

## John on Jesus - Jesus and the Samaritan Woman - Pt. 2

Sign Title: Jesus and the Samaritan Woman - Pt. 1

August 12, 2012

Good morning Faith Church. For those of you who are new, my name is Kurt. I am one of the pastors. I was out of town for the last two weeks. My family and I want to thank you for the time away. The first week I helped officiate a wedding in Michigan. Last week, I was with my parents in Philadelphia. It was enjoyable to be with them.

It is good to be back and pick up where we left off in the Gospel of John. In our studies of this Gospel, we learned John loves to use contrasts. There is a great contrast between Nicodemus in John 3 and the Samaritan woman in John 4.

Nicodemus was the ultimate religious stud muffin. He was a member of the elite religious group known as the Pharisees. These guys had their entire Old Testament memorized in the original Hebrew. They were walking encyclopedias. Nicodemus was also a member of the Sanhedrin. This was the elite group of 70 men who ruled the Jews. Nicodemus was also known as *the* teacher of Israel. Nicodemus was a stud. He was about as good as they come. People were in awe of his intellect and status.

The problem is that while he knew a ton about God, he didn't know God. When it comes to how God works in people's lives, he was dumber than a box of rocks. No matter how simply Jesus tried to explain knowing God to him, Mr. Brain-on-a-Stick couldn't grasp it.

In John 4, we find the exact opposite. Jesus talks with a Samaritan woman. The Samaritans were hated by the Jews like many Americans feel about Islamic extremists. This particular Samaritan was a woman. In that day, men didn't talk to women in public. If they did, people thought they were lusting. Men didn't even talk to their own wives or daughters in public. Jesus defies social conventions and talks with this woman. He doesn't care what others think about him. He talks to her because he cares about her. Last time we studied this story, we learned she wasn't just any woman. She was a sexually loose woman that nobody loved.

She worked through five husbands and now she was living with a guy who was not her husband. He didn't love her enough to marry her. He just used her for benefits. Even though she wasn't loved by him, she didn't have the courage to leave him because she needed a man. She worshipped men. She was desperate to have a guy in her life, even if he treated her like trash and simply used her for her body. Most likely, the woman in this story was not an old woman. She was young enough to carry a water jar a mile to and from the city. She was lonely, confused and filled with shame. While the other women of the city came to the well in the cool of the morning, she came at the hottest time of day because she knew nobody else in their right mind would be there. That way she didn't have to face the insults, mocking and shame the other woman heaped on her.

When she met Jesus, he didn't treat her like the other guys would. He didn't run from her. He didn't mock her. He asked her for a drink. He talked with

her for what was probably one to two hours while the disciples were in town buying lunch. He didn't ignore her sin. He spoke the truth to her. While he spoke the truth about her sin, he loved her and built a relationship with her.

In the Gospel of John, she was the only person he revealed his identity to until the end of the book. Do you see the contrast?

Nicodemus, the ultimate stud, is dumber than a box of rock when it comes to Jesus and how to have a relationship with God. The Samaritan woman, the despised, rejected, lonely, sexually-confused woman, came to God through Jesus and finds forgiveness and the relationship with God she desperately desired. I love that.

Let's put our finger in the text and pick up our story.

Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you seek?" or, "Why are you talking with her?" John 4:27 (ESV)

The disciples came back from the town, and they were shocked to see Jesus talking with a woman. The text says they marveled at this. They were amazed that Jesus was talking with a chick. As we learned, this wasn't done in that day. Jesus broke all kinds of social conventions by giving value to women and dignity to women and treating them with respect instead of as sexual objects. Teaching women about God was unheard of. In that day, one rabbi said to teach your daughter theology was the same as selling her into prostitution. Jesus didn't give a rip what the culture said and what other people thought of him. He loved this woman in an appropriate way and taught her about God and God's love for her.

This is one of our problems. Most of us are more concerned with what other people think about us than we are with what God thinks about us. We have this insatiable desire to fit in with society, when our insatiable desire should be to fit in with God. I love this about Jesus. He is the ultimate non-conformist.

The disciples were really perplexed that he was talking with a woman but they knew better than to ask him what he was doing. Notice they didn't say to him, "What do you seek?" or "Why are you talking with her?" They figured there must be a good reason he was talking with her, they just couldn't figure out what it would be.

It is like seeing Dan Cathy of Chick-Fil-A having lunch with the leader of the local gay pride group. It is too weird to ask him on the spot but you know there must be a great story behind it. That's the reaction the disciples have to Jesus talking with this woman.

