



# Disciplers Bible Studies

JOHN  
LESSON 5

## The New Fellowship and New Life John 4:1-54

### Introduction

#### A. Review – Nicodemus Meeting

In the Gospel of John, the Apostle gives us unique insight into Christ's evangelistic approach to different kinds of people. In Lesson 4, Jesus used a direct, strong approach with Nicodemus, who was established among the Pharisees as a masterful religious teacher with a good moral reputation. He was a Jew – of the chosen race.

Jesus told Nicodemus bluntly that all of his knowledge of Old Testament Scriptures, all of his external acts of righteousness, and all of his striving to keep the Law were for naught in God's eyes. Only when he saw himself as an unworthy sinner, mournfully repent of his sins and was born a second time in the Spirit of God, only then would God give him a new heart and put a right spirit within him. Only then would he enter the Kingdom of God.

#### B. The Samaritan Woman

This week in Chapter 4, by contrast, we see Jesus' approach with a different kind of person. Unlike Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman met Jesus not knowing much about God or religion. She was a half-pagan woman of dubious reputation, mainly concerned with meeting her physical needs and desires.

#### C. Overview – Chapter 4

Jesus, in a gentle way, revealed some of His deepest truths to her about living water and worshiping God in spirit and in truth. Within a few minutes of their conversation, without signs or miracles, she not only believed in Him but understood His love and power to help her. In her unprejudiced heart, she had a powerful personal conviction. Immediately, she went into town, confessed Jesus to her neighbors and brought them flocking to Him by her testimony.

In this Chapter we also see Christ's second sign miracle - the healing of the royal official's son.

### Outline of John 4:1-54

- I. The New Fellowship (4:1-42)
- II. The New Life (4:43-54)
- III. Memory Verse

#### I The New Fellowship (4:1-42)

##### A. Background and Setting (4:1-6)

###### 1. Feud Between Jews and Samaritans

To better understand the inclusiveness of Christ's love for all mankind, it is necessary to grasp the adversarial background of the Samaritans and the Jews. It began with the King of Assyria bringing back pagan peoples from the Euphrates River to occupy Samaria in place of the Jews he had deported. When the Jews returned from captivity, they would not let the half-pagan Samaritans share in rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem. So the Samaritans started a strange mixture of worshiping heathen gods along with a confused belief in Jehovah and the Law of Moses.

Such bitterness and hatred existed between the two peoples that a Jew would never set his foot in Samaria if he could avoid it. Samaria separated Galilee from Judea geographically so that Jews traveling from Judea to Galilee would cross the Jordan to the east side, then cross back into Galilee, rather than go through Samaria. This route was twice as long, but the Jews did not want to be contaminated by the half-breed Samaritans.

###### 2. Jacob's Well in Sychar

The setting for this week's lesson is this. It is about the sixth hour of the day (noon). We see Jesus and His disciples come to Sychar - Jacob's well - in Samaria. The heat of the day was high and it made a natural stopping place for Jesus who was tired from travel and needed refreshment. He sat there alone while the disciples went into town to buy food. While He was waiting there, a Samaritan woman came up with her pitcher on her head to draw water.

## B. The Offer of Living Water (4:7-15)

## 1. Jesus Saw Her Dissatisfied Soul

Women did not ordinarily draw water during the heat of the day, so it may be that she came at this time because the other women of the town had ostracized her.

Being physically thirsty, Jesus asked her for a drink. In those days a Jewish rabbi would never ask a Samaritan woman for a drink, especially one of doubtful reputation. A strict rabbi would not greet any woman in public - sometimes not even his wife, daughter or sister.

Jesus spoke to her gently, knowing that she was considered a disreputable outcast. He looked into her heart and saw the unsatisfied hunger in her soul. He graciously humbled Himself to talk with this lonely woman and draw her into His Kingdom.

Surprised, pleased and curious, the woman probably drew water for Him and He drank while continuing the conversation. She didn't understand His talking with her. Jesus didn't pursue the Jewish-Samaritan cleavage, but told her of a greater gift of God that exceeds all earthly spring water.

**Application:** Are you as compassionate and understanding in meeting unlikable people as Jesus was? Most of us are not and we need to pray for the Holy Spirit to empower and enable us over our biases.

