

Face to Face With Jesus

Rejected

John 4:1-26

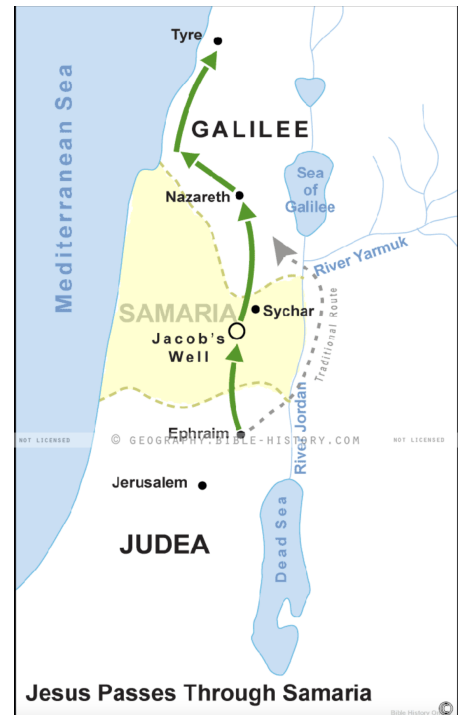
Leaders Guide

Rejection is painful. Sometimes a person might be rejected because of something they have done or for what or who they are. Sometimes they might be the cause of their rejection and sometimes it might be the fault or prejudice of others. People who have been rejected, ostracized, or bullied might feel fear, anger, shame or guilt. Whatever the reason, being rejected by everyone around them is a very vulnerable and lonely place to be.

Risky Behavior

If you had lived in the first century this story would have made you very uncomfortable. Customs and rules were being ignored. Actions and behaviors were risky. We need to look inside the culture to understand the inferences of the story.

- Jews avoided travel through Samaria. They took the route on the map that is east of the Jordan River to avoid that dangerous area.
- Jews did not talk to Samaritans, they were unclean.
- Jewish men avoided talking to women who were alone and/or unaccompanied by a male relative.
- People did not share drinking utensils with people they considered unclean.
- Women did not discuss theology with men.
- Water was gathered in the early morning or the evening (because of the heat) by women in groups for protection and assistance.



Note to Leaders: Samaritans were descended from the intermarriages between Israelites and pagans after the 722BC conquest by Assyria. The division between the Israelites and the Samaritans involved five issues. 1) They were a threat to the purity of the Jewish people. 2) They had a syncretic religion which blended Judaism and Paganism. 3) They had a rival temple on Mt. Garazim. 4) They had false priests not descended from Aaron or Levites. 5) They only accepted the Torah and rejected the prophets, psalms and other books accepted by the Israelites.

Read John 4:1-9.

Answer the following questions:

Level A

- Why do you think Jesus was taking the Samaritan route?
- The sixth hour was around noon (6 hours after sunrise). This was a very hot, dry region. Explain why this was a perfect time for someone who wanted to avoid encountering other people. Why might she have wanted to avoid others?
- What was the woman's reaction when Jesus asked her for a drink? Why? (Look back at the previous list.)

Level B

- What do you think is meant by the statement that Jesus "had" to go through Samaria? What reasons would you give to take a route through a dangerous part of town?
- Why did the woman pick this time to go to the well? Why do you choose to do an activity alone rather than in the company of others?
- Why would Jesus break every taboo and not only speak to the woman, but then ask her for a drink from her "unclean" vessel? What was her reaction? Why?

Level C

- Why would Jesus "have" to return to Galilee by the Samaritan road? What would be a "good" reason to travel a dangerous route?
- Why are people compelled to avoid other people? What type of treatment might this woman have suffered from the others in her town? Have you ever known someone who was this afraid?
- Why would Jesus break every taboo and not only speak to the woman, but then ask her for a drink from her "unclean" vessel? Considering the customs, why didn't she run away? What would motivate her to converse with this Jewish man?

Living Water

Jacob's Well is very deep and the water is accessible only by a very long rope through a hole that has been dug through a slab of soft limestone. It is spring fed, so the water is fresh, pure and cold. It was the only source of water in that arid region aside from brackish springs.

According to L. C. Higgs this is the longest *conversation* in scripture between Jesus and any other person. And it is a theological conversation between a Jewish man and a Samaritan woman. Astounding!

Read John 4:10-15 and John 7:37-39.

Answer the following questions:

Level A

- What did Jesus mean by “living water”?
- How did Jesus try to explain “living water” to the woman?
- What was the woman’s response to Jesus’ answer (verses 13-15)?

