because getting water at the well involved a lot of walking while carrying a heavy load. It was much easier to do that hard work when the sun wasn't high overhead, as it was cooler in the morning and evening.


Yet, this woman was drawing water in the heat of the day. We can't know for sure, but the circumstances suggest that she was drawing water in the middle of the day so she wouldn't have to do so in the presence of other women. As we will learn, she had had multiple husbands and the man she was currently living with was not her husband. It is possible she was ostracized and seen a person to be avoided.

When we read the Gospels, we readily see Jesus's humanity. We read about Him growing weary. We see Him interacting with people. We see Him praying. All of these things are common and familiar to us.


This is what our lives are like. Jesus was 100 percent human. On the other hand, Jesus was also 100 percent divine. His divinity was present along with His humanity as He walked the earth among men. When we read the Gospels, we catch glimpses of this. In fact, the Gospels are replete with details about Jesus's life that just don't make sense unless He is truly the Son of God. What kind of man can perceive the thoughts of other men (Matthew 9:4)? Or see people when not physically present with them (John 1:47-48)?

Jesus Christ had all the attributes of God because He was God truly God. Yet, as He completed His mission on earth, His full divinity was veiled. Though this veiling hid His divinity to a degree, it did not make Him any less divine. Jesus did not cease to be God when He took on flesh. He also wasn't less than human. Jesus was fully God and fully man. This was necessary because only One who was fully God and fully human could bring people to God. He had to be fully human so that in human nature He could obey the whole law of God perfectly and then suffer the punishment for human sin. He did these things on behalf of all who put their faith in Him. He had to be fully divine so his obedience and suffering would be perfect and effective to save the lost. Also, His divine nature made it possible for Him to bear up under the righteous wrath of God the Father and overcome the grave.

Jesus certainly was not caught off guard by the Samaritan woman at the well. He already knew she would be there, and He knew why. Jesus drew near to this woman out of His mercy, kindness, and love.


 How do we see God using the woman's circumstances to draw her to Jesus in this account?

One of Christ's offices is that of a King. Jesus is a King to those who are His. He governs, rules, provides for, and protects them. While we would never deny that the Samaritan woman had free will, was responsible for all her actions, and was accountable before God for her sins, we also recognize that all the circumstances in her life worked together so God's purpose might be accomplished in her. The Father drew the Samaritan woman to the Son that hot day (John 6:44).

 Application: As you look back at your life, how can you see the different ways God has directed your steps even though you thought you were planning your own life?


2. The Awful Truth (John 4:9-24)

One of the startling characteristics of Jesus's conversation with the Samaritan woman is the fact that He spoke the truth with her directly. Here we see Christ exercising the office of the Prophet. He told her the truth about who she was and what she needed, even though it may have been difficult for her to hear.

-  What did Jesus mean when He said whoever drinks this water will thirst again? How does that compare with the living water that Jesus offers?

Jesus used the context of drawing water from the well to help the Samaritan woman understand a spiritual reality. When He said that whoever drinks the water from the well will thirst again, He was pointing to the truth that there is nothing the world can offer that can truly satisfy the desperate need of the human soul.

This message cuts against the grain of many messages today. It isn't uncommon for church leaders to encourage members to become the best that they can be. Many sermons are focused on improving one's state in life by implementing principles to live a happier, wiser, more productive life. Jesus said people needed to deny themselves, not improve themselves. Jesus preached a message of radical surrender; He didn't primarily offer helps for improving one's life. Jesus's words here meant that until a person came to Him for living water, death would continue to reign in them.


-  What was significant about Jesus telling the woman to call her husband and return?

Jesus told the truth clearly, even when the truth was hard to hear. It is only by recognizing the truth about sin that a person can repent and seek the Savior. This same boldness was exhibited by the apostles also. Early in their ministry, Peter and John were detained by Jewish leadership for their direct preaching and teaching. They boldly testified to the council before they were finally released, but they weren't released without a stern warning. When they returned to the believers, Luke reported that they lifted their voices in prayer and, among other things, prayed these words, "And now, Lord, consider their threats, and grant that your servants may speak your word with all boldness" (Acts 4:29).

