

Straight to the Heart - John 4:1-26 - Jn10

We left our last study with a radical and critical lesson on Ministry Leadership, “John the Baptist” style. Today, we follow Jesus away from petty disputes and to much higher ground.

John 4:1-3

“¹ Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John

² (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples),

³ He left Judea and departed again to Galilee.”

The fruit of Jesus’ ministry in Judea had reached the Pharisees, and they were not happy about it. From Matthew, we learn that John the Baptist was probably now in prison and the religious leaders had set their sites on Christ. So Jesus left the area around Jerusalem and headed for Galilee.

But John 4:4 says

“But He needed to go through Samaria.”

The King James Version says, “He must needs go through Samaria.” Now, any good Jew, traveling from Judea to Galilee, would never, never go through Samaria – not because it was a bad way to travel, but because the Jews hated the Samaritans, and they would purposely travel around Samaria to avoid any possible contact with them. So when Jesus said He “must” go through Samaria, He was referring to the will of His Father. He loved all those in Samaria, and He had souls to save and lessons to teach there.

John 4:5

“So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.”

This city in Samaria is actually in the valley called Shechem, which was a very critical valley in the Old Testament. With Mt. Ebal on one side and Mt Gerazim on the other, Shechem is actually where:

- Abraham pitched his tent and received his first promise from God;
- Joshua took the tribes to recite the blessings and cursings of the law;
- And he took them there again for his final address to them;
- It was also designated a City of Refuge in Joshua;
- It was here that Jacob bought a parcel of ground and built a well right through solid rock, and it was here that his son Joseph was buried; and
- It was also said to be the most beautiful place in all Israel.

So, in Samaria, we have a critically important place of Jewish history, but because of their hateful prejudice of the Samaritans, a good Jew would not even walk through this valley. But there’s only thing Jesus hates, and that’s sin and its eternal toll, and that’s why Jesus needed to go through Samaria.

John 4:6

“Now Jacob’s well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.”

It was noon. Jesus was physically exhausted. He sat down by Jacob’s well. And then the reason He had to come this way begins to unfold.

John 4:7-8

“⁷ A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give Me a drink.”

⁸ For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.”

It was customary for women to draw water, but not at noon because it was too warm. This woman probably came at noon to avoid disrespect and ridicule from the other women who would gather at the well. But Jesus was orchestrating a very specific plan, and He had one other problem. He had to get rid of the disciples. So He sent them for food. Can’t you just see Jesus? “Man, I’ve got to get rid of these disciples. The Samaritan woman is about to come and these guys with their prejudice are going to mess it all up. Hey, how about if you guys go buy some food?” So Jesus sees to it that He’s alone, the Samaritan woman walks up, and He asks her for a drink.

John 4:9

“Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, “How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?” For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.”

The line of hate between the Jews and Samaritans was very clear, and this woman addresses it immediately. In fact, the Jewish Rabbi’s “guidelines” stated that water in a pot that had been touched by a Samaritan was unclean and unfit for Jewish consumption. They also had a saying that went, “He who eats the bread of a Samaritan is as he who eats the flesh of swine.” This was serious hatred.

What’s really interesting about this prejudice is that the Samaritans were actually one-half Jewish. In 2Kings chapter 17, the Assyrians took the Northern tribes of Israel captive and, during their captivity, they intermarried with the Assyrians. Now the Southern Kingdom of Judah was also taken captive later by Babylon, but they did not inter-marry during their captivity. And it was this “inter-marrying” that caused this murderous hatred between the Jews and the Samaritans. So later, the Samaritans, originally the northern tribes of Israel, rejected all the Old Testament except the Pentateuch. Then they opposed the building of the temple in Jerusalem. Then they built a rival temple right here in Samaria on Mt. Gerazim. All of that came from their hate for one another, which is so incredible because they were both originally from the 12 tribes of Israel. The sad thing is we, at times, are guilty of similar prejudice of those who, at the very core, are really the same as us. But the M.I.P. today (the Most Important Point), is that Jesus cuts through all that junk and He speaks “Straight to our Heart.”

Now before we get any further, let’s place the people in this conversation. YOU are the Samaritan woman, and Jesus is Jesus. So when I talk about the Samaritan woman, I’m talking about you and me. And when I’m talking about Jesus, well, I’m talking about Jesus. OK? So Jesus arranges a meeting with you (the Samaritan woman). He then begins a conversation with you, and your first response is basically prideful and defensive, as the woman says, “Hey, I thought you hated me. Why are you treating me like I was one of Your own?”

Two weeks ago, Nicodemus came to Jesus with similar pride and reservation and, in response, Jesus spoke directly to Nicodemus's heart – not to the words Nicodemus spoke, but to his heart. Here Jesus does the same thing with the Samaritan woman (or us). He doesn't even address her spoken word, but instead, He offers her what her heart really needs.

John 4:10

“Jesus answered and said to her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.””

In unconditional love, without reservation, Jesus says, “If you only knew and you would only ask, then I would surely give you Living Water.” Jesus loves you so much that He's done everything to draw you into receiving His free gift of life, but He won't force it on you. He's provided it all for you, but you must ask in faith and receive His gift.

In John 7:37-38 Jesus says

“³⁷ ...If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.

³⁸ He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”

His words are so clear, but so often we just don't get it, usually because we're so caught up in the needs of this world that that's all we can think about. And so we respond just as the Samaritan woman responds.