## 2. The Water of Lasting Satisfaction

Jesus told her that drinking ordinary water quenches your thirst temporarily, but you soon thirst again. The things of the earth do not provide lasting satisfaction. Seeking to quench the thirst for happiness through money, power, position, pleasures and possessions are temporary. Emptiness returns to the soul. It thirsts again for something of permanent satisfaction. The *"living water"* that Jesus spoke of here is the Holy Spirit who gives eternal life (Jn. 7:38-39). *"Living water"* provides the soul's deepest thirst for love, for peace, for joy and for a meaning to our existence.

The woman still thought Jesus was talking about earthly water and bodily thirst. She asked Jesus to give her this material water so she wouldn't have to make the daily trip to Jacob's well.

## C. The Claims of Christ (4:16-26)

## 1. No Condemnation

Since she was not grasping His meaning, the Lord now started on a different track which led to further unfolding of the heavenly truth that He had already hinted at. In the discussion about her past husbands and current illegitimate relationship, she was shocked that this strange Jew who spoke these beautiful words about living water knew about her adulterous life. Jesus used strong words to cause her to see her true state from God's viewpoint, but He did not condemn her for her sin.

He reminded her of her many disappointments in personal relationships in order that she might appreciate the deep and lasting satisfaction that Jesus brought. She sensed His love and that He wanted to help her. She was beginning to discover that this was no ordinary man. He must be at least a Prophet of God.

## 2. The Place of Worship

He next clarified for her the age-old dispute between Jews and Samaritans about the proper place of worship. Jesus told her it was no longer relevant where people worship, but with the new order, the important question was who and how they worship. He said, *"Salvation is from the Jews"* (John 4:22), *"God is spirit"*, and *"those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth"* (John 4:24).

## 3. In Spirit and Truth.

What does it mean to worship *"in spirit and truth"*? Jesus said God Himself is Spirit and He must be worshiped by the human spirit, that is, people who have been born again and have become humble, contrite, grateful, adoring children of God. This worship does not consist of merely physical actions, but involves the interaction of the human spirit with the divine spirit. It comes from the heart of one who has surrendered his or her life to Jesus Christ.

The second element of worship is truth. This means that true worshippers accept the revelation of God in Christ as ultimate truth. It involves not only sincerity of heart, but also a knowledge of and obedience to God's revealed truth in Christ in the Bible.

## 4. Jesus the Messiah

It is interesting to note that Jesus revealed this highest spiritual truth to this simple woman - a truth that He probably had not yet revealed to His disciples. Already, even in her confession, the light

flooded her soul. She seemed to have the instinctive realization of who this person was. She opened her heart and humbly confessed her deep longing to know the things that the coming Messiah had for her.

Jesus confirmed to this Samaritan woman her thoughts about the Messiah. He was not a political/military figure which most Jews were thinking, but a Prophet revealing God's truth. He told her plainly as He did to few others, "*I who speak to you am He.*" I am the Messiah. It was not only His claim to be the Messiah, but His ability to know her past, plus His words and works that made her understand. This was the only time that Jesus clearly identified Himself as the Messiah before His trial.

#### D. The Witness of the Woman

The woman gratefully accepted Christ's self-disclosure as true. She took advantage of the opportunity provided by the return of the disciples to hurry off and tell her news to others.

#### **Application:**

There is a message here for all of us. How do you and I depart from our meetings with Jesus – meetings that we have with Him in worship, Bible study, prayer and meditation? Do we have exhilaration and joy in our hearts that reflect in our lives and words like the Samaritan woman? Or do we go silently back into the night like Nicodemus, pondering Christ inwardly, but not really manifesting the blessing of our relationship with Christ to those around us?

#### E. Sowing and Reaping

While the woman is away, Jesus tells His disciples that are trying to get Him to eat the food they brought, that He does not need to satisfy His hunger with physical food. He has an inner spiritual source of sustenance consisting of obeying His Father's will and finishing the work His Father sent Him to do. He then points them to the immediate results produced by the Word of God, which He came to the world to proclaim. There is no 4-month interval between His sowing of the seed in the Samaritan woman's heart and the harvest which has resulted. He is referring to the ordinary process of sowing and reaping in farming,

The days had now arrived when sower and reaper could rejoice together. Jesus' disciples would carry on the work of gathering into the new Israel the crops of Gentile believers such as these Samaritan

converts. John Tenney writes, "The reaping of people for the granary of God is not the task of any one group, nor is it confined to one era. Each reaps the benefit of its forerunners, and succeeding generations in turn gain from the accomplishments of their predecessors."