The boldness of Jesus Christ, the Apostles, and Christians throughout history has been based on robust confidence in the power and faithfulness of God. Christian boldness is not based on confidence in oneself; that would be foolhardiness. Rather, Christian boldness is based on God's power—that's how it is possible to be both bold and humble.

Living Water

The water that the woman had come to draw had to be obtained with hard labor in the sun. If the refreshing water of which this stranger spoke could be made available without all that effort, so much the better. And even that dimension of comparison is important in these verses. Jesus pointed out that the spiritual water of which he spoke is not something for which one strives in difficulty and struggle. Rather, a person receives it as it bubbles up from within.

 Application: When have you found yourself in a situation where you faced a decision to speak the truth about Jesus or remain silent? How did you respond?

3. Christ, the Hope (John 4:25-26)

The Samaritan woman knew she was speaking to someone special. After all, how could He have known that she had had five husbands? Jesus's authority must have made her think of the promised Messiah because she said, "I know that the Messiah is coming. . . When he comes, he will explain everything to us" (v. 25). To that, Jesus replied, "I, the one speaking to you, am he" (v. 26).


What a stunning scene. Jesus of Nazareth, the Promised One, revealed His identity to an immoral Samaritan woman at a well. He was her only hope and she believed in Him.

 How do we see Christ as Priest here?

Christ's office of Priest is necessary because people are guilty. The Samaritan woman's sin and guilt was exposed, and Christ made it clear that her only hope was to look to Him for life. Of course, Jesus had not yet completed His mission on earth—He had not yet offered Himself as an atoning sacrifice on the cross—but He was headed in that direction. Jesus of Nazareth is the only adequate and capable mediator between God and man. Because He is fully God and fully man, He was able to lay His hand both on God and man and reconcile the two.

Before the time of Christ, priests came to the temple day after day to offer animal sacrifices to atone for sin. These offerings were shadows of what was to come. Their purpose was to teach the world of the heinousness of sin, that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin, "for the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

When Jesus of Nazareth arrived on the scene and offered Himself by the shedding of His own blood for the sins of God's people, He showed Himself to be the true priest, the only Mediator and Intercessor. In this passage, the Samaritan woman met Jesus as her priest, who went to God on her behalf.

 Why did the Samaritan woman need a priest and a mediator?

She was dead in her sins and trespasses. There was nothing she could do to make herself right with God. She was completely hopeless and miserable in her iniquities. But salvation came to her. William Swan Plumer put it

this way: “Lost as men are, they may yet be saved. There is a way of life, a door of hope, a scheme of mercy, a plan of salvation. Jesus came into the world on the very errand of saving the lost (Matthew 18:11). Christ was anointed and set apart to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.”²

- ❓ Application: What similarities do you see between yourself and the woman at the well? Why is it important to recognize this?

Conclusion

The account of the Samaritan woman at the well helps Christians today remember that Jesus Christ is their Prophet, Priest, and King. Christ sought the woman out, spoke truth to her, and would atone for her sins. He does these same things still for those who look to Him in faith and repentance.

- ❓ How does knowing that God can see the beginning and the end and is working out His plan affect the way you respond to the events around you?
- ❓ How should Christ’s work in our lives change the way we interact with people that others may consider outcasts?
- ❓ Who do you need to have a gospel conversation with this week? How might you use the story of the woman at the well to do so?

