

# The Woman At The Well

**Introduction.** Part of our purpose in glorifying God is teaching the lost. The greatest teacher of all was Jesus. Not only did He win every soul that is saved through His death on the cross, but He was also an effective evangelist. In John 4:4-42, we see the master teacher at work.

Jesus did not want, at this stage in His ministry, a controversy about baptism, so He decided to leave Judea and go to Galilee. The quickest route was through Samaria. As Jesus was passing through the area, He came upon a woman at Jacob's well, about a half a mile from the small village of Sychar. It was referred to as "Jacob's well" because it lay on a parcel of ground purchased by Jacob, and was later bequeathed to Joseph (Genesis 33:18-19; 48:22). This was the land where the Israelites buried the bones of Joseph (Joshua 24:32). Sychar was the ancient city of Shechem, and is presently called Nablus. It is located at the foot of Mt. Gerizim, on which the temple of the Samaritans was built, and was part of the tribe of Ephraim. It probably got the name Sychar, which means "drunken," from the drunkenness of its inhabitants (Isaiah 28:1, 3, 7-8). Sychar was an important city in the Bible because it is the first city in Canaan where Abraham stopped on his journey from Haran. It is also where God appeared to Abraham and promised to give the land to his seed and where Abraham first built an altar to the Lord and called upon His name (Genesis 12:1-8).

Jesus used four worthy and successful methods when speaking with the woman. In order to help us better teach the lost, we will examine how Jesus worked with individuals.

## I. ***He Caught Her Attention***

- A. In the heat of the day, Jesus rested by a well while the disciples went for food (John 4:4-9). A woman from Samaria came to draw water from the well and Jesus asked her for a drink of water.
- B. This request immediately caught the attention of the woman. First of all, no Jewish rabbi would have volunteered to carry on a public conversation with a woman. Also, the text states that the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans.
  1. The remnant left when the Assyrians captured the northern tribe of Israel eventually began to intermarry with the foreigners flooding into the land of Palestine (2 Kings 17:6, 24). To the Jews, this was an unforgivable crime.
  2. For several centuries, the Jews and Samaritans had great hatred toward one another.
    - a) After the return from captivity, the Samaritans sought a share in the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, but were refused (Ezra 4:1-2; Nehemiah 2:10, 19; 4:6-8).

- b) Later, Manasseh, a Jew, married a daughter of the Samaritan Sanballat (Nehemiah 13:27-28) and founded a rival temple on Mount Gerzim which was in the center of the Samaritan territory.
- C. Although the woman saw Jesus as one of many strangers, Jesus viewed her as one of many souls. A soul has an eternal destiny and Jesus immediately began to direct her soul in the direction of the heavenly Father (John 6:40).
- D. There was a vast chasm of social and religious prejudice which separated Jesus and the Samaritan woman. We may be uncomfortable, but we must be willing to talk to those of different races or economic classes or to those in sin (Matthew 9:10-13).

## II. ***He Created An Interest***

- A. Although the woman did not understand what Jesus was talking about, His offer of living water certainly piqued her interest (John 4:10-15).
  - 1. The well was over 100 feet deep and no one could get water from it unless they had something with which to draw.
  - 2. The Jews used the expression "living water" to denote springs, fountains, or running streams, in contrast to stagnant water found in pools and cisterns.
- B. Jesus meant His free gift of grace and mercy in contrast to the impure and dead religion of the Samaritans and the Jews.
  - 1. Whoever would drink of this living water would never thirst; that is, be in want or have a lack of satisfaction (Psalm 42:1; Isaiah 12:3; 44:3; 55:1; Jeremiah 2:13; Ezekiel 47:1-12; Zechariah 13:1; 14:8; Revelation 7:17; 21:6).
  - 2. This is a lovely image of His grace and mercy bubbling up at all times and satisfying the seeking soul, even unto eternal life (Psalm 36:9; Isaiah 35:7; 49:10; Jeremiah 17:13; John 7:38-39; Revelation 22:1).
- C. It was not unusual for Jesus to convert a secular conversation into a spiritual one. He uncovered the deep mysteries of God with the means at hand. In a materially-minded world, if the Christian does not initiate a spiritual conversation or one which will lead to spiritual matters, who will? The Christian who has set his mind on what is above and not on what is on the earth is truly a credit to his profession (Colossians 3:2).
- D. It is no wonder that we cannot teach our neighbors if we are too timid or are unwilling to speak to them about spiritual matters (cf. Acts 17:23). If all we ever talk about is the ball game or how fast the grass grows, we cannot lead them to consider deep, spiritual truths.
- E. We need to learn to catch the attention of others.
  - 1. These would include your family, friends, co-workers, schoolmates, fellow members of clubs, neighbors, people you see at the grocery