So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, John 4:28 (ESV)

There is significance here. This woman came to the well thirsty. The last time she drank cold water was 24 hours before. It was 110 degrees in the shade. She was thirsty. In chapter 4, when Jesus talked with her, he talked about the thirst in her heart by connecting it to the thirst of her body. She came to the well physically thirsty. He told her that what she was really thirst for was to be loved by God.

When I was studying, I wondered if she was really thirstier for God than she was thirsty for water. In this verse, we have our answer. She was so stoked

about Jesus that she left her water jar behind and ran to the city telling people she found the Christ. She was thirstier for God than she was for water.

On vacation, we arrived at a friend's house around midnight after 13 hours of driving. We were tired. We were hungry. As we settled into his house his wife screamed. There was an opossum that was eating their tomatoes in the vegetable garden. She was yelling, "Kill it! Kill it!" Usually an opossum would get away, but it had a family of five chasing it. We cornered it up a small tree. David and Daniel beat it out of the tree with ice scrapers they found in the garage. You don't need the details but trust me, that opossum's days eating tomatoes are over with.

When we finally calmed down, we remembered everyone was tired and hungry from driving 13 hours. When the greater need of catching the opossum came along, we forgot our lesser needs. I think it was the same way with this woman. The greater thirst was her thirst for God. Satisfying that was enough to make her forget about her lesser thirst for water.

**"Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" They went out of the town and were coming to him. John 4:29–30 (ESV)**

Now it gets funny. The Samaritan woman ran to town telling people she met a guy who told her all she ever did. Jesus had all the details of her sexual history. He knew about the five husbands, the names and the dates. You name it, Jesus knew it. She told everyone in town that Jesus knew more about her and her sin than she remembered about herself. I think it is hilarious she ran around telling people she met a guy who knew everything she ever did.

Here is the neat part. She said, “Jesus must be the Christ. Jesus must be from God because he knew the things about me that only God would know.” Yet, he still loved her. He built a relationship with her. He cared about her. He ultimately died on the cross for her.

I think this is funny. You have one of the most promiscuous women in the town telling people she met God in the flesh because only God could know her sexual history. The best part is he still loved her! The people of the town begin coming out of the town to the well to meet Jesus for themselves. People said to themselves, “If this guy is the Christ, if he is God in the flesh and he can love her and he can straighten out her messed up life; maybe there is hope for me.”

Now, let’s take a little side track that I think will be helpful. This woman was about as messed up as they come. Her life was a basket case. Every other woman in the town will not let her husband within 50 feet of this woman, but God used her life in a big way. Doesn’t that teach us something?

We think the people God uses are those who are famous and gifted. We think that if someone is going to have a great platform for Jesus it will be one of those Olympians. We ask God to help Gabby Douglas win Olympic gold in gymnastics to have a platform for Jesus. While I don’t want to minimize any of those great achievements, many times those are not the people God uses in mighty ways.

God loves to take people that are lost, whose lives are ruined and use them to change the world. When the Samaritan woman went to town and her life was totally changed by Jesus, people sat up and listened. If Jesus could take

her and change her, God's love and power must be real. You can't get that from people who already have their acts together.

In sixth grade, my first friend was a guy named John. I remember visiting his house and using a weightlifting set in his basement that had weights filled with water. Do any of you remember those old weight sets?

Half way through sixth grade, our friendship changed. John became involved in the wrong crowd. He let his hair grow long. He began smoking, drinking and using drugs. He was a complete mess through the rest of his school career. We never talked after sixth grade. He was the guy your parents warned you about. I went to college. John stayed home. I don't know what he did after high school. While home from seminary, my parents told me things changed for John. He came to Christ. In fact, John was even attending our church! He became the leader of the local Young Life club. I met with him for spaghetti at an Italian restaurant and I was amazed. He was completely changed. Jesus changed his life. It was undeniable that the power of God was real. Only God could change his life like that.

The best part of John's Christ story was people kept saying that if God could change John's life, they knew there was hope for theirs.

So many of you have broken lives. You were wounded through a divorce. You have issues. You have struggles. Don't think God can't or won't use your life in a significant way. Don't live live under the false illusion that God only uses people who have their acts together. Learn from the Samaritan woman. God

loves to use broken people. God used this broken woman to introduce an entire town to Christ! I love that.

Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, “Rabbi, eat.” But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” So the disciples said to one another, “Has anyone brought him something to eat?” Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.” John 4:31–34 (ESV)

As we learned earlier in John, Jesus likes to use physical needs to teach about spiritual needs. He used physical thirst to teach the woman at the well about the real thirst in her life, which was to be loved by God. Jesus then used the same strategy to teach his disciples about mission.

When his disciples went to town looking for a Jimmy John’s for sandwiches, I wondered why they left Jesus at the well. It doesn’t tell us. I wonder if Jesus wasn’t simply tuckered out and looking for some alone time. I wonder if Jesus wasn’t totally exhausted from serving people, loving people, preaching and teaching.

Then the disciples came back. I picture Peter holding a Jimmy John’s Gargantuan with double meat, chips, diet soda and a cookie. The disciples tried to get Jesus to eat but Jesus was so busy with the Samaritans he had no time to eat. The disciples wondered what the deal was. These were low-life Samaritans. The disciples grabbed the lunch. “Let’s get out of town and leave the Samaritans to deal with their issues.”

Jesus told the disciples that his food was to do God’s will and accomplish God’s work. What was he saying? Was Jesus saying he was not hungry? No. He was saying there was incredible satisfaction and joy when you are doing



God's will and God's work with your life. Can you imagine how satisfying it was to watch the lights come on in this woman's life when she realized that God fully knew her yet God still loved her and forgave her? Jesus loved her enough to talk with her and listen to her and relate with her. The lights come on for this woman, and it was totally satisfying for Jesus to be part of this happening.

It reminds me of falling in love. When Cindy and I began our relationship, there was that time when it became apparent the relationship would be serious. We were so caught up in the relationship we lost our appetites. This is one of those times for Jesus.

Imagine this woman being born again and running to tell her friends. People were like ants coming out of the city to hear the truth about God. They were living in a spiritually-confused, child-sacrificing religion that was demonically inspired. Imagine the thrill of people being born again? How much more satisfying can it be?

Many times there is great satisfaction when you are in the middle of God's will and you are doing God's work. Many of you don't get a chance to see some of the things the pastoral staff and I enjoy. As we meet with people and hear about their stories, it is incredibly satisfying. You have no idea the blessing it is to be a part of what God is doing in people's lives. I wouldn't trade it for the world.

Some of you think of church as boring. You can't wait to pay your dues so you can get to the beach. You know why church is boring? You are not living in God's will doing God's work. It doesn't get much better than the privilege of God using your life to help other people grow in Jesus. It is like having a satisfying

meal. If church is boring, it is probably because you aren't involved in people's lives. You are a spectator. Spectatoritis is the disease of the American church. It isn't biblical. Church isn't a show like Broadway. It is a community where people are involved in other's lives to magnify and follow Jesus.

Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. John 4:35–36 (ESV)

Harvest season is something we understand in Iowa. I understood this verse in a new way when we were first married and lived in Michigan. We lived in an old farm house. Around us were rows of grape vines harvested for Welches. In the fall, when harvest season came, there was a strong grape smell in the air. The window of opportunity to harvest the grapes was small. The grapes were picked and put into cold water. They needed to be at the Welches processing plant within 24 hours. To take advantage of this brief window, it wasn't uncommon to have the harvesters running 24 hours a day during this short window of time.

That is what was happening in this verse. There was a window of opportunity. It was not in the future. It was right then. The fields were ripe for harvest. God used this unexpected meeting with this unlikely woman to open an entire town to respond to the Gospel. When people were coming out from the city to learn about God, Jesus and the disciples were to drop everything and harvest.

The same thing happens spiritually. Many times people are not open to hearing about Jesus. Occasionally, God uses circumstances to pry open hearts

and give a window of opportunity for the Gospel. When the window is open, we must use it.

A few years ago, I was in the habit of studying in a coffee shop. In the coffee shop, I met a spiritually-confused guy. He was going through his third divorce, and he had huge guilt issues over people he killed while in the military. Over time we built a good friendship. One afternoon he asked me if I wanted to drive across the state to buy beef jerky. We ended up in the tiny town of Dublin, MI, at a small country store with meat cases packed full of different varieties of Jerky. This store thrived because of their online business. They sold exotic jerky. I remember buying a bag of alligator jerky. As we were driving home and I had a mouth full of alligator jerky he began asking me questions about God's love and forgiveness. I was trying to swallow the jerky and pull the meat from between my teeth to take advantage of this opportunity.

I am thankful to say that during the next few months he became a Christian. That window of opportunity came while sitting in the passenger seat of his work truck with alligator jerky stuck between my teeth. God has a sense of humor.