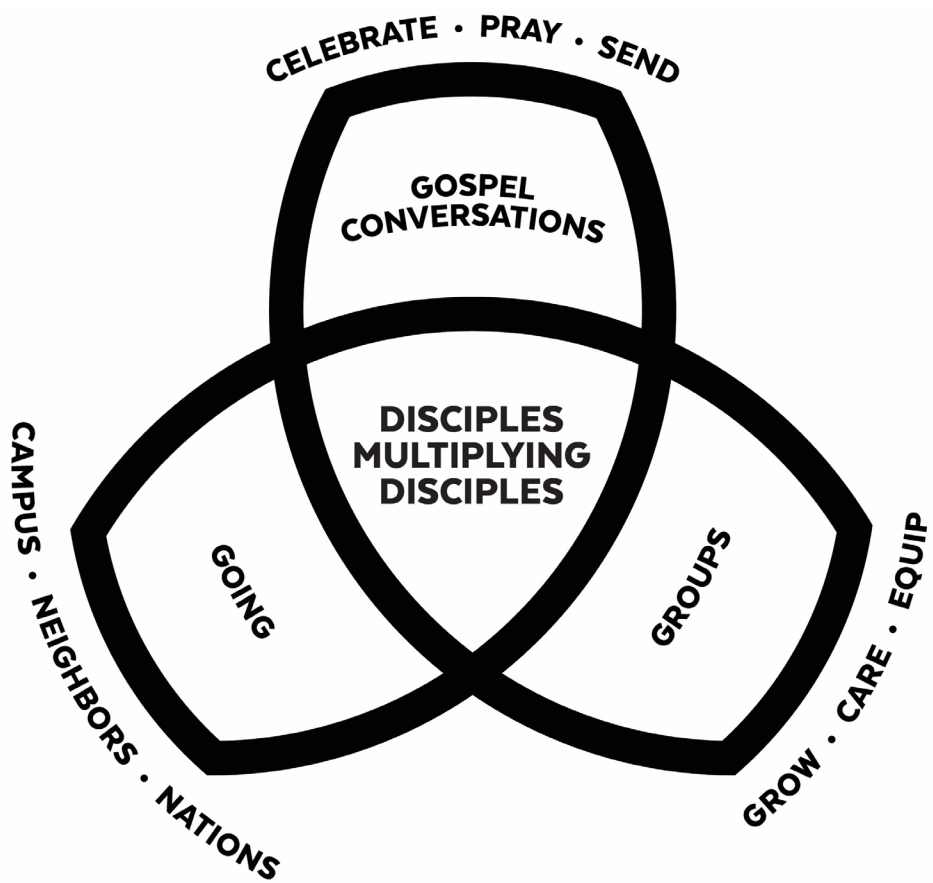
Prayer of Response

Ask the Lord to strengthen your faith in Christ and nourish repentance for sin. Give thanks for the fact the Christ is a perfect Prophet, Priest, and King to you. Submit yourself to His authority. Repent of sin. Listen to His Words. Ask God to make your heart behold the wonder of Christ and rejoice continually in His person and work.

Additional Resources

- *John* by Charles Swindoll
- *John 1-11* by John MacArthur
- *John* by R. Kent Hughes

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



DxD This Week

Group Emphasis

Again: Have someone share about their baptism experience. Have someone else share about a friend or relative's baptism they attended.

For Next Week

Session Title

- Pursue the Broken (Adulterous Woman)

Main Passages

- John 7:53 - 8:11

Session Outline

1. Sin is Sin (John 7:53–8:6)
2. Solution for Sin (John 8:7-10)
3. Repentance of Sin (John 8:11)

Memorize

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.”*

- John 4:13-14

Historical Context of John

Purpose

The purpose statement in 20:30–31 indicates that John wrote with an evangelistic purpose, probably seeking to reach unbelievers through Christian readers of his Gospel. If the date of composition was after AD 70, the time of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, it is likely that John sought to present Jesus as the new temple and center of worship for God’s people in replacement of the old sanctuary.

Author

A close reading of the Gospel of John suggests that the author was an apostle (1:14; cp. 2:11; 19:35); one of the Twelve (“the disciple Jesus loved,” 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:20; cp. 21:24–25); and, still more specifically, John, the son of Zebedee (note the association of “the disciple Jesus loved” with Peter in 13:23–24; 18:15–16; 20:2–9; 21; and in Lk 22:8; Ac 1:13; 3–4; 8:14–25; Gl 2:9). The church fathers, too, attested to this identification (e.g., Irenaeus). Since the apostolic office was foundational in the history of the church (Ac 2:42; Eph 2:20), the apostolic authorship of John’s Gospel invests it with special authority as firsthand eyewitness (Jn 15:27; 1Jn 1:1–4).