- store, bank, or a restaurant, the person who works on our car, or cuts our hair. Also, never forget Christians who have fallen away. They need restoring!
2. Use an open door! Ask where your prospect attends services, ask their opinion on a current topic or event, ask about what is going on in their lives, tell them you will pray for them; but most of all, live a righteous life.
  3. You can invite your prospects to church services, gospel meetings, or special classes (such a men's classes, ladies' classes, or young people's classes).
  4. You could also give them tracts, CDs, bulletins, or offer home Bible studies.
  5. You also need to be aware of visitors. Look through the audience and make an effort to visit people who are new. Get to know who they are, where they live, where they work, is there some crisis in their life that has motivated them to come to church, etc.

### III. ***He Showed Evidences***

- A. Jesus demonstrated His omniscience when He revealed His knowledge of her past (John 4:16-19; cf. Luke 6:8; John 2:25; Acts 15:8). She immediately remarked that He must be a prophet sent from God. This allowed Jesus to discuss the true nature of worship in vss. 20-24 and to reveal His identity in vss. 25-26.
  1. When man stands before God, his innermost thoughts are revealed and laid open to God (Romans 14:12; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Hebrews 4:13).
  2. This incident ought to serve as a reminder to us that though we might think that we are committing a sin that nobody knows of or will ever find out about, God knows!
- B. Though we do not possess omniscience, we can stress to people the necessity of having a standard of authority by which to live, and the Bible is the only standard of authority (John 12:48; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). The woman at the well was in need of repentance -- in need of aligning her life with the Lord's word.
- C. This necessitates a need for intense study (2 Timothy 2:15). Paul frequently "reasoned from the scriptures" (Acts 17:2; 18:4, 19; 24:25). We need to know enough to be competent in answering questions and correcting erroneous thoughts and teaching (1 Peter 3:15). A Bible study need not be a complicated affair. When you look in the book of Acts, the simple sermons revolved around the topics of Christ, salvation, and His kingdom.

#### IV. ***He Produced Results***

- A. John 4:27-30, 39-42 tell us that the woman believed. She had witnessed His proofs and heard His preaching. She hastened to the city to make it known that she had seen and heard the Messiah (John 1:40-42, 45-46).
- B. As a result, many believed. The people believed the woman's account and they believed Jesus because of His own words. Nobody knows how much good can come from just one personal encounter.
- C. Jesus did not convert everyone, but He did use every opportunity to teach and convert. This inevitably produced results. It will with us as well.

**Conclusion.** When Jesus talked with a person, He did not see a Gentile, a black man, a woman, a child, a fisherman, or a poor person -- He saw someone with an immortal soul! Hence, His teaching was not hindered with preconceived notions. If we could only learn that lesson!

Someone called the waterpot left at the well "the unconscious pledge of her return." It was also a mute token of her new interest in a higher life. She came for water, but when she left her waterpot was forgotten, for she was consumed with a thirst for living water.

Studies show that 82% of people who do not attend anywhere are at least "somewhat likely" to attend if they are invited; however, only 21% of active churchgoers invite anyone to services in the course of a year, and only 2% of church members invite people who do not attend to services. Could the evangelistic apathy in many churches be explained by simple laziness on the part of church members in inviting others to worship services? Remember, 75% of people who do not attend decide to come to a worship service because of a friend or relative!

Jesus went on to say in John 4:34 that His meat or food was to do the will of the Father who sent Him. The fields are white for harvest and the work is for the worker, not just the preacher (Matthew 9:35-37). Let us reap and gather fruit for eternal life!