

WOMAN AT THE WELL

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

BIG IDEA

08/23/26

What happens when Jesus intentionally crosses boundaries everyone else avoids? In this powerful introduction to the story of the Samaritan woman in John 4, discover why Jesus “had to” pass through Samaria—and how His journey reveals a Savior who sees individuals, confronts compromised worship, breaks through generations of religious and cultural hostility, and carries a mission far bigger than any one person. From the surprising contrast between Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman to the history behind the deep divide between Jews and Samaritans, this message lays the groundwork for an unforgettable encounter with Christ. Above all, it reveals a life-changing truth: Jesus is for everyone, He sees you personally, and nothing He does is by accident—He moves on purpose and with purpose.

CONNECT Spend 10 minutes getting to know each other as a group by answering the following question.

Are you more likely to take the fastest route somewhere or the scenic route? Why?

DISCOVER Read John 4:1-45 out loud and answer questions focused on the details of the biblical text.

- 1. When you read John 4, what part of Jesus’ interaction with the Samaritan woman stands out to you most? Why?**
- 2. John 4:4 says Jesus “had to pass through Samaria,” even though alternative routes existed. What kind of necessity is John describing?**
- 3. Jesus crossed significant cultural, religious, and social boundaries to speak with this woman. What kinds of boundaries are hardest for Christians to cross today?**



REFLECT

Review the following and use this time to discuss how your thoughts and feelings are affirmed and/or challenged.

2 Kings 17...Then the king of Assyria invaded the entire land, and for three years he besieged the city of Samaria. Finally, in the ninth year of King Hoshea's reign, Samaria fell, and the people of Israel were exiled to Assyria...This disaster came upon the people of Israel because they worshiped other gods. They sinned against the Lord their God, who had brought them safely out of Egypt and had rescued them from the power of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. They had followed the practices of the pagan nations the Lord had driven from the land ahead of them, as well as the practices the kings of Israel had introduced...The king of Assyria transported groups of people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim and resettled them in the towns of Samaria, replacing the people of Israel. They took possession of Samaria and lived in its towns. But since these foreign settlers did not worship the Lord when they first arrived, the Lord sent lions among them, which killed some of them...So one of the priests who had been exiled from Samaria returned to Bethel and taught the new residents how to worship the Lord. But these various groups of foreigners also continued to worship their own gods. In town after town where they lived, they placed their idols at the pagan shrines that the people of Samaria had built...These new residents worshiped the Lord, but they also appointed from among themselves all sorts of people as priests to offer sacrifices at their places of worship. And though they worshiped the Lord, they continued to follow their own gods according to the religious customs of the nations from which they came. And this is still going on today. They continue to follow their former practices instead of truly worshiping the Lord.

4. How should the history of Israel and Samaria in 2 Kings 17 shape our reading of John 4? How did exile, resettlement, competing worship traditions, and generations of hostility create the theological backdrop for Jesus' encounter with the woman?

5. 2 Kings 17:33 describes people who "feared the LORD but also served their own gods." What is the difference between including God in our lives and surrendering our lives to God?

APPLY

Use this time to discuss how the Big Idea and scriptures impact your view of the world around you.

6. If Jesus moves "on purpose and with purpose," where might God be asking you to become more intentional instead of simply going through the motions?

Prayer Requests:

GO DEEPER - CONTEXT

The Bible was written across ancient cultures, languages, political situations, religious traditions, and social structures that can be very different from our own. When we don't recognize those differences, we can unconsciously fill in the gaps with our own assumptions.

When studying scripture, the goal, therefore, isn't simply: ***"What does this verse mean to me?"***

- A better way to understand scripture is to ask:
- What did the author communicate to the original audience?
 - What timeless truth does that reveal?
 - How should that truth shape us today?

4 CONTEXTS:

- Literary Context** — What surrounds the passage?
- What comes immediately before and after this passage?
 - What is the author trying to accomplish?
 - Are there repeated words, themes, contrasts, or patterns?
 - What type of literature am I reading?
 - How does this passage fit into the author's larger argument?

- Historical Context** — What happened before this?
- What historical events are assumed by the passage?
 - Who are the people involved?
 - What political or religious tensions existed?
 - What previous biblical events help explain what is happening?

- Cultural Context** — What would the original audience understand that I might miss?
- What social customs are operating?
 - How important are family and community?
 - What boundaries exist between groups?
 - What concepts of honor and shame are operating?
 - What expectations existed regarding gender, ethnicity, religion, wealth, hospitality, or social status?
 - What goes unexplained because the original audience already knew it?

- Spiritual/Theological Context** — What is God revealing?
- What does this reveal about God?
 - What does it reveal about humanity?
 - What does it reveal about sin and redemption?
 - What does it reveal about Jesus?
 - How does it connect with the larger story of Scripture?
 - What response does the passage call God's people to make?

EXERCISE:

Create 4 columns, read the passage and answer these questions:

Literary	Historical	Cultural	Spiritual/Theological
What do I notice in the text?	What history do I need to know?	What cultural assumptions might be operating?	What does this reveal about God and His purposes?

