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## John 4:1-26 *Living Water!*

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Into Thy Word Ministries Bible Study [www.intothyword.org](http://www.intothyword.org)

**General Idea:** While the Disciples were baptizing and gaining more popularity, Jesus decided to return to Galilee. His trip took Him from Judea into Samaria to a village of Sychar, where Jacob's Well was. There, while He sought to get some water, He encountered an outcast woman, in deep need and in deep sin. She was a moral outcast, a thirsty woman in many ways, who came to draw water after going a half a mile way out of her way around the other, much closer well in the village. She was possibly forced to do so either by reasons of shame or just to avoid the other townspeople. The Jews did the same thing, going way around her and her town. As she came this way, she encountered Jesus who went out of His way to meet with her, and said to her, "If you knew about the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me to drink,' you would have asked of Him and he would have given you living water." The "gift of God." Jesus read her heart and what she, as well as we, really thirst for. She was in shock that He talked to her, because she was an outcast; Jesus came to make her well at a well with "living water." The woman gave Jesus a drink to quench a temporary thirst, yet Jesus came to quench the real and needed thirst that she had. Jesus then pointed her to an eternal longing she had. Quenching her thirst would redirect her from sin to Him, and transform her from a social pariah to a person of real warmth who could proclaim the great news of The Word. She knew of God, but somehow she was not able to overcome her sin or to grow healthy relationships with God and others. Then Jesus made the profession that He was the Messiah!

### Contexts and Background:

This passage is about the social contempt that the Jews and Samaritans held for one another. Jesus demonstrated to us that we can overcome cultural walls to reach a woman in need. Jesus ignored the customs and cut His way right through the prejudicial barriers of ignorance, narrow-minded thinking, and fear, and traveled through Samaria when others would not. Then, He sat down and asked an outcast, sinful woman for a drink. The route Jesus took on His journey to Galilee is the most direct route, traveling through Samaria, which lies between Judea and Galilee. Samaria is known today as the West Bank. This direct route from Judea to Galilee was about 70 miles, or a two and a half day walk on a safe and well made Roman road, well-traveled and patrolled by Roman guards. This road was laden with frequent rest stops, inns, and oases. But, most of the Jews chose not to go through Samaria. Rather, they chose to embark upon the hot, harsh, and foreboding desert and the rocky road northeast from Jerusalem to Jericho, up the Jordan valley and then crossing the inhospitable Jordan River—twice. Thus, because of the prejudice they exercised against the Samaritan people, they journeyed almost twice the distance. Jesus shows that our prejudice is ridiculous and blocks the Gospel, and that we are all sinners in need of a Savior, created, loved, and pursued by our Lord (Luke 9:52).

### Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *Lord learned of this.* It is possible that Jesus returned to stop His Disciples from ensuing conflict with the Pharisees and to continue His training of them and His preaching (John 7:6-8, 30; 8:20; 12:23; 13:1; 17:1).
- *Samaria.* They were a sub-Jewish cultural group that also followed the Law of Moses, but with a few distinctions. They were the remnant of the 10 tribes of the Northern Jewish Kingdom who had been taken captive by the Assyrians in 729 B.C. They then intermarried with them instead of remaining separated, as the Southern peoples did in Babylon. Thus, ever since the days of Nehemiah, when the two Southern tribes came back from captivity to find their Northern brothers in heinous sin, intermarried with Gentiles, and forsaking much of the Law, they have been regarded as reprobates—a hated, heretical, Jewish cult (1 Kings 16:24; 2 Kings 17:1-31; Ezra. 4:1-24; Neh. 4:1-6; Luke 10:25-37; 17:6; John 8:48).
- *Jacob's well.* This is a specific landmark that still stands today. This helps shows us the reality of the Bible. Both, Isaac (through a servant) and Jacob met their wives at a well. Jesus also showed His Sovereignty and Lordship over any conceivable "holy site" (Gen. 24:17; 29:10; 33:18-19; 48:21-22; Ex. 13:19; Josh. 24:32; John 4:20).