John 4:11

“The woman said to Him, “Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water?””

The woman (who is us) totally misses it. You can tell she's curious about the “living water” comment, but she's not going to be interested until it makes sense to her. Then, to make ourselves feel secure again, we fall back on the familiar ground of pride and defensiveness.

John 4:12

“Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?”

Pride and defensiveness cause us to feel like we're in control, but Jesus will never be phased by your bad attitude. His love for you knows no bounds, His love for you knows no limits, and His response will always be straight to the center of your heart, just as it is with this woman. She's not getting it, so Jesus woos her again in patience and love.

John 4:13

“Jesus answered and said to her, “Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again””

Jesus is speaking to our hearts, and He's saying the true thirst we have in our hearts will never be satisfied by any earthly means. No matter how grand or perfect we drink in this world, we will never be satisfied. Jesus offers the only alternative in verse 14.

John 4:14

“...but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.”

Only Jesus can satisfy the deepest thirst of our hearts, and not only satisfy, but His Living Water will become in us a fountain, springing up into everlasting life. Now, watch closely because, at this point, a process of decision is begun in this woman’s life, and it culminates in her salvation.

John 4:15

“The woman said to Him, “Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw.””

I can’t tell you how many people I’ve seen accept Jesus Christ without fully understanding all that it means to make Him their Lord. But as long as that person maintains an intimate relationship with the Lord, Jesus will continue speaking “straight to their heart” and cause that Living Water to become a fountain, springing up inside them, which is exactly what He does with us, played here by the woman at the well. The first matter of the heart that must be addressed is sin.

John 4:16

“Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.””

Here Jesus gives her an opportunity to face her sin, just as He does with us, because, without repentance, there can be no new life in Christ. Jesus continues to speak straight to her heart, no matter what objections she comes up with. Jesus wants her heart, just as He wants your heart. In verses 17-18, Her sin is exposed by her Savior.

John 4:17-18

“¹⁷ The woman answered and said, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You have well said, ‘I have no husband,’

¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly.””

So Jesus reaches right into her life and says, “This is the area for you where repentance must come.” Jesus wants to strike a chord in your heart at the very center of your life and, if you allow Him to, it will turn on that fountain of Living Water. And here, the woman allows Jesus to strike that chord as she essentially acknowledges her sin.

John 4:19

“The woman said to Him, “Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.””

Her heart has been touched and she’s beginning to respond. She has gone from calling Jesus a “Jew” to “Sir” to a “Prophet.” Now, her (and our) next response seems strange at first, but I’d like to present it to you in a little different light. Most say the woman is going to try to divert the focus off her sin, and she may very well be, just as our first response is usually to divert attention from our sin, but I find when we try to skirt the real issue or our sin, there’s usually a deep desire in our heart to be made right.

And so, she says in John 4:20

“Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.”

Is she throwing up an idle theological debate to avoid the real point?? I don't think so. I used to think so, but now I don't. At this time, Jews and Samaritans both used the same method of repentance and covering of sin to be made right before God. That was the worship of blood sacrifice, even though the Samaritans had it pretty messed up. I believe the woman is saying, "I want to be made right with God, but how do I do it? The Jews' way or the Samaritans' way?" Have we not said the exact same thing? "How do I get right with God?" And Jesus is about to tell her exactly what He tells us, and what He'll always tell us. "Being made right before God is not a matter of religious ritual. It is a matter of the heart!"

John 4:21-23

²¹ Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father.

²² You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.

²³ But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him."

What an incredible statement. Jesus is saying, in essence, "Your Samaritan religion is a wreck, but it doesn't even matter because, from this point on, all religious ritual, without the right heart, is utterly worthless." Again, verse 23 says:

John 4:23

"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him."

Do you want to be made right with God? Then drop the religious rituals and worship the Father in spirit and truth. It's a matter of the heart! And JESUS READS OUR HEARTS LIKE HE READS AN OPEN BOOK!

Hebrews 4:13 says

"...all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account"

Jesus Christ wants your heart at the deepest level. In verse 24, we have one of only three "MUST's" in the Gospel of John:

- In John 3:7 it says, "You must be born again."
- In John 3:14 it says, "The Son of Man must be lifted up; and
- Here it says, "We must worship God in spirit and truth.

John 4:24

"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

Karl Barth says, "*Worship of God in spirit and truth is the most meaningful, most glorious, and most urgently needed action that can take place in a human life,*" and I couldn't agree with him more. Spirit is the opposite of flesh, and this word for "truth" denotes *veracity, sincerity, and truthfulness*. God wants your heart. He wants it in spirit (the opposite of flesh), and He wants it in veracity, sincerity, and truthfulness. In our next study, we are going to see that is exactly what He got from this woman at the well – a heart of worship in spirit and truth.

Is that what He has gotten from you? In verses 25-26, Jesus Christ delivers the clear ultimatum of choice to this woman. We'll see what she does with it in our next study. But today, Jesus Christ is speaking Straight to your Heart, and when He does, He always brings a choice, a need for response.

John 4:25-26

“²⁵ The woman said to Him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When He comes, He will tell us all things.” *[here comes the choice . . .]*

²⁶ Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am He.””

Jesus speaks directly to your heart. He bypasses all the trivial junk that we cloud up our lives with. He strikes the deepest chord in our lives. And He asks only, “Will you believe, and will you worship Me in spirit and in truth?”