

Into Thy Word Ministries Bible Study www.intothyword.org

General Idea: While Jesus was talking to the Samaritan woman, the Disciples came back from their errands and they were shocked, but did not say a word. The woman left her water jar and immediately went back to her village, very excited and already fully engaged in what Christ told her. She had found the Messiah and wanted everyone to know it! She told everyone what Jesus told her and exclaimed that Jesus must be the One for whom they had been waiting. So, the people from the village came out to the well to see for themselves and meet Jesus. At the same time, the Disciples wanted Jesus to eat the food they brought back, and Jesus seized this as a teaching point to reveal what was far more important than food—our spiritual formation—and that our real nourishment comes from God; we demonstrate this when we do God's will. Jesus told them that His sustenance came from God and that He was empowered to do His will. He showed them an illustration of the agriculture around them: just as the crops are ready for harvest, God waits for us to harvest what He has planted in us and also wants us to help others grow, just as this woman was doing. Then, He shares that we all have different gifts and opportunities; some plant, some water, and some harvest. All are important and needed for the harvesting of souls. We can't rush it but we have to see the *immediacy* of it. Because of this woman and Jesus' use of her, many of the Samaritans turned to Christ and put their trust and faith in Him. This woman was an outcast and still God used her to bear His Message of Love, Hope, and Faith, which could not be accomplished by prejudice.

Contexts and Background:

Jesus interacted with a race extremely hated and rejected by the Jews. This should cause us to think about our own cultural ideas and bigoted reactions, those we do either unconsciously or deliberately. This passage continues to tell of the social contempt that the Jews and Samaritans held for one another. Jesus exhibits the importance of acceptance and calls us to remove the prejudice and narrow-mindedness and intolerance we have, just as the Jews and Samaritans held for each other. And, in application, to remove all social dislike, scorn, and prejudices we harbor. Jesus looked at the barriers some had to growth and He confronted them so the person could move forward into spiritual maturity with faith and relationship development. To be a true follower of Christ, one must also be a disciple, a learner who can look at what hinders us, reach out to Christ, and grow beyond the barriers that block our spiritual formation and intimacy with Christ. We have to understand Him and His teachings, be deeply convicted, and be willing to grow through our trust and obedient actions. If not, we will stagnate into apathy, disillusionment, depression, dysfunction, or some other kind of abuse to one's self or others. We have to be convicted; Jesus shows us how by these examples, and He makes the Way for it!

It is interesting that many opponents to the Scriptures, or a conservative view of the Bible, claim that the Bible is anti-Semitic (a view that the teachings of the Bible are hostile toward Jews and/or the Jewish faith) and racial. In fact, the Bible is clearly on the side of anti-discrimination and advocates the abolishment of prejudice in all of its forms. God sees no race; He only wants us to run the race of faith (2 Tim. 4:7).

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *Surprised/marveled.* Meaning an attitude of being astonished. *How could Jesus do that?* This can lead to an attitude of either contempt or respect. As the previous passage disclosed, *Jews do not associate with Samaritans.* Even though the Samaritans were still Jews and practicing their faith, they differed because they accepted only the five books of Moses, and they stirred and mingled in some idolatrous practices. The Jews had laws forbidding the association with Samaritans, including it was against the law to eat with them, and the Samaritans shunned the Jews. This animosity directed toward one another was centuries old, and they hated one another even more than they hated the Gentiles. This is why the Samaritan woman was so surprised when Jesus talked to her and was willing to take a drink from her too.
- *Talking with a woman.* The Disciple's surprise continued, because single men in these Semitic cultures would court the women at the wells, so why was Jesus here and talking with her? The well was as much a place for social gatherings as it was for gathering water for the village and families. In

other words, it was also a date spot—and Jesus is there! The Disciples were perplexed; why would Jesus go to the hot dating spot of the time and associate with a woman known for a very bad reputation and the fact she was a Samaritan? It would be like a pastor today talking to a prostitute in public, with no ill intention other than to share the Lord, or a conservative Christian moving into a bad area to be a witness, or befriending a gay person or a white man joining a black church or visa versa; these are our Christian social ills today. We think only in our socioeconomic demographic area and befriend only whom we like; we then shun others who are not like us. Rather, we should hang with who Christ wants us to be with. Also, men did not talk to women unless it was one's wife or mother, and even so never in public. A teacher would consider it a waste of time to talk to a woman. This was to avoid temptation and/or the attitude of male *chauvinism*. The Disciples had a lot to learn about racial and social barriers that Christ wanted them to overcome just as we need to do today (Gen. 1 Sam. 9:11).

