

John Chapter 4...

Jesus and the Tainted Woman (John 4: 1-42)

The conversion of a chief rabbi in John 3:1-21, was indeed structured round the three 'key' elements of John 20:30-31: testimony, belief, and life. In this next chapter of John's gospel, we'll see Jesus offering living water to a Tainted woman at a Samaritan well-water that all humanity thirsts for. Professor Zane Hodges discusses this longing in his excellent book *The Hungry Inherit*.

‘Love, success, wealth, fame. These were but a few of the countless springs at which men had stooped to drink, only to rise from them to find that they offered no lasting inward satisfaction, no enduring personal fulfillment...

But this water was different! It could accomplish a miracle! The one who drank it was secure from thirst, not merely for time but for eternity as well.”

Such was the experience of the Samaritan woman in John 4, and such is the offer to all who come to Christ. With one sip of faith, our deepest thirst is quenched. And what was once a wilderness of wants is transformed into an oasis overflowing with abundant life.

1. The Conversation

In those days, women normally drew water at dawn or dusk, the cooler hours of the day. It was a time to visit, to exchange news, to idle away a little time gossiping, a time when the women could be themselves. That this woman has come to the well at noon, the hottest hour of the day, hints at her reputation (compare vv.18 and 28). Promiscuous with the men and, consequently cold-shouldered by the women, she braves the brazen sun to avoid the searing stares of the more reputable.

A. The discussion (Vv. 7-26). The woman comes bearing a dry, empty pot, a telling symbol of her parched, barren heart. Jesus opens the conversation with a direct, somewhat disarming request, “Give Me a drink” (v.7). But she responds defensively to His simple petition.

“How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink...”

Intense racial hatred existed between Jews and Samaritans, much of it centering on religious differences. So great was this animosity that, in travelling from Judea to Galilee, Jews would go miles out of their way to avoid crossing the Samaritan border. And not only is our noonday patron of the well a Samaritan-she is a woman. Cultural sentiment for women was extremely low during the time of Christ. The Pharisees taught that men should not speak to women in public. Some men were even so rigid as to refuse to look at a woman they passed on the street. But Christ not only looks at her and speaks with her, He does so kindly and in such a way as to whet her appetite for spiritual things.

Jesus answered and said to her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have

given you living water." (v.10)

She said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; ..." (vv11-12). With her who-do-you-think-you-are question, she makes a mild attempt at putting Jesus in His place. "Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks..." (vv13-14)

Seeing only from a human viewpoint, however, the woman misses His point entirely. The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water..." (v.15) Feeling that the conversation is beginning to meander down a dead-end path, Jesus points to her personal life. In effect, He places a full-length mirror in front of her, forcing her to take a good, hard look at herself.

He said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." (v.16) The woman answered and said, "I have no husband..." (vv. 17-18) Christ's sharp perception pricks her conscience, and the desolation and shame is more than she can bear. Squirming, she shifts to more comfortable conversation. "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet..." (vv.19-20)

What about the unsaved in Africa, Asia, Middle East, Europe, etc? How can God allow suffering and evil? What about creation and evolution? Sprinkling or immersion ... wine or grape juice... King James or Living Bible? Distracting questions about religious peripherals. This is the smoke screen she hopes will hide her blemished soul from the dawning light of His penetrating gaze. But it is no use. A radiant shaft of truth pierces the veil. Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father..." vv 21-24

B. The declaration (v. 26). A foreigner, a Samaritan, a woman, and, to top it all off, a woman of low morals and ill repute. To a strict Jew, she is indeed far from the kingdom of God. But because of a man she knows simply as "a Jew" (v.9) ... then as "Sir" (vv.11-15) ... then as "a prophet" (v.19), she now crouches on the brink of total acceptance, waiting to make that leap of faith-somewhat fearfully, but most certainly-as she listens with piqued interest for the revealing of this mysterious visitor's true identity. Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He." (v.26)

2. The Reaction

A. of the Samaritan woman

So the woman left her water pot, and went into the city ... (vv.28-29)

Like the sun bursting forth from behind the clouds, the light of truth had flooded her soul. She turned from Him, the water jar she had come to fill standing empty upon the ground, but the heart she had not come to fill now overflowing with living water. Just as Jesus had earlier turned ordinary water into the most festive of wines, He now takes the emptiest of lives and fills it full. He can do that with your life too. No matter how stagnant the water... no matter how empty the pot. All it takes is a sip of faith.