#### F. The Response of the Samaritans (4:39-42)

##### 1. Bringing in the Sheaves

The Samaritan woman was indeed changed by her encounter with Jesus. John MacArthur said, "The living water which the Samaritan woman had received became an overflowing fountain in her life. Her words had power. The change in her was so tremendous that her neighbors poured out of the city to seek this refreshment that she could not contain without telling others."

The Samaritans were intellectually, spiritually and emotionally captivated and inspired by Jesus. They asked Him to stay and teach them, and He stayed two days. Many believed because of His word.

##### 2. The Savior of the World

How amazing that these lowly, pagan Samaritans recognized Him as the Savior of the world! They believed and received Him as the Messiah, the first large group of people to openly confess and accept Him as Savior. These half-breed outcasts from the Jewish world had open, hungry hearts for truth. How incredibly different was the attitude of the prideful, self-righteous Jews, God's chosen people of the Old Testament (John 1:11-12).

#### **Application:**

All of us must watch ourselves carefully that we don't get caught up in spiritual pride. Our self-oriented flesh so often claims, "I'm right, you're wrong." The moment we lose our surrendered-ness to God, our first love of Christ, our yielding to the Holy Spirit, we become like the self-righteous Pharisees. Are you so dead right about everything in your relationship with God that you are not open to the truth?

## **II. The New Life (John 4:43-54)**

#### A. The Return to Galilee

From Samaria, Jesus returned to Galilee. Vs. 44 and 45 seem contradictory. If a prophet has no honor in his own country, why did the Galileans welcome Jesus? Probably John was referring to Galilee in contrast to Samaria rather than in contrast with

Judea. Jesus' own country was Jewish turf rather than Samaritan territory. On Jewish soil, He had not experienced the honor that He had among the Samaritans.

## B. Second Sign: The Healing of an Official's Son (4:46-54))

### 1. Inquiring Faith

Enroute to Galilee, Jesus encountered a royal official. In view of his title, the official was probably a Jew serving Herod Antipas. He had heard about the supernatural power of Jesus, and with an inquiring faith walked about 20 miles from Capernaum to Cana to find Him. He pleaded with Jesus to come to Capernaum and heal his son.

### 2. Confident Faith

The official had a spark of faith in the Miracle Worker because of His reputation. He obviously believed that Jesus could heal people, but there is no indication that initially he believed that Jesus was more than a healer. The official ignored Jesus statement about "signs and wonders" and desperately pleaded with Him to come to Capernaum quickly because his son was dying.

### 3. Confirmed Faith

Jesus did not go with him, as the father asked, but He gave him a promise that his son would live. The father believed that promise, and on his way back met his servants. They told him his son had significantly improved at the exact time that Jesus said, "*Go, your son lives.*"

### 4. Contagious Faith

The official now believed in Jesus at even a deeper level. The members of his household also believed in Jesus. They all learned that Jesus' word is powerful to save even at a distance of many miles.

Morris points out that the royal official's faith grew through progressive states, from "crisis faith" (vs. 47), to "confident faith" (vs. 50), to "confirmed faith" (vs. 53), to "contagious faith" (vs. 53).

## C. The Two Sign Miracles at Cana

It is interesting that John identified this miracle as the second sign that Jesus did even though He did other miracles in both Galilee and Judea after His first sign in Chapter 2 (John 2:23 and 3:2). Why then does he call this the second sign? Tasker writes "Both the miracles performed at Cana (John's first

and second signs) are thus shown to have been prompted by trust."

Herbert Lockyer writes, "There seems to be an interesting connection between the two miracles at Cana. The first was associated with a marriage, the second with an anxious home – the first with the joy of a wedding and the second with the sorrow of a family. At the first miracle, Christ added gladness to the feast; at the second, He banished sadness from the hearts of many. Mary trusted her Son to do something to relieve the embarrassment of their host at the wedding. The father of the sick boy was equally confident that he could rely on Jesus' help." Over and over we see in the Bible that "*risking by faith leads to knowing by experience*".

### Application:

Can you identify with the four progressive stages of faith (inquiring faith, confident faith, confirmed faith and contagious faith)? What stage are you in right now with a situation in your life?