

# Evangelism: Woman at the Well

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Salem

John 4:1-42

## INTRODUCTION:

Please turn in your Bibles to **John 4**... We'll come back to this passage in just a few moments.

- This evening, I would like for us to imagine how difficult it must have been for Ted and Dorothy Hustead to go into business in a small town in South Dakota in 1932.
- It was the middle of the great depression, they were in the middle of a long drought, and the temperatures were consistently over 100 degrees for 10 days at a time.
- The young couple owned a drug store in a town of only 326 very poor people.
- As a last ditch effort, they decided to put up signs at 5, 10, and 25 miles on each side of town, offering free ice water at their store.
- History tells us that even before they were finished hanging the signs, people started pouring into the store.
- Even today, most of us are at least a little bit familiar with Wall Drug, in Wall, South Dakota.
- According to their web site, during the summer months even today, Wall Drug will have up to 20,000 visitors on a good day, even though the population of the town is only 800.

Ted and Dorothy Hustead understood that people were thirsty, and they went about filling that need, and in the text for this evening's lesson, we find that Jesus did the same thing.

- The passage that I would like us to focus on this evening can be found in **John 4** where we see that Jesus was speaking to a Samaritan woman.
- Please read with me **John 4:1-42**...

*1 Therefore when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John*

*2 (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were),*

*3 He left Judea and went away again into Galilee.*

*4 And He had to pass through Samaria.*

*5 So He came to a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph;*

*6 and Jacob's well was there. So Jesus, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.*

*7 There came a woman of Samaria 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 Therefore the Samaritan woman said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am 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 She said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water?"*

*12 "You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?"*

*13 Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again;*

*14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."*

*15 The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw."*

*16 He 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 correctly said, 'I have no husband';*

18 *for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly."*

19 *The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.*

20 *"Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."*

21 *Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.*

22 *"You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.*

23 *"But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.*

24 *"God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."*

25 *The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us."*

26 *Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He."*

27 *At this point His disciples came, and they were amazed that He had been speaking with a woman, yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why do You speak with her?"*

28 *So the woman left her waterpot, and went into the city and said to the men,*

29 *"Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?"*

30 *They went out of the city, and were coming to Him.*

31 *Meanwhile the disciples were urging Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat."*

32 *But He said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about."*

33 *So the disciples were saying to one another, "No one brought Him anything to eat, did he?"*

34 *Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.*

35 *"Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest.*

36 *"Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.*

37 *"For in this case the saying is true, 'One sows and another reaps.'*

38 *"I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored and you have entered into their labor."*

39 *From that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all the things that I have done."*

40 *So when the Samaritans came to Jesus, they were asking Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days.*

41 *Many more believed because of His word;*

42 *and they were saying to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world."*

As we study this account, we find that there are probably thousands of lessons we could learn from the chapter.

- This evening, though, I would like for us to narrow our focus to **Jesus and the example he set in sharing the gospel.**

I. As we look back over **John 4**, one of the first lessons we learn in this area is that **JESUS MADE CONTACT WITH THIS WOMAN.**

There are obviously many excuses that Jesus could have used to avoid sharing the gospel with this woman.

- If we look back up at **verses 1-2**, we find that Jesus was personally responsible for more baptisms than even John the Baptist.
- Apparently, Jesus was not the one who actually did the dunking in the water, but he was responsible for teaching them the gospel and bringing them to the point of decision about their faith.
- With that in mind, Jesus could have very easily used that as an excuse to take it easy.

Jesus could have also very easily used his own physical hunger and thirst and exhaustion as an excuse for not sharing the gospel on this particular occasion.

- We learn in **verse 6** that Jesus was “*wearied from His journey.*”
- In **verse 7** we find that Jesus was thirsty, and in **verses 8 & 31** we find that Jesus must have been hungry as well.
- He probably would have enjoyed relaxing for a moment on his own, and yet he did not use his physical needs as an excuse.

In **verse 7** we also learn a detail about this individual that could have also kept Jesus from talking.

- We find out that she was a Samaritan.
- The hatred between the Jews and the Samaritans actually went back hundreds of years.
- The Samaritans were considered to be half-breeds and traitors of the Jewish nation.
- They had compromised their faith with the pagan religions of the area.

Not only was she a Samaritan, but she was also a woman.

