

Woman at the Well

Read John 4:1-42.

In baseball, with three strikes, you're out! Not so with Jesus. John 4 presents hearers of the Bible with a different perspective. Jesus demonstrated how He valued all people, regardless of previous sins.

During the heat of a late spring day, Jesus met a woman at a well outside the town of Sychar in Samaria. The Samaritan woman had plenty of strikes against her. As far as most were concerned, she was "out."

Talking Points

- The Samaritan woman came to the well in the heat of the day rather than during the cool morning when the other women of Sychar drew water. She was an outcast among her people.
- The woman had a history of sexual impropriety with the city's men.
- Her meeting with Jesus was charged with tension on several levels. Among them were nationality, gender, sexual, and religious beliefs.
- The Samaritan woman became increasingly engaged with Jesus through a compassionate conversation—she recognized Jesus as the Messiah the Samaritans were waiting for.
- Receiving the forgiveness only God can offer, the Samaritan woman reported her discovery to the people of Sychar.
- Many joined her newfound belief in the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.

Background

Sennacherib of Assyria destroyed the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C. His subjugation strategy was the resettling of those he defeated throughout his expanding kingdom. This practice removed and isolated future rebels who could threaten his rule. Relocating the Hebrews of Israel, Sennacherib replaced them with foreign pagan idolaters. The people group known as "Samaritans" came into being through intermarriage.

Strike One

The Samaritans blended pagan cultic religious practices with Moses' Torah teaching, Genesis through Revelation. Their hybrid religion disgusted the Jews of the 1st Century. Animosity flowed both ways.

Finding a Jewish man at the only place she could get water shocked the woman at the well. And then He spoke to her. "Give me a drink of water."

How would you characterize the tone of the woman's response? *"How is it that you, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?"*

Strike Two

It is impossible to live without water. Without it, people die in about three days. Every day, thirst drove the Samaritan woman to the well when no one else would be there, especially women. She had a history of stealing their men.

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 (John 4:7-10).

Men had a history of using her. As far as she knew, Jesus was just another "user." Still, the unfolding conversation between a Jew and a Samaritan, a man and a woman, created curiosity worth exploring. *"Sir, give me this water so I will not be thirsty or come here to draw (water), she replied.*

Strike Three

Jesus said, *Go, call your husband and come here.* An inner conflict erupted. Deep down, the woman wrestled with shame. *I have no husband,"* was her reply. A partial truth is not the truth. A partial truth misses the mark of integrity. But with Jesus, there is no place to hide. He knew her story.

Home Run

There are people like the Samaritan woman everywhere who use and are used. They have "struck out" so many times nobody wants them on their team.

After her conversation with the Lord, the woman hit a home run in her community. We're still talking about her today. Can you imagine yourself as the catalyst for restoration in the lives of others where you live, work, and play?

Jesus' Discipleship Model

Repeatedly, the Gospels illustrate a ministry model demonstrated by Jesus. Disciples are made organically, not organizationally. The abiding lifestyle Jesus taught takes place naturally out of everyday events that are captured for Kingdom moments. See John 15.

Read the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman again. Jesus used a four "C" s approach to move the outcast woman from a place of shameful isolation to a position of societal transformer. It begins with a conversation.

Conversation -> Curiosity -> Conviction -> Collaboration

Bible Conversations

- The context of this event is the Middle Eastern shame and honor worldview. Westerners value truth & error. As you prepare to tell this story, meditate on that conflict of worldviews.

- Identify how shame shapes relationships with family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and local churches. How could this story be used to raise awareness of marginalized people who, through their own sinful decisions, live outside a restorative community in shame, anger, and fear?
- Who are some people in your sphere of influence who need to know this story? How could you use this account to open doors for Gospel conversations that lead to new-life relationships between Jesus and those who need Him?