Setting

The most plausible date of writing is the period between AD 70 (the date of the destruction of the temple) and 100 (the end of John’s lifetime), with a date in the 80s most likely. A date after 70 is suggested by the references to the Sea of Tiberias in 6:1 and 21:1 (a name widely used for the Sea of Galilee only toward the end of the first century); Thomas’s confession of Jesus as “my Lord and my God” in 20:28 (possibly a statement against emperor worship in the time of Domitian); the reference to Peter’s martyrdom, which occurred in 65 or 66 (21:19); the lack of reference to the Sadducees, who ceased to be a Jewish religious party after 70; and the comparative ease with which John equated Jesus with God (1:1, 14, 18; 10:30; 20:28).

Special Features

The Gospel of John is different from the Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—in that more than ninety percent of its material is unique. John’s Gospel does not focus on the miracles, parables, and public speeches that are so prominent in the other accounts. Instead, the Gospel of John emphasizes the identity of Jesus as the Son of God and how we, as believers, should respond to his teachings.

Extended Commentary

John 4:4-25

4:4 Had to travel may indicate that Jesus's itinerary was set by the sovereign plan of God (9:4; 10:16; 12:34; 20:9). Through Samaria was the most direct route from Judea to Galilee, but strict Jews, wishing to avoid defilement, bypassed Samaria by taking a longer, less direct route. This involved crossing the Jordan River and traveling across from Samaria on the eastern side of the river.

4:5 Sychar was located just east of Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal. The reference to the property that Jacob had given his son Joseph reflects the customary inference from Gn 48:21–22 and Jos 24:32 that Jacob gave his son Joseph the land at Shechem that he had bought from the sons of Hamor (Gn 33:18–19) and that later served as Joseph's burial place (Ex 13:19; Jos 24:32).

4:6 Jesus was worn out from his journey. This underscores his genuine, full humanity.

4:7 The first sentence would have raised the question: What will Jesus do? Those who knew the Samaritans would have been shocked by Jesus's request.

4:8 Jesus and his disciples usually carried little or nothing to eat on their journeys. Rather, they brought money to buy provisions along the way (12:6; 13:29). Purchasing food was a common assignment given to disciples. Jesus did not fear being defiled by food bought in a Samaritan village.

4:9 The author's aside that Jews do not associate with Samaritans explained to his Diaspora readership that rabbis considered Samaritans to be in a continual state of uncleanness.

4:10–15 The references to Jesus as the giver of living water involve double meaning (see notes at 3:3–8, 14–15). Literally, the phrase refers to fresh spring water (Gn 26:19; Lv 14:6). God was known as the source of life (Gn 1:11–12, 20–31; 2:7) and “the fountain of living water” (Jr 2:13; see Is 12:3). In Nm 20:8–11, water gushed out of the rock, a much-needed provision for the Israelites.

4:11 Jacob's well may have been the deepest well in Palestine. It is more than a hundred feet deep today and was probably deeper in Jesus's day.

4:12 The woman's account of Jacob giving the Samaritans the well and drinking from it himself was based on tradition, not Scripture. The book of Genesis does not record Jacob digging a well, drinking from it, and giving it to his sons.

4:14 The phrase will become a well of water springing up in him is reminiscent of Is 12:3 (cp. Is 44:3; 55:1–3).

4:16 Jesus's instructions gave the woman the opportunity to admit that she was living with a man who was not her husband.

4:17 While technically truthful, the woman's statement was potentially misleading because it could be taken to imply that she was unattached. Jesus knew the full truth.