- In William Barclay’s commentary on this passage, he points out that the strict Rabbis were not allowed even to greet a woman (even their own wives, or daughters, or sisters) in public.
- According to Mr. Barclay’s commentary, there were even some Pharisees who were called the “*bruised and bleeding Pharisees,*” because they shut their eyes when they saw a woman on the street, and so they actually injured themselves walking into buildings as they avoided looking at women.

Jesus, though, was not like that at all, was he?

- Jesus crossed all kinds of barriers just to make contact with this particular woman.
- Jesus was ready to share the gospel with even those who seemed least likely to accept it.
- I believe this all goes back to an interesting statement buried at the end of **verse 23**.
- Jesus said, “*...for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.*”
- Unlike under the Old Law, under the New Law, God started actively looking for people to be his worshipers.
- Under the Old Law, I don’t recall very many missionary journeys, but under the New Law, God is actively seeking those who are lost—including Samaritan women.

We can look at the four gospel accounts, and we find that as a part of this outreach, Jesus went to weddings, and banquets, and funerals.

- He worked with people, he walked with people, and he even met with people in the middle of the night—all in an effort to reach out with the good news.
- What an example for us to follow!

Jesus made contact with people for a very specific reason.

- I find it interesting in **verse 4** that the Bible says Jesus “*had to pass through Samaria.*”
- Most Jews never passed through Samaria—they always went out to the east, crossed the Jordan River, went around Samaria, and then crossed the Jordan again when they got where they were going.
- Jesus, though, had to do it.

- This woman must have been the reason why Jesus was there.
- Many people view God as being very distant and not very involved in their lives.
- This woman might have been the same way, but she had no idea that God in the flesh was about to meet her on purpose.

As we get back into our routine this week, I would like for us to remember what Jesus did here in **John 4** in making contact with this woman.

- I don't know about you, but as I think about my interactions with the hundreds of people in my life every week, I sometimes have some regrets.
- Sometimes I will look back on a conversation and tell myself what I should have said...but didn't.
- Maybe we regret not inviting someone to church, as we should have.
- Maybe we regret not bringing up our faith, as we should have.
- Maybe we regret not asking someone about their faith, as we should have.
- But as we go into this coming week, I would like for us to promise ourselves that we will take advantage of opportunities...just as Jesus did with the Samaritan woman in **John 4**.
- The gospel is spread just like a cold virus—through personal contact—and we need to remember that this coming week.
- Let's get out there and infect as many people as we can!

**II.** As we continue looking at **John 4** with the idea of sharing our faith, I'd like for us to notice a second lesson, and that is **JESUS SPOKE THE TRUTH IN LOVE**.

As we look through **John 4**, we find that Jesus was always respectful.

- He always treated this woman with loving concern. He never cut her down.
- He never made fun of her condition. And yet at the same time, Jesus also told her the truth.
- Jesus very clearly said that she had a need that only He could fill.
- Sometimes we may hear people refer to the fact that we have a God-shaped hole in our hearts.
- That is a very accurate way of describing our condition, and Jesus very gently pointed out this truth to the Samaritan woman.
- Jesus did not confront this woman to condemn her, but to save her from her sinful lifestyle.
- We might say that this woman had been looking for love in all the wrong places.
- She had had five husbands, and the man she was living with at the time was not her husband.
- Her lifestyle had made her a very lonely person.
- She was looking for love, but in a way, Love came looking for her.
- Jesus came to speak to her in love.

As Jesus began, did you notice that he did not apologize for what he was about to say?

- But instead, he came right out and very clearly said that he had something that she needed.
- He did this by comparing truth to water, and water was certainly something this woman could understand and appreciate.
- Jesus asked her for a drink, and then he turned the conversation toward the spiritual need that she had.
- As we look at **John 4**, we find that the conversation started with water, it moved to living water, it continued to her condition, it progressed to a discussion of worship, and it ended with Jesus' statement that He was exactly what she should be looking for.

Jesus wanted the Samaritan woman to have a thirst for proper worship... A thirst to do things God's way.

- When some people are faced with this decision, they run, or hide, or change the subject...and there's nothing we can do about that.
- And yet we are happy when someone reacts the way this woman reacted.

Again, all of this goes back to the fact that Jesus spoke the truth to her in a loving way.

