

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

Lesson 4 – Study Questions

John 4:1-54

DAY ONE

1. What thoughts from the spiritual reflection or commentary of Lesson 3 spoke to you this week?

Read John 4:1-9

2a. As this week's lesson begins, Jesus was in Judea baptizing along with His disciples when He learned that the Pharisees had heard a rumor. What was the rumor and who did it involve?

b. As is often the case with hearsay, the rumor which the Pharisees heard was not exactly correct. According to the parenthetical phrase in verse 2, what was actually happening?

THINK: Those who are disciples of Christ do things in His name, now, just as in that time. Are you familiar with the term "in persona Christi"? (You may refer to the Catechism, CCC 1548-1549).

3a. When Jesus learned what was being said about Him, he left Judea and returned to Galilee (verse 3). Why do you think He might have wanted to leave Judea at that time?

b. As you will see from your map, the most direct route from Judea to Galilee means travelling through Samaria (verse 4). According to verse 5 to what city did Jesus come and what was its historical significance?

4a. Jesus was tired from His journey so He sat down at Jacob's well. Imagine Jesus' condition after the long hot journey and describe the scene (verse 6).

b. A Samaritan woman came to the well to draw water (verse 7). Jesus' disciples had gone to buy food. Jesus asked her for something and she answered. When Jesus asked for a drink of water, what was her response (verse 9)?

NOTE: In that time, women of the town customarily came to the well to draw water twice each day, morning and evening. The Samaritan woman was probably not expecting to meet anyone there at midday. The meeting of Jesus and the woman at a Jacob's well echoes the meeting of Jacob and Rachel at a well in Haran (Genesis 29).

5a. The last sentence in verse 9 explains the reason for her question. What is the reason?

b. The Jews and the Samaritans had a history of animosity dating back over 700 years from when the Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom of Israel and brought in foreigners to forcibly resettle the area. Read 2 Kings 17:24-34. In light of this passage, why do you think the Samaritan people were not accepted by the Jews (verses 33-34)?

6. CONNECTION: Jacob met his wife Rachel at a well and wooed her by watering her sheep. In today's lesson Jesus (Whom John the Baptist called Bridegroom) reached out to the Samaritan woman at a well to spiritually "woo" her with His living water. Jesus approached her at a time when others could not watch and criticize. He spoke mysteriously to her in a way intended to get her attention. We also are called to attract others to Jesus. Think of an appealing way that you have caught the attention of a nonbeliever; or a way that you would like to do so. Jot down some thoughts for your small group.

Read and record Isaiah 62:5 and pray that we may bring to Jesus, the Bridegroom, those who do not yet know Him.

DAY TWO

Read John 4:10-15

7. In yesterday's lesson the Samaritan woman questioned why a Jew would ask a drink of a Samaritan. In today's lesson, Jesus didn't answer the woman's question. In your own words, what does He tell her in response (verse 10)?

8. The Samaritan woman pointed out that Jesus had no bucket and the well was deep. How did she address Him and what question did she ask in verse 11?

9a. In verse 12 the woman asked Jesus, "Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this well and drank from it himself with his children and his flocks?" What tone do you perceive she is taking?

b. Jacob was the son of Isaac and the grandson of Abraham whose name God changed to Israel. Refer to Genesis 35:11-12 and briefly summarize what you learn about Jacob.

10a. In verses 13-14 Jesus explained the difference between the water from Jacob's well and His living water. How do they differ?

b. How did the woman respond (verse 15)?

11. Many passages in the Bible refer to our thirst for God and His life-giving water. Pick one of the following verses and record a phrase referring to living water that is most meaningful to you and the reason why.

Psalm 42:1-2

Isaiah 49:10

Revelation 21:6

12. CONNECTION: The Samaritan woman needed water from Jacob's well to stay alive. While she recognized her critical need for water, she did not know how to satisfy her empty heart. Within the human heart there is a spiritual thirst that only Jesus can quench. His words began to help her recognize what was lacking in her life. What has helped you to see your need for Jesus in your life: a blessing, a crisis, a wise person, or something else? Record some thoughts to share with your small group.

Think of a favorite hymn that involves spiritual water and record a meaningful verse. Take a moment to sing or speak this verse about God's great gift.

DAY THREE
Read John 4:16-24

13a. After explaining to the Samaritan woman about the living water, Jesus asked her to return to Him with her husband. She admitted that she had no husband. Summarize Jesus' response in verses 17-18.

b. What did the Samaritan woman surmise about Jesus (verse 19)?

14. The subject of the conversation then turned to worship. According to verse 20, what confused her?

NOTE: After the Samaritans intermingled with pagan peoples, they compromised and revised the Jewish faith. They changed the place of worship from Jerusalem to Mt. Gerizim, and instead of worshipping Yahweh as their only deity, they added Him to the list of gods the pagans worshiped.

15. In verse 21 Jesus said that a time is coming when true worshipers will worship the Father neither on the mountain nor in Jerusalem. What does this mean?

16a. How did Samaritans' worship differ from Jews' worship according to verse 22?

b. Wisdom 13:1-2 describes the ignorance of pagan worshippers. Read these verses and record verse 2.

17a. In verse 23 Jesus said the hour is coming when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. From the end of the verse, what does the Father seek?

b. How is God described and how should He be worshiped (verse 24)?

