

Week 3: Love Beyond Boundaries John 4:5-26 Woman at the Well

Know: Share names around the group, where you've lived over the course of your life, and the prejudices you've observed in different locations.

Grow: Have a volunteer read John 4:5-26. (There are no parallel accounts of this passage in scripture.)

The back story: Jews and Samaritans had history

- Both religious sects traced their beliefs to the One God, believed in The Torah given through Moses, and in God's making of a covenant with Abraham.
- The Samaritans were of mixed race, part Jew and part Gentile. Jews considered them "mutts." They established religious worship in their own Temple on Mount Gerizim, whereas the Jews worshipped in the Temple in Jerusalem.
- There was bad blood between them, and The Bible tells us that they did not associate with each other. (John 4:9) Jews traveling in the vicinity of Samaria would take the long way around rather than go through Samaria.

An unlikely conversation

- Jesus decided to travel through Samaria rather than around. Where did he stop to rest? _____
- The passage immediately prior to this passage includes John 3:16, "For God so loved the world..." The author of John's gospel wants his readers to understand that "the world" includes her world. What was Jesus' mission? (see John 1:12-13)

- What did Jesus ask of the Samaritan woman? _____
- Why did she express surprise that Jesus spoke to her? _____
- How might a person feel put off by another's background, nationality, or race - and how can prejudice affect a Christian's witness?

- Jesus spoke to her about "living water." What was her response? _____
- What did Jesus say would be the result of drinking the water He offered? _____

An outcast among outcasts

No one could have stood in greater contrast to Nicodemus than this woman. She was a Samaritan, a race that the Jews looked down on as having no claim on their God. Apparently the woman was an outcast in her own community as well; she came by herself to draw water from the community well. In biblical lands drawing water and chatting at the well was the social highpoint of a woman's day. In this woman's own village she was ostracized and marked off as immoral; an unmarried woman living openly with the fifth in a series of men.¹

- The woman came to Jacob's well about noon. What do you know about life in the ancient world? Why might this have been unusual?

- Any Jew that heard about a Samaritan referred to in a positive light would have been shocked. What are these other examples of Jesus using shock value in his ministry? (see Luke 10:25-37 and 17:11-19)

- If we told a story for shock value today, from what groups of people might we choose a "good guy" to come so that others would reflect more closely on our message?

- Jesus gives his last command before ascending to heaven in Acts 1:6-8? _____
What does it mean to be a witness in Samaria? _____
Who or where is Samaria in your life today? _____
How are you witnessing to these people today? How will you witness to these people tomorrow?

True worship

- True worship: the Samaritan woman was questioning Jesus about the where and how, but Jesus responded by saying that true worship arises from where? _____
- What did Jesus reveal about his identity to this woman? _____

Note that women did not have high status in the ancient world, yet Jesus gave divine truth to a woman. There was an old rabbinical saying, "It is better that the words of the Law be burned than be delivered to a woman." Yet Jesus' first missionary to the Gentiles was a woman. Amazing!
- How is the world's need for salvation and eternal life like thirst? _____
- How do you think Jesus' gift of salvation is different from what the world offers as truth? _____

Go: faith takes action steps. "Dare you to love"...God, others, yourself.

- What are some prejudices you will ask God to help you overcome? _____
- What worldly truth have you accepted that you need to reexamine in light of God's Word? _____

- Who can you encourage to quench their spiritual thirst this week, and how can you facilitate that effort? _____

¹ Richards, Larry, and Lawrence O. Richards. The Teacher's Commentary. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1987.

For further study:

Name the top 3 priorities in your life?

1)

2)

3)

Jesus tells what his priority is in life in John 4:34? What is it?

Through his example, how can you re-adjust your priorities to be aligned with Jesus' example?

Additional Reading - *Discovering God's Will* by Andy Stanley