- Today, Jesus' approach might seem a little strange—especially in the Salem area.
- Today we hear things like, “**Everyone has their own truth, and we do not want to offend anyone by suggesting otherwise.**”
- Others may try to say that truth is whatever someone sincerely believes in.
- And yet we look at **John 4** (especially **verse 22**), and we find that Jesus was shockingly blunt.
- He told this Samaritan woman that the Samaritans were worshipping what they did not know.
- In the nicest way possible, Jesus told this woman that everything she had ever believed had been wrong—in **verse 22**—“*Salvation is from the Jews.*”
- By the end of the conversation, though, Jesus revealed himself as the Messiah.

Today, when we talk to someone who is living in a sinful situation, they don't just need to know that what they are doing is sin, but they need to know that Jesus offers them freedom from that sin.

- It is very easy to avoid this subject all together, and yet Jesus did not avoid it.
- According to **Luke 19:10**, Jesus came into the world for the purpose of saving lost people.
- We can follow his example by speaking the truth in love.

**III.** There is a third lesson I'd like for us to consider from **John 4**. Not only did Jesus make contact with this woman and speak the truth to her in love, but we also notice that **JESUS SAW THE POTENTIAL IN THIS WOMAN'S LIFE.**

No one is too sinful to be taught God's word.

- When Jesus saw this woman, he did not see a Samaritan, he did not see someone with a bad reputation, he did not even see her as a woman—but Jesus did see her as a human being with tremendous potential.
- He presented her with the truth, and then he let her decide what to do with it.

Later on, in **verse 42**, Jesus is referred to as being the “*Savior.*”

- As the Savior, Jesus was able to see this woman for what she could be.
- As we talk with people on a daily basis, then, we should also look at them in this way—not for what they are at the time, but for what they have the potential of becoming.
- As Jesus looked at her in this way, we see that his vision was correct.
- In **verse 28**, we find that she left her waterpot right where it was, and she went into the city and told the men what she had seen.

Her immediate response was to share the good news with others.

- In **verse 29**, we find her one-line statement to the men of the city—“*Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?*”
- At that point, many of the Samaritans came out to meet Jesus, and Jesus stayed there two more days to teach all of those who were come out of that village.

I find it interesting that Jesus apparently had a special place in his heart for the Samaritan people.

- You might remember from **Acts 1:8** that Jesus was talking to the Apostles and he said that they would be his witnesses, “*both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.*”
- Later on, Philip fulfilled this prophecy as he preached in Samaria in **Acts 8**.
- The Bible tells us in **Acts 8** that everyone, from smallest to greatest, were paying attention to Phillip and that many people were being baptized “*men and women alike.*”

All of this started in **John 4** when Jesus looked beyond this woman's sinful life and her social position and saw her for the potential she had.

### **SUMMARY:**

- First of all, then, Jesus made contact with this woman—overcoming several barriers in the process.
- Secondly, Jesus spoke the truth in love—respecting her as a person and yet being straightforward at the same time.
- And finally, Jesus saw the potential in this woman's life—with the understanding that no one is too sinful to be taught.

### **CONCLUSION:**

When it comes to evangelism, we have two examples in **John 4**.

- First of all, we can tell people directly, as Jesus did, or we can bring people to someone who can tell it better, as the woman did.
- Either way, all of us can play a part in bringing salvation to the Salem area.

As we go through this coming week, all of us will meet people who are thirsty in a spiritual sense.

- They may never meet another member of this congregation, and that means that it is completely up to us to share our faith.
- We have seen it done in **John 4**.
- If we could be more like Jesus, we might lead one person to the truth or we might end up teaching an entire city as we've learned about this evening.

### **INVITATION:**

As we close this evening's lesson, I would like for anyone who is not a Christian (or an active part of this congregation) to think about the gospel in terms of water and to think about our need in terms of thirst.

- At the end of the New Testament, in **Revelation 22:17**, the Bible gives an invitation for all people—regardless of social position, or race, or language, or gender—all people who are thirsty are invited to come and drink the water of life without cost.

We can quench our thirst and fill the God-shaped heart in our lives by reading the Scriptures and obeying the words that we read.

- We look at the price Jesus paid as a sacrifice for sin, and then we change our lives—understanding what we've done.
- At that point, we confess our belief in Jesus and allow ourselves to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of our sins, being added by God to the body of Christ, the church.
- If you would like to obey the gospel, you can let us know as we stand and sing together...