- *But no one asked/said.* It was inappropriate for a student to challenge his teacher in either a Jewish or Greek-Roman culture. The Disciples seemed to see through the hypocrisy of their culture and perhaps had even more respect for Jesus and His radical stances. Such respect leads to trust and then obedience.
- *Water jar.* A ceramic or clay jar usually carried by leaning it on the waist. She was so excited and preoccupied that she forgot about her original errand. This is also a metaphor for the *living water*, that what Jesus gives us is far more important and nourishing than what we had or could have or want; His Way is best.
- *Come, see.* It is ironic, as this repentant sinner outshines the Disciples and becomes a more effective evangelist with only a few hours of instruction.
- *The Christ.* The anointed One, Messiah, who comes to save the lost. By understanding faith and what **Christ** has done for us, we will be able to have more gratitude and live a more transformed life. Once this happens, the result will be more faith, better relationships, more impact, and of more use to **Christ**.
- *Rabbi/master.* Meaning a teacher (Matt. 23:7-8).
- *My food.* This is a metaphor for spiritual sustenance, our real nourishment that comes from above and for God's call of faith and obedience for us, not from our perceived needs, desires, or fears. However, this did not mean Jesus did not need to eat or perform essential human functions, since He was also fully human (Deut. 8:3; Jer. 15:16; Ezek. 2:1-3; Matt. 4:4; 6:25; John 6:32-40; 14:12; Eph. 5:17).
- *Finish his work.* This means God's creative work is accomplished but He still continues and sustains. This also indicates Christ's redemptive work that was just beginning here and would climax at the cross. When God works in us, He finishes what He starts. It is only our pride and fear that would block Him, but still He will work it out (Gen. 2:2; John 5:17; 17:4; 19:30; Rom. 8).
- *Harvest.* Meaning gathering and using what was grown. He is comparing it to the building of our faith is that it is to be utilized, just like crops. Jesus was showing them through what they knew and took for granted, and applied it to one's life and faith.
- *Open/lift your eyes.* Meaning look, take heed, and pay attention: this is important!
- *Reaper...sower.* These are agricultural terms for planting and harvesting crops, such as there are *four months* between planting and harvesting where one does not sit and do nothing; rather, he prepares and cultivates. Jesus is using these terms to say that we all have different responsibilities and roles in the Kingdom. We have real prosperity in Christ; we—not others—are responsible for our role, but we are to help and work together in unity. The bottom line is that Jesus is the One who is planting His seed in us; so, we help others receive His seeds and help one another cultivate the crops of faith and

fruit. We may not always see what is at work or the final outcome and crops, but we can see and trust our Lord that our faith at work is a faith that is in play and that He will use it to its fullest and in His perfect time (Amos 9:13; John 12:23-24; 1 Cor. 3:6-9).