When those windows come, and they open at the most unexpected times. It was much more satisfying to be doing God's will and God's work than finishing my bag of alligator jerky. That is what Jesus was talking about.

"For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor." John 4:37–38 (ESV)

What Jesus was teaching about missions is that many times, when people are born again, it is usually not a one-shot deal. It is like my high school drafting class when we designed and built a bridge out of toothpicks. It had to hold 20 pounds. After we built them, we had a day when we tested them. The guys in the group were not satisfied with passing the minimum weight. We ran to the gym and stacked weights on our bridges until you added just 2 pounds more and the whole thing collapsed.

Many times that is what it is like in people's lives. It is one little conversation after another. It is friend after friend that tells them about God's love for them in spite of their sins. Slowly, weight is added. Nothing seems to change until one day God uses a small conversation to place their faith in Christ. Everything changes. That is what happened to this woman. That is what was happening in this city of Sychar. Bits and pieces of the Jesus story were added to their bridge over the years and now things were changing.

Where did those pieces come from? I don't know. I suspect John the Baptist passed through this area. Aenon Salim, where he was baptizing, was just to the east of this city. We learned John the Baptist's mission was to prepare the way for Jesus. Apparently he was known in this town.

Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did." John 4:39 (ESV)

I love this verse. One of the things I need to get organized is evangelism classes. I want to help you share about Jesus with your friends. Before we get too ramped up on the fact that we can't share about Jesus because we haven't gone through a class, look at this woman. Did she have an evangelism class?

Did she have great social standing? What was special about her? Nothing. What did she have? All she had was her Jesus story. It wasn't a perfect one either. That was all she needed. God used it to reach the city!

That is all it takes. Just tell your story. It doesn't have to be pretty. It doesn't have to be perfect. It doesn't have to be complete. God will use your story to change people's lives, just like he used her story to change her city.

So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. John 4:40–41 (ESV)

Here is another contrast. Remember what happened to Jesus in his first Passover in chapter 3? The Jews rejected him. The Pharisees were confrontational. Jesus left Jerusalem so he didn't have to God fight club. The heretical Samaritans who are doing child sacrifice and demonic worship on Mt. Gerazim; they won't let Jesus leave town. There is citywide revival and a church is born in the most unlikely place amongst the most unlikely people. God loves to do things that are totally backward to our way of thinking.

When it comes to where the Gospel should go, we think the best place for the church is a comfortable place. That is backward. Often the place God will birth a church is in the most unlikely place amongst the most unlikely people. That way, God gets the most glory.

They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world." John 4:42 (ESV)

The Jews thought salvation was for the Jews. Jesus tried to teach that salvation from the Jews, not just for the Jews. Jesus is the savior of the world.

That includes the child-sacrificing Samaritans. That includes the sexually-loose woman of this chapter. He is the only one who can save us from the mess of our screwed up lives. He is the only one who can forgive us and give us a future. It doesn't matter your culture, your background or your history. Jesus is your savior.

## Conclusion

This story has a lot to teach us. As we wrap it up, I want to pull out one thread to focus on for the week. *It is in the most unlikely times, with the most unlikely people in the most unlikely places that God is most likely to work through my life.*

Think about this. It is in the most unlikely times. When Jesus is exhausted, when he is collapsed by the side of a well in the desert is when he least expected that he met this Samaritan woman.

It is with the most unlikely people. None of the disciples would have guessed God was going to change this woman's life. By outward appearances, she was the most unlikely candidate. She was the one you were afraid to shake hands with because you might come down with a disease. This is the woman God used to reach an entire town with the Gospel.

It is in the most unlikely places. Sychar was not the place the disciples expected a church to be born. They were hoping for Jerusalem. They were hoping for everything to happen in a good Jewish town, not among the heretics, nut-jobs freaks who hated the Jews.

This week, change the way you look at life. *It is in the most unlikely times, with the most unlikely people in the most unlikely places that God is most likely to work through my life.* This week, look at the unlikely times, people and places as the spot where God is most likely to use you to grow his kingdom.

Jesus, thank you for loving us. Thank you for dying for us. Thank you for bringing great glory to your name by working in all the unlikely places, people and times. This week, show us the people who are like the Samaritan woman that you bring into our lives. Give us the courage to build a relationship with them. Give us the wisdom to know what to say and the clarity to know how to speak about Jesus' love in a way they will understand. Amen.



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