



Sharing Your Story

<p>Scripture</p> <p>John 4:7-34</p>	<p>Main Point</p> <p>We have opportunities to share the good news of Jesus with people, regardless of who they are or what they have done.</p>
<p>Memory Verse: John 4:24</p> <p>God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and in truth.</p>	<p>Supplies Needed</p> <p>Geography Quiz Memory verse printout</p>

Introduction

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

Middle School Activity

Prepare some fun questions or diagrams to use for a geography trivia game. You could print a blank county map of Kentucky, state map of our country or world map. Plan a fun, team against team, way to answer geography trivia questions.

- How many of you have travelled to another part of the country or even outside the USA? Have the students share about some of their journeys.
- What are some of the stranger things you have seen from your trips?
- How many of you enjoy using apps like Google Earth to explore new places?
- When considering that Christ has told us to go to all the world to make disciples, how do we get started on such a big task?

High School Activity

As the students are gathering, share about some of the most distant trips you have taken. Then, ask the students to share about the longest trip from home they have ever made.

- What are some interesting things about the cultures that you visited? (Even if they have only travelled in the USA, there are many different cultures to encounter.)

- If you could travel anywhere in the world and stay for an entire month to live in that culture (not just be a tourist), where would you go? And why?
- How can your life impact a world that needs to hear about Jesus?

Main Point

It is fun to travel, meet new people and see new things. However, we have a great task – to share the good news of Jesus. In this connected world in which we live, we don't have to travel across the globe to share with others. In fact, we have opportunities to share the good news of Jesus with people, regardless of who they are or what they have done.

- What are some ways you can move a casual conversation to a message about Jesus?
- What are the essential truths we should share about Jesus when we have the opportunity?

Transition

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. Use the commentary to teach through each of the passages.

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.

Read & Explain: 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 that the person was a Jewish man who wanted to talk. Jesus began the conversation with the woman for one reason. For the same reason, He struck up conversations with other people in His ministry. He could tell she had a spiritual thirst that could only be quenched by the living water He alone could offer.

- 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 a 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, so 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?

Read & Explain: 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?
- 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 end by asking if Jesus 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.

Memory Verse

Review previous memory verses:

- Matthew 9:37-38: Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few. Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest."
- Psalm 126:3: The Lord had done great things for us; we were joyful.
- Acts 16:31: They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your household."

Invest group time in helping students learn this week's memory verse. Have the memory verse printouts ready to place on the board. (As an alternative, write the verse on the white board and be prepared to selectively remove words.) As the leader, you will be setting a good example if you do this work with them.

Help students learn this week's memory verse through the following steps:

1. Have students find a partner and practice reading the verse to one another out loud.
2. Bring the group back together and have them read in unison and out loud the memory verse as it is placed on the board.
3. Replace it with the second sheet that has a few words omitted and have the students recite the verse in unison and out loud together.
4. Replace it with the third sheet that has many words omitted and have the students recite the verse in unison and out loud together.
5. Remove the verse from view, and have the students recite the verse in unison and out loud together. Help whenever needed.

Encourage the students to recite the verse each morning and pray that God will use this verse to remind them we have opportunities to share the good news of Jesus with people, regardless of who they are or what they have done.

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?

Pray

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 point 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 here 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 came 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 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 everywhere and all the time. 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 similar to 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.