Level B

- What was it about Jesus’ response in verse 10 that confused the woman?
- What does Jesus’ explanation of “living water” mean to you?
- Why was the woman so eager for Jesus to give her “living water”? Did she understand what it meant?

Level C

- What was Jesus trying to tell her in verse 10? What points confused her?
- Living water is the Holy Spirit within us. The word used in the description in verse 14 is *hallomai* in Greek and means jump, leap, gush, or spring up. It is translated in various versions of the Bible as bubbling, gushing, welling up, and springing up. How does this phrase help you understand Acts 10:44-45?
- How had the woman’s situation misled her about the meaning of “living water”?

The Reveal

To understand the situation of the Samaritan woman, we have to understand the culture of this time. It is often assumed that the woman was divorced but that is not stated anywhere in these passages. She could have been widowed each time or have experienced a combination of both. Scholars think divorce is most likely because of her evidence of shame (going to the well when no one was there, embarrassment about having so many husbands) but we still don't know for sure.

Divorce in those times could only be sought by the husband (Deuteronomy 24:1-4). If the husband followed the teachings of Shammai then he could only ask for divorce if she had committed adultery. If he followed the teachings of Hillel then he could pursue divorce for almost any reason he considered indecent like burning his dinner. She was at the mercy of her culture. L. C. Higgs says, "Between warfare, famine, disease, pestilence, and fatal injury, men in those days didn't have lengthy life spans. Since a woman in that society was doomed to poverty or worse as a widow[or divorcee], it behooved her to keep remarrying."

But this woman was also now living with a man who didn't even give her the dignity of marriage. She had probably been used and abused by men. She may have been at fault or not. We don't know, but Jesus did. And he offered her a blessing that was beyond measure.

Read John 4:16-26.

Answer the following questions:

Level A

- Why do you think Jesus asked her to get her husband?
- Why did she think he was a prophet?
- Since she doesn't completely understand his explanation, she declares that the Messiah will explain everything. What does Jesus reveal?

Level B

- What might people assume today about a person who had been married 5 times?
- Jesus doesn't condemn or condone the woman like others might. Instead he did what Paul advises us to do in Ephesians 4:15. Discuss the challenges of following Paul's advice.

- Why do you think she deflected the conversation to an argument over where to worship?
- Look at verses 21-24. What were the three truths he emphasized about worship?
- Verse 26 is the first time Jesus reveals to anyone that he is the Messiah. Why do you think he told it first to the Samaritan woman?

Level C

- What assumptions do people tend to make about people that are marginalized in our society—homeless, incarcerated, poor, etc. How do their assumptions influence their actions? How can Christians set an example that is more Christ-like?
- How does one worship in spirit and truth?
- Even though Samaritans only accepted the first five books of the Bible (The Torah), they still believed in a Messiah. Read Deuteronomy 18:18, Genesis 3:15, and Genesis 22:18. How do these passages allude to a Messiah?
- MacArthur exclaims, “What is staggeringly unexpected about the whole fantastic account is that Jesus chose this time and this place and this woman to be part of the setting where he would (for the first time ever) formally and explicitly unveil his true identity as the Messiah.” Why is it “staggeringly unexpected?”

From Outcast to Witness

The Samaritan woman’s encounter with Jesus was her “born again” moment. It was a blessing to be seen as redeemable. It was a blessing to be treated as a person of worth. It was a blessing to meet the Messiah. He changed her life and used her to bless others.

Read John 4:27-42.

Answer the following questions:

Level A

- What did the woman do?
- Why did the villagers believe her?
- How was her witness a blessing to her entire community?

Level B & C

- What do Jesus' words in verses 34-38 tell you about the recent attitude of the disciples?
- What do verses 34-38 tell us to do?
- What does verse 42 tell you about becoming a believer?

Resources

Books

Bailey, Kenneth E., *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008)

Brand, Draper, England, ed., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003)

Higgs, Liz Curtis, *Bad Girls of the Bible* (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook Press, 1999)

Mac Arthur, John, *Twelve Extraordinary Women* (Nashville, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2005)

McLelland, Kristi, *Jesus and Women* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2020)

Strong, James, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance Of the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996)

Wright, Tom, *John for Everyone* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2004)

Online

Campbell, Rusty, 2021, Bible History, www.bible-history.com

What did Jesus mean when he spoke of living water? www.gotquestions.org