

Encounters with Christ

Week 1 — **The Samaritan Woman** — John 4:1-42

Prepare...

As you begin, take a moment to pray and focus on the Lord as you come into his presence and study his word.

“Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord.”
Jeremiah 29:12-14

Jesus is on his way from Judea to Galilee. The most direct route is through Samaria; however, most Jews would have taken the long way around to avoid passing through Samaria. As we read through this passage, we learn that Jesus travelled to Samaria for one woman...

Begin... by familiarizing yourself with the text. Read the passage two times.

Answer the questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

Record in detail what you learn about the Samaritan woman.

Record any other questions or thoughts you have about the text. Are there parts you don't understand? What spoke to you the most?

Memory Verse for the Week...

“For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” Revelation 7: 17

Historical background

Samaria

The Samaritans were partly Jewish and worshipped God differently from the Jews. They were considered unclean in Jewish eyes, and no religious Jew would have any contact with them. Jews often avoided Samaria by crossing the Jordan and traveling on the east side. The woman was surprised Jesus would speak to her, much less drink from a cup handed him by a Samaritan.

Jesus arrived in Sychar, Samaria, around the 6th hour (noon). People normally drew water at the end of the day rather than in the heat of midday. (Gen. 24: 11 "...it was toward evening, the time the women go out to draw water") The Samaritan woman went to the well at a time when others would not be around.

Some scriptures for contemplation...

Revelation 7: 15-17

"Therefore, they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Psalms 107:8-9

"Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men, for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things."

Isaiah 55: 1-2

"Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare."

Let's take a closer look...

1. In verses 1-26, the words "water" and "thirst" are used frequently. List the verses where either word is used.

What different things do "water" and "thirst" refer to?

What additional water-related words do you find?

2. There are three levels of thirst talked about in this text : physical, emotional, and spiritual. The dialogue Jesus has with the Samaritan woman takes her through each level, until he gets to the core of her thirst. Note where each of these levels is addressed in the passage.

3. We have all tried to satisfy our thirst in the wrong way, trying to find cheap substitutes for God (relationships, addictions, fantasies, busyness, religious activity...). None of this will satisfy; we have to keep going back for more; they all will disappoint.

What are you thirsting for most in life right now?

Prayerfully consider how you may be trying to satisfy your own thirst in unsatisfactory ways. Write down any thoughts you have.

4. In verse 26, Jesus reveals himself as the Messiah for the first time. This is the only time before his trial that Jesus states who he is. Why could it seem surprising that he chose to reveal himself to the Samaritan woman?

What does this teach you about the person of Christ? (see also verses 40-42)

How is the Samaritan woman transformed by this encounter with the Messiah? (reread v27-30 and v39-42)

5. In verse 23, Jesus says, “The true worshipers will worship the father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.” In light of this passage, what does worshipping in spirit and in truth mean?

6. In verse 27, the disciples return with food. They are surprised to see Jesus talking to the Samaritan woman, but they wisely don’t say anything. Jesus takes the opportunity to teach them. In your own words, what does Jesus tell them?

How does this apply to you?

7. Look back at your responses on page one. Are there questions you still have that are unanswered?

8. Read Revelation 7: 15-17 from the sidebar. What an amazing God we have! Spend a few moments praising Him for these promises.

A prayer...

Dear Lord,

Even though I have the same living water within me that you gave the Samaritan woman, so often I find myself searching for other things to fill my life.

It is inconceivable that anyone who’s tasted of your goodness would drink from any other well. Yet I have. Money. Success. Pleasure. Popularity. Security. In that end, all dry wells.

But how many times have I lowered my cup into their depths? And how many times have I brought it up empty?

Keep vivid in my mind the time when you met me by the well and said, “I who speak to you am he.” And may the memory of that sacred moment keep me from wandering to seek water at any other well than yours.

Grant me diligence in watching over that sacred well. And let me not forget that even living water can be stagnated by indifference or tainted by the impurities I tolerate in my life.

Keep my faith pure so it will be a deep well where others can come to be refreshed. And as they do, O Lord Jesus, I pray that you would meet them there...as you did that Samaritan woman...as you did me...and give them living water.

Renew in me, O Savior, a zeal like this Samaritan woman had - a zeal to tell her friends, her acquaintances, and even strangers about you. Not a zeal to worship in this church or that. Not a zeal for theology. Not a zeal for causes. But a zeal for you. For you and only you....

—Ken Gire in *Intimate Moments with the Savior*

“Our inner thirst will only be quenched when we openly allow Christ to take us to our true thirst and fill us with His living water.” *Women of the Bible* Richards