- *Tired/weary.* He was weary and thirsty from a long journey and His humanity required rest. While His disciples went into town to get some food, an opportunity arose. So, He sat beside the well to rest and drink while the disciples were gone. Here, we have a very beautiful picture of our Lord's humanity (Matt. 8:24; 2 John 7).
- *Sixth hour.* By Jewish reckoning, it would be noon. But, according to Roman time, which John used throughout his gospel, it was six o'clock in the evening, the same time as we use today. So, it was no surprise that Jesus was weary. He had been walking in the hot sun all day (John 4:40; 19:14).
- *Came to draw water.* Women would come to draw water in the early morning avoiding the heat; here, this woman comes later, in the heat, to avoid the other women and possibly their callous remarks and intolerance due to her sexual exploits and sin. Jesus showed love to the unlovable (Gen. 24:11)!
- *Will you give me a drink?* Jesus came to call all, Jew as well as Gentile, to repentance. She was a sinner just like us, and He gave her love, setting her on the right path. "I did not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners" (Matt 9:13, Mark 2:17, Luke 5:32).
- *Gift of God.* This is a statement that salvation cannot be earned or even merited. It can only occur by God choosing to grant it to us by His grace (John 3:16; Gal. 2:20-21; Eph. 5:25).
- *Living water.* Meaning what is fresh and flowing over what is stagnant; this refers to God's "Divine Activity," that God refreshes us and also about the work of the Holy Spirit upon someone. The water Jesus was offering was not the substance of a drink or to quench a physical thirst; rather, it was the refreshment of eternal life. The Holy Spirit imparts to us the new transforming, cleansing, and spiritual life. This new life impacts us totally, constantly, and continually to usher us into eternity. But, it is still up to us to accept that impact and let it come in contact with our application of life to God, ourselves, our environment, and others (Isa. 12:3; Jer. 2:13; Ezek. 47:1-9; Zech. 14:8; John 7:37-39; 8:24; 11:50-51; 19:19).
- *Will be thirsty again... never thirst.* Meaning it is only God Who satisfies us and quenches our deepest spiritual needs, not pleasures, fulfilling of desires, or even sin. Jesus is contrasting what is physical, fleeting, and limited to what is spiritual—what is temporary to what is eternal and abundant—what we think is important to what really is important. This woman, like Nicodemus and many others, misunderstood Jesus and took His metaphor literally (Isa. 44:3; 55:1-3; John 2:19-21; 3:3-10; 1 Cor. 2:14).
- *I have no husband.* This means, "I am available" and may have had two connotations: one, she was trying to hide her sin; and the other was she may have been "coming on" to Jesus, as in flirting. Jesus quickly cut this down by confronting her with compassion, gentleness, and respect concerning her sin
- *Five husbands.* This may not mean she was married, rather had live-in boyfriends and considered it as marriage—without the cultural and legal obligations. She was rationalizing her sexual liaisons and rebellion, claiming what was morally wrong and destructive as being OK. Jesus showed His Divine omniscience (knowledge) (Gen. 38:24; Ex. 22:16; Deut. 22:13-29; Song. 3:11; Mal. 2:14; Matt. 9:15; 15:19; John 1:48; 4:44; 6:14; 7:40; 8:41; 9:17; 1 Cor. 6:18; 7:2-9; 2 Cor. 11:2; 1 Thess. 4:3; ).
- *Worshipped on this mountain.* After the fall to Assyria around 721 BC, due to disobedience and disloyalty to God, the people had erected a temple on Mt. Gerizim as a rival to the temple in Jerusalem. A split occurred between the two kingdoms, Judah the northern and Israel the southern, during the time of Solomon's prideful and disobedient son Rehoboam (930 B.C.); this facilitated the hatred between them. This temple was destroyed by the a Jewish king, probably with the aid of the Romans in 130 BC, but they still gathered to worship there perhaps because they were not welcome in Jerusalem and possibly also chose to rebel as they mocked the Temple (Gen. 12:4-7; 33: 18-20; Deut. 11:29; 27:12; 12:5; 2 Sam. 7:5-13; 2 Chron. 6:6; 2 Macc. 6:2).
- *Salvation is from the Jews.* This is a statement of the role of the Jews to evangelize and proclaim the Message of God. This does not mean all Jews are saved. This also alludes to Jesus who, being a Jew, brings Salvation (Gen. 12:1-3).