4:18 The woman had had five husbands—or five “men” (the Gk *aner* can mean “husband” or “man”)—having engaged in a series of illicit relationships, and she was not married to her current lover. Sexual relations outside of marriage are forbidden in both Testaments.

4:19 The woman recognized that Jesus knew her life circumstances without apparently having been told by anyone—hence he must be a prophet (cp. Lk 7:39).

4:20–21 The fathers who worshiped on this mountain—a reference to Mount Gerizim (Dt 11:29; 27:12), the OT setting for the pronouncement of blessings for keeping the covenant, and the mountain on which Moses commanded an altar to be built (Dt 27:4–6)—included Abraham (Gn 12:7) and Jacob (Gn 33:20), who built altars in this region.

4:22 True worship must be based on true knowledge of God, and the Samaritans limited themselves to just the Pentateuch. Salvation is from the Jews means that in salvation history the Jews are the conduit through which salvation comes to the world.

4:23–24 Because God is spirit, the Israelites were not to make idols “in the shape of anything” as the surrounding nations did (Ex 20:4). Jesus's point was that since God is spirit, proper worship of him is also a matter of spirit rather than physical location.³

References

1. C. S. Lewis, *The Horse and His Boy* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 164-165.
2. William Swan Plumer, *Theology for the People* (Hinton, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 2004).
3. *CSB Study Bible* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).

Author Bio

C.S. Lewis (The Horse and His Boy)

Clive Staples Lewis (1898-1963) was one of the intellectual giants of the twentieth century and arguably one of the most influential writers of his day. He was a Fellow and Tutor in English Literature at Oxford University until 1954, when he was unanimously elected to the Chair of Medieval and Renaissance Literature at Cambridge University, a position he held until his retirement. He wrote more than thirty books, allowing him to reach a vast audience, and his works continue to attract thousands of new readers every year. His most distinguished and popular accomplishments include *Out of the Silent Planet*, *The Great Divorce*, *The Screwtape Letters*, and the universally acknowledged classics *The Chronicles of Narnia*. To date, the Narnia books have sold over 100 million copies and have been transformed into three major motion pictures.

William Swan Plummer (Theology for the People)

William Swan Plummer (1802-80) was a minister, author, and theological professor. Plummer was a prolific author and active churchman. His published works include commentaries, biblical studies, articles, essays, sermons, and a volume on pastoral theology. His writings, while profoundly theological in nature, are very practical in focus. His books represent a high point in the theological-devotional literature produced of nineteenth century American Presbyterianism.

Charles Swindoll (John)

Charles R. Swindoll is the founder and senior pastor–teacher of Stonebriar Community Church in Frisco, Texas. But Chuck’s listening audience extends far beyond a local church body, as *Insight for Living* airs on major Christian radio markets around the world. Chuck’s extensive writing ministry has also served the body of Christ worldwide, and his leadership as president and now chancellor of Dallas Theological Seminary has helped prepare and equip a new generation of men and women for ministry. Chuck and his wife, Cynthia, his partner in life and ministry, have four grown children, ten grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren.

John MacArthur (John 1-11)

John MacArthur has served as pastor-teacher of Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California, since 1969. His ministry of expository preaching is unparalleled in its breadth and influence. In more than five decades of ministry from the same pulpit, he has preached verse by verse through the entire New Testament and several key sections of the Old Testament. He is Chancellor of the Master’s University and Seminary, and can be heard daily on the *Grace to You* radio broadcast (carried on hundreds of radio stations worldwide). He has authored numerous bestselling books, including *Twelve Ordinary Men* and *One Perfect Life*.

R. Kent Hughes (John)

R. Kent Hughes (DMin, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) is senior pastor emeritus of College Church in Wheaton, Illinois, and former professor of practical theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Hughes is also a founder of the Charles Simeon Trust, which conducts expository preaching conferences throughout North America and worldwide. He serves as the series editor for the *Preaching the Word* commentary series and is the author or coauthor of many books. He and his wife, Barbara, live in Wyncote, Pennsylvania, and have four children and an ever-increasing number of grandchildren.