- *Ripe or white* is what the barley looked like when it was ready. We have to see what God wants us to look like and be ready for that.
- *May be glad/rejoice*. When we see people come to the Lord, what is accomplished, and how God has used us and worked in others' lives as well, we will feel extraordinarily joyful and content. We can take heart and comfort that Christ is at work and in charge no matter what we face or have been through, so we can be happy in our work for Christ. The image is that Jesus takes our sorrows and turns them into joy (Ruth 3:2-7; Isa. 9:3; Ecc. 2:18; Luke 15:7-10, 32; 2 Cor. 2:15-16).
- *Woman's testimony*. Such a testimony had no legal or societal bearing, and then the fact that she was an adulteress and a sinner brought even less respect and even contempt. Yet, they listened to the point that they were willing to check it out for themselves. I imagine this woman's life and relationship with her community drastically changed after this (Acts 1:8; Phil. 1:46).
- *Stayed two days*. Jesus defied His cultural rules of segregation and related to those who were considered unworthy. This would have put Jesus at further odds with the establishment and would have angered the religious leaders. Like a white civil rights worker living in the US black south in the 1950's and 60's, or an Indian high cast person to choose to work with or for those of a lower caste, most church folks would not let such a person back in their church; how sad we do not learn.
- *Became believers*. A statement of conversion and the acceptance and trust for Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.
- *Heard for ourselves*. Taking responsibility for one's faith is crucial for spiritual formation. When God speaks to us in His Word or through prayer or by others' wisdom, God expects us to heed and open up our ears, hearts, minds, and will to Him. A harlot was able to do this. The question is, *are we?*
- *Savior of the world*. This means Jesus is not just a prophet or a teacher; He is the Eternal God incarnate, the Only One who can save us from our sins and give us a New Life. And He extends this offer to the whole world (John 3:16; 1 John 4:14; 10:16; 11:51-52; Acts 8:4-25).
- *A prophet has no honor in his own country/hometown*. Galilee was Jesus' home, the place where He grew up and the people who knew Him both as a kid and then as the local carpenter. As extraordinary as He must have been, people can only see what they want to see and experience. It seems even though He was welcomed, they just wanted a magician show and not a relationship. They did not want to be saved, just amazed. Jesus' power or ability was not limited or imputed, He was not unable to do miracles; He just knew it would be ineffective, as their unbelief would not change. So, He did not waste His time, because miracles are of no value unless people have faith (Matt. 13:44-58; Mark 6:1-6; John 1:46; 2:1; 1:11; 7:42-52; 1 Cor. 13:2).

Devotional Thoughts and Applications:

This woman had a thirst and a longing for something real in a life that was filled with sin and other things meant to fill that hole. She had a desire, perhaps throughout her life, to obtain the living water, but found everything meaningless and chose the lust of sin and rebellion as a coping mechanism. Christ fulfilled her desire, and this transitioned her from sin to Him and translated her lust to the willingness to grow, willingness to strive, and to be challenged in the faith. She was able to do so—crossing her fears and hurts in order to know Him, and to grow in Him. The barriers of fear and past hurts is one most Christians may never cross, but they are possible to overcome with His Hand guiding us. For us, this is a lesson given to shake us from our false thinking and complacency or bad situations to see what is in front of us. Perhaps, we need to be kicked out of our anxieties and concerns so we can embrace faith more

and grow to go into the areas where we fear to go. The journey He has for us need not be feared, because Christ will not call us to an area in which He has not gifted us and for which He has not given us a desire. It is when we do not heed His call that we get in trouble, not because the call is too difficult, as He gives us all we need.

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. What are some religious or racial or social issues with which you have had issues? What about now?
2. How is love a summary of all of Christ's character not just His one attribute? How does His love show through in this passage?
3. How does our intimacy with Christ gives us the confidence and completeness to know and do God's Will, His purpose?
4. How ridiculous is prejudice ? How does it block the Gospel? How has God demonstrated His ultimate Love to you? How can you show this to others more?
5. What did or what do you need to do to overcome cultural and prejudicial walls to reach a person in need? Why would a church person think negatively of another Christian who befriends a gay person?
6. What do you think motivated the village to come out to the well to see and meet Jesus for themselves? What motivates you?
7. Why does Jesus take the time to deal with the social contempt that the Jews and Samaritans held for each other? What does Jesus need to show you about how you feel and deal with others who may not look or act like you?
8. How is taking responsibility for your faith crucial for your spiritual formation (growth in Christ)?
9. What can you do to understand and apply more faith? How does understanding what **Christ** has done for you enable you to do so?
10. How does it make you feel that our growing faith will result in more use to **Christ**?
11. How is your respect level with Jesus? How can improving your reverence help you to trust and then obey? When will you do this?
12. What does it take to get you excited and fully engaged to learn and serve Christ? What gets in your way? What do you need to do to pursue Him and His call for you more?