- *Time/hour is coming.* This is in prophetic language, meaning the Temple will no longer be needed, as the age of grace and the work of the Holy Spirit as well as the Church universal will supersede it. So, now, all will have the ability to come before God and truly worship Him (1 Sam. 2:31; 2 Kings 20:17; Jer. 31:31; John 6:25; 1 Cor. 3:16-17; Eph. 2:19-22).
- *God is spirit/God is a Spirit.* This means God does not have a material body; He has an invisible, omnipresent nature that can't be confined or even defined. Only through what He has revealed to us can we know Him. This refers to the "non-corporeal" beings such as Angels whom we cannot normally see with our eyes without some supernatural unveiling. God cannot be seen, but Christ could, and thus God was seen then; now, we commune in God. We are not able to see God since He transcends space and time. However, Christ, being fully God, gives us a tangible look into an intangible God. Our view and concept of God rests on who Jesus is and has done, that we can trust Him for He does exist and is involved. This also means we are not to look to anything but Christ for Who and What God is (Ex. 20:4; John 1:1-18; 8:58; 10:30-33; Rom. 1:20; 9:5; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 1:19-23; Phil. 2:6; 6:16; Col. 1:15; Titus 2:13; 1 Tim. 1:17; 6:16; Heb. 1:3, 8; 11:27).
- *His worshipers.* Meaning real Christians give real, effectual, true worship from a heart that truly loves God, are grateful for His work, and are dedicated to true Truth—not to schemes, trends, or feelings. This is also in contrast to the worship services that are merely rhetoric and by obligation, meaningless ritual and liturgy that just spins one's pride and/or hides one's heart (John 1:18; ; 3:3; 14:16-18; Acts 2:33).
- *Worship in spirit and in truth.* This is a worship of Jesus Who is Truth, of Christ as LORD. He is the only Way to God that we are to recognize with our spirit and soul. This is not based on location or liturgy or externals and formalities; rather, it is recognizing Christ our Savior and Lord with proper attitudes and motives. This also means a sacrifice of our hearts over animals and an offering of praise over burnt offerings. This is not about the Holy Spirit here; rather, Jesus is emphasizing a manner of heart and obedience from our gratitude over and above ceremonial requirements and orders. This is also a transformational call to true worship, as the Church transitions from the provisional Law of ceremony to honor God's holiness to honoring God with our grateful hearts for giving us unearned and unmerited salvation and by placing the Living Holy Spirit in us. This impact from the Spirit nourishes, invigorates, and empowers us to deal with life here and now. His qualities and character become real in us and are modeled as real to others around us. This empowerment gives us salvation and builds our maturity so we can have joy and contentment, purpose and meaning. It allows us to know we are deeply loved and makes us able to replicate that love to others. In that way, we can worship Him in power and adoration, to a deeper level than we could do without that growth (1 Sam. 10:5; 1 Chron. 25:1-6; John 3:3:21; 14:6; Acts 4:12; Rom. 1:25; 9:4-5; Phil. 3:1-14).
- *I who speak to you am he.* The Samaritans were expecting a retuning Moses or some kind of Moses-like person. Here, Jesus is proclaiming that He is the anticipated Messiah. Rarely does Jesus draw this attention to Himself because of political misunderstandings of people who do not understand His true mission—to save souls, not be a political or military figure (Deut. 18:15-18; Mark 9:41; John 6:14-15; 8:58).

### **Devotional Thoughts and Applications:**

Why her hesitation with Jesus? Perhaps, she thought there was something wrong with herself, and that she did not deserve a better life. Perhaps, her heart was hardened by pursuing exciting and forbidden relationships in order to find meaning, yet only finding a meaningless life. She had to learn a lesson we all have to learn—a need to surrender to His Lordship. Christ has to be our meaning—not anything else found anywhere else where we just want to do our own thing and go our own way, perhaps not even caring about the long term effects and consequences. *Who cares what others think or what God has to say?* But, what will it get us in the long run?

The first thing the woman realized was that God has compassion and love; He cared for, and had a plan for her, even though she was considered a social pariah. She was willing to be challenged and confronted for her sin. She was willing to repent and become clean. She was able to learn and develop character, so God used her to transform her community. It is the same for us. We must see our sin and

deal with it by confession and removal. We have to see His love and care for us! We are to study the Word, seek wisdom, be prudent, and lean on the strength of the Lord! These things do not come merely by chance; they come by knowing and following Christ (Proverbs 12:4; 28:20; 31:10)! She had to learn and follow. Have you learned that lesson? Do not forsake your living water, your "gift of God."

**The Essential Inductive Questions** (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

**Additional Questions:**

1. When you were growing up, did your parents tell you not to associate with people of certain social classes or ethnicities? How did you feel about it? How have those feelings changed since Christ has become more rooted in you?
2. What are your thoughts about the Woman? How are prejudices a barrier to Christ?
3. What do you do when you meet an outcast or someone in deep need and in deep sin? How should you respond? What gets in your way?
4. What does "living water" mean to you? What does "gift of God" mean to you?
5. How do God's ways give us freedom? How does Jesus show love to the unlovable? How does He call us to do the same? What are our challenges to do so?
6. What does it mean to you that only God satisfies us, not the pursuance of pleasures, fulfillment of desires, or even sin? How can this help you form a deeper trust and relationship with Christ?
7. How would quenching this woman's spiritual thirst redirect her from sin to Jesus, and transform her life? How have you seen this so in others or yourself?
8. What did it take for you to know about the gift of God? What is God saying to you about what to give or take as a drink?
9. How does the fact that we are all sinners in need of a Savior, who are created, loved, and pursued by our Lord help to remove our prejudicial tendencies?
10. What does this passage tell us about worship? How can you have more focused worshipful experiences with our Lord? What do you need to do to make this happen?
11. What do you need to do to be focused on building your life on His precepts?
12. What will it take for you to make a further commitment to pursue your faith and spiritual growth in a richer and deeper way? How can that help fuel you to further persevere in your spiritual gifts, relationships, opportunities, and purpose or call?