



## SHARING YOUR STORY

JOHN 4:7-26

WEEK 4

### MAIN POINT

We have opportunities to share the good news of Jesus with people, regardless of who they are or what they have done.

### INTRODUCTION

*As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.*

**Can you remember a time when you had a really strange or awkward conversation? What happened?**

**What makes a conversation good or bad? Who is your favorite person with whom to sit down and talk? Why?**

We all have favorite people with whom to talk—it could be a spouse, parent, or friend. Conversations go all sorts of directions, but the best conversations often have an intentional goal—a purpose that seeks to help and improve one or both people. Jesus had this type of conversation with a woman in Samaria.

### UNDERSTANDING

*Unpack the biblical text to discover what God's Word says and means for us.*

Jesus and His disciples left Jerusalem for Galilee, traveling by way of Samaria. Jews in those days tried to avoid the Samaritan route because they considered the people in the region to be unclean. Jesus led His disciples toward the Samaritan town of Sychar, where they stopped at Jacob's well, a religious landmark as well as a source of water.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 4:7-14.**

**What might the Samaritan woman have thought when she came to the well in the middle of the day and found a Jewish man sitting next to it?**

**How might the woman have felt having a conversation at the town well?**

**Why did Jesus speak to the woman at the well? Why did that surprise her?**

**What people in our community would be surprised if you spoke to them? Why?**

The Samaritan woman was surprised not only that someone was at the well, but the person was a Jewish man who wanted to talk. Jesus began the conversation with the woman for one reason. It was the same reason He struck up conversations with other people in His ministry. He could tell she had a spiritual thirst only the living water He alone could offer would quench.

**The Samaritan woman and Jesus have two different ideas about living water. What were they?**

**Why was the living water Jesus described attractive to the woman?**

Jesus talked about the water and described living water that gave new life, but the Samaritan woman thought He meant running water, like a river or stream. The woman wanted living water that would never leave her thirsty, because she would not need to go to the well every day.

**How did Jesus turn the conversation from His need to hers? How can you use this as you witness to others?**

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ John 4:15-26.**

**What was the woman's reason for going to the well at noon? Why was she avoiding people?**

**Why do you think the Samaritan woman had so many husbands?**

**What might she have been seeking through these relationships?**

**Why did Jesus tell her to call her husband?**

The woman had been married five times and lived with a man that was not her husband. She was an outcast and perhaps could not go to the well in the morning because she feared having to talk with the other women and hear their snickering. Jesus knew about her failures. He drew her attention to them by bringing up her husband (v. 16). He had a strategic reason for asking her to return to her home and bring back her husband. With His request, Jesus wanted her to get honest with Him about her situation. Accordingly, He guided her to confront her failure. In order to receive God's gift of living water, she had to admit she failed in her attempt to meet her deepest spiritual need by herself. Admitting this meant coming face to face with the failures in her life.

**Why was it important for her to confront her failures? Why is it important for us to confront ours?**

**Why did the woman first think Jesus was a prophet? Why did she ask Jesus if He was the Christ? How did her opinion of Jesus change during their conversation?**

The Samaritan woman's failure did not start with her lifestyle of immorality. Neither did it begin with her series of failed relationships. Her lifestyle pointed to a far more serious problem. Her lifestyle exhibited the reality of her sin. Therefore, she failed because she was a sinner. Jesus engaged the woman with intentional conversation that addressed her deepest needs. As they spoke, she discovered more and more who Jesus was a man, a prophet, and the Christ.

## APPLICATION

*Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.*

Like the Samaritan woman, some of us think we can find fulfillment in relationships with other people. Others of us have convinced ourselves that indulging in wealth or possessions will help us to deal with our spiritual condition. As we discover to our sorrow, however, self-indulgence doesn't fill the void either. Only a relationship with Christ, the source of living water, can meet our gaping spiritual need that results from our sin.

**Do you feel as if there are reasons you are not good enough for Jesus? How does this story speak against this feeling?**

**In what people or things are you most tempted to look for fulfillment instead of looking to Christ? How can we hold one another accountable to look only to Christ this week?**

**How can you use your testimony and salvation story to share the message of Christ this week? Who will you invite this week to join you in Sunday School in two weeks?**

## PRAYER

Close your group time in prayer by praying specifically for any needs or hurts that surfaced during your discussion. Pray group members would look only to Christ for fulfillment and purpose, and would be bold enough to share the gospel with those who need to hear it.

## COMMENTARY

John 4:7-26

**4:7-9.** About noon, the woman came to the well, telling us that she was clearly a social outcast, since that hot hour would have been an unlikely time to lug a heavy water jar back into the city.

**4:10-12.** Jesus cut right to the basics and offered living water. This confused the woman since she had no context for moving from physical to spiritual water. The expression “gift of God” appears only in the Gospels, but it has become an important part of our Christian vocabulary. The gift of God is living water—the water of life, or life itself through the Holy Spirit.

**4:13-15.** The water that the woman had come to draw had to be obtained with hard labor in the sun. If the refreshing water Jesus talked about could be made available without all that effort, even better. 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 a free gift. People who depend only on physical water will be continually thirsty. They will always look in the wrong direction for satisfaction.

**4:16-18.** Beginning with verse 16, Jesus dealt in straight talk. Like this woman, we must recognize our sin and understand that God sees us for what we are. Surely the change in topic must have seemed abrupt, but the woman did not miss a beat. What she said was true—she had no husband—at the moment. And the fact that she spoke the truth was the very point at which Jesus pinned down the reality.

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

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

**4:22-23.** Jesus indicated the Samaritans were wrong. “You Samaritans worship what you do not know.” After all, this must be the case since salvation is from the Jews. Jesus swept the entire argument aside. “An hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.” The old covenant and its provisions were coming to an end and a new covenant was being brought in. Under the new covenant,

there is no sacred place or sacred space. We can worship our Father anytime and anywhere.

**4:24.** This explains why we worship God all the time and everywhere. Since “God is Spirit,” those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. Answering an altar call by kneeling on the steps at the front of the church worship center does not commend us to the Father; it does not make us more spiritual or our prayers more powerful. The Father always looks at our hearts (1 Sam. 16:7). If our hearts are not in tune with Him and do not respond to Him according to the truth of His Word, then we are not really worshiping Him. True worship flows from hearts that are right with God and lives that are consistent with the truth of the Scriptures.

**4:25-26.** In response to Jesus’ words about genuine worship, the Samaritan woman said: “I know that Messiah is coming (who is called Christ).” Some Jews looked for a priestly Messiah, but most expected one from David’s line who was a conqueror. They awaited a Messiah who would be a political/military leader like David. This deliverer would drive out the Romans and restore the Jewish nation to power and prominence.

The Samaritans also looked for a Messiah, a prophet like Moses. They believed this prophet would restore the worship system on Mount Gerizim and convert Jews and pagans. Jesus’ response no doubt stunned the woman: “I am He.” In Jewish territory, Jesus avoided the title Messiah, preferring instead the designation Son of Man, which did not carry the baggage of a political/military deliverer.