NOTE: "Christian worship contrasts with Jewish and Samaritan worship. It will be in spirit, not confined to a single Israelite sanctuary where the ritual sacrifice of animals has continued since the days of Moses. It will also be in truth, not tainted by the errors of idolatry that have plagued the Samaritans since the days of the divided kingdom." (Ignatius)

18. CONNECTION: Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman about a coming hour when true worshipers will worship in Spirit and truth. At Holy Mass, after the Consecration, Jesus, the Lamb of God, is offered as a perfect Sacrifice to the Father. Through baptism and the Spirit, we are able to join in this act of worship.

Whether within a community of believers or in quiet solitude, the essence of worship is a deeply personal connection between one's spirit and God's, moving from self-centeredness to God-centeredness (Ratzinger). Has there been a time or place at Mass or elsewhere that you have found yourself to be in the presence of the Holy Spirit? Describe this experience for your small group.

The liturgy is the great reordering principle - of the cosmos, of history and of us. Its content is the sacrificial work of Christ, the Priest (the greatest bridge builder) ... bridging the gap between heaven and earth ... (Carstens, Christopher). Write a prayer to the Holy Spirit asking for the grace to be God-centered.

DAY FOUR

Read John 4:25-30

19. As today's lesson begins, Jesus was still in conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well. She assured Him she knew that the Messiah was coming. What did she say that the Messiah will do when He comes (verse 25)?

20a. How did Jesus describe Himself to her in verse 26?

b. Whenever Jesus uses the term "I AM", He is identifying Himself with God. Read and record [Exodus 3:14](#).

21a. How did the disciples react when they returned to find Jesus talking to the Samaritan woman in verse 27?

b. Sometimes discretion is the better part of valor. List the two questions the disciples chose not to ask out loud and explain why you think they might have refrained.

22. The woman then went back to the town, leaving her water jar at the well (verse 28). Why do you think she left her jar there?

23a. According to verse 29, how did the Samaritan woman describe Jesus to the townspeople and what did she urge the townspeople to do?

b. How did the townspeople respond according to verse 30?

24. CONNECTION: Both the Jewish and Samaritan peoples were waiting, longing for the Messiah. When the woman realized Who Jesus was, she couldn't wait to tell people about Him. In her excitement she dropped what she was doing and ran into the town to let everyone know that she had met the Messiah. Often our own keyed up actions speak more than our words ever could. Can you remember a time when you were so excited about your discovery of who Jesus was or what He had done in your life that you couldn't wait to tell people about it? Explain.

The last verse of the hymn *Amazing Grace* is "When we've been there 10,000 years, bright shining as the sun, we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we'd first begun". Read and record Psalm 146:1-2.

DAY FIVE

Read John 4:31-42

25. In verses 31-33 at the well, the disciples begged Jesus to eat something, but He responded that He had food to eat that they didn't know about. According to verse 34 what was that food?

26a. Jesus then turned to the subject of harvesting. What do you think harvesting symbolizes to Jesus and what relationship does it have with verse 34?

b. Jesus then complained that some do not think that harvesting is an urgent need, that they can wait 4 months (first sentence of verse 35). To the contrary, what did Jesus say to show the urgency of the situation (end of verse 35)?

27a. In verses 36-37 Jesus explained that the reaper receives wages and gathers fruit for eternal life so that sower and reaper may rejoice together, distinguishing between the sower and reaper. Who do you think is the sower and who is the reaper in this case?

b. What have the apostles been sent to reap according to verse 38?

28a. The Samaritans believed more and more as they got to know Jesus. According to verse 39, why did many believe at first?

b. After two more days many others believed. According to verse 41, why was this?

29. Finally, by the end of verse 42, what did they know to be true about Jesus?

30. CONNECTION: Jesus spoke to His disciples about sowing seeds of faith and reaping a harvest of souls. In this week's passage, Jesus sowed the seed of faith with the Samaritan woman who passed it on to others in her community, resulting in many coming to Christ. The harvest was plentiful and immediate! Often, however, the seeds of faith are sown in a person's heart, yet don't take hold until much later, without the sower ever knowing the result. Who are the people who have sown seeds of faith in your life? Were they able to see the "harvest"?

Begin your prayer thanking God for the "seed sowers" in your life.

DAY SIX

Read John 4:43-54

31a. Jesus moved on from Samaria to Galilee (verse 43). What do you recall is significant about this place?

b. Jesus pointed out that a prophet has no honor in His own country, yet we are told He was welcomed in Galilee by His fellow Galileans. Why was this so according to the second half of verse 45?

32a. What had Jesus done in Cana?

b. What happened in nearby Capernaum? Summarize verses 46-47.

33a. In verse 48 Jesus made an observation which tied together His misgivings about the people who witnessed signs in Jerusalem. What was it?

b. How does the official respond to Jesus in verse 49?

34a. Jesus dismissed the man with the promise that his son would live. According to the second half of verse 50, what two things did the official do then?

b. Summarize what the man learned on his way home according to verses 51-53.

35a. The phrase at the end of verse 53 tells us what happened as a result of this miracle. What was it?

b. What does verse 54 say about this “sign”?

36. CONNECTION: The royal official, probably a Roman, believed that Jesus had the power to save his son but to be sure he wanted Jesus to accompany him to his son’s bedside. He stepped out in faith when he came to Jesus for help and even more when he returned home on Jesus’ assurance that his son was healed. It is most difficult to trust God in such a critical situation. Can you share an instance when you stepped out in faith and had to leave a dear one’s destiny to God? What was the outcome?

Read and record Matthew 10:29-31 and end today’s lesson with a prayer asking God for the faith of the royal official.

Read Lesson 4 John 4:1-54 in the *Meditation and Commentary on the Gospel of John* by Rev. Alfred McBride, O. Praem. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New American Bible, Revised Edition (NABRE) © 2010, 1991, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, DC. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.

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