In the prejudiced society of first-century Palestine, few people were valued less in the system than a Samaritan woman-especially one with loose morals. It would have been easy for Jesus to pass right by her, to pretend He didn't see her, to not acknowledge her existence. But He didn't do that.

How well are you doing at the Father's work? How do you feel about and treat the marginalised in your society-the homeless, the poor, the person of a different colour

or nationality from you, the person with AIDS, the prisoner? Are you pretending not to see them or are you seeing the eternal soul within each one?

Given the social barriers between Jews and Samaritans, what do verses 40-42 teach you about Jesus?

As a disciple, how would you feel about spending two days as a guest of people against whom you were prejudiced?

STUDY QUESTIONS

John 4: 1-26

JESUS AND THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

LOOKING INTO THE SCRIPTURE

Read 4: 1-26 and discuss.

1. What was the Samaritan woman really saying in reply to Jesus' question, "will you give me a drink?"

- a. do you know who I am (an outcast)
- b. why would you talk to me?
- c. you're giving me too much attention. What do you want?
- d. you're threatening me

2. What was the woman's response when Jesus said, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water"?

- a. stumbling for an answer at first
- b. arousing of a spiritual desire for something
- c. curious: "Is it possible this is the thing I've been looking for?"
- d. sceptical: "who do you think you are?"

3. How does the woman respond when Jesus explains, "...the water I give you will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life ..."?

- a. puzzled: "Are you kidding me?"
- b. desirous: "I'd love to have it."
- c. open: "I'm ready"

4. When Jesus declared that "the time is coming ... when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth ... " what was her response?

- a. deep desire: "I want that myself"
- b. awareness: "I think I understand"
- c. commitment: "I'm sold"
- d. clarification: "What are you trying to say?"

HEALING AT A DISTANCE (John 4: 43-54)

1. The Occasion. The first miracle Jesus performed was the turning of water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana (2:11). In chapter 4, verses 46-54, John records a second miracle—the healing of a government official's son who lay sick some twenty miles away. Two major characters enact this emotionally charged drama: Jesus and the royal official.

11. The Conversation

Cupping our ears to overhear the conversation between the royal official and Jesus, we can't help but empathize with this troubled father. "There was a certain royal official, ... "(vv.46b-47).

What motivates the royal official to travel so far?

How would you have responded to what Jesus told him to do?

111. The Reaction

A. The Official: belief. The royal official followed Jesus' instructions to be on his way. At first glance, we might assume that he was hurrying back to Capernaum. But the Greek verb "started off" *-poreuo* simply means "to go one's way." All we can infer is that he left Jesus' presence absolutely assured that His words formed a promise. And in that promise, he rested.

B. the slaves: excitement. Apparently, the slaves were jumping up and down with joy, repeating over and over: "Your son's alive ... he's living...he's well!"

C. The household: revival. The healing not only caused enthusiasm on the road, it created a revival at home.

What does this "miraculous sign" point to about Jesus? how does it add to what was demonstrated by his first sign (See 2: 1-11)?

1V. Conclusion

John concludes the story of the royal official's son with an editorial comment found in verse 54. "This is again a second sign that Jesus performed, when He had come out of Judea into Galilee."

This statement directly ties in with John's major purpose in writing the book, that the reader might "believe that Jesus is the Christ" (20:31).

Jesus chose Cana to be a place of transformations, didn't He? first He changed water into wine, and then He changed a deadly illness into restored life. If we look deeper, we'll see that Jesus' first sign was really about changing the emptiness of law-keeping into the full joy of grace. And His second sign was more about the transformation from spiritual death to spiritual life, For not only was the boy earthly life restored, but the whole household-family and servants-believed in Jesus and received eternal life.

Jesus cares so much about our faith. That's why He would say with a sigh, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe" (John 4:48). A faith that depends on miracles can't endure tough times; it's fickle, ebbing and flowing with each desired result we receive or don't receive. Signs and wonders may be a good place to begin seeing the Lord's power, but our faith needs to mature into a trust of God's Word and a sure belief in His Person.

How is your faith faring in the midst of life's painful challenges? Have you desperately begged Jesus for a miracle? What happened?

If God chose to not miraculously intervene in your situation, how did your faith come through?
