



Candlewood Church



Jesus Elevated Women – Part 1

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BIG IDEA – Jesus elevated women beyond the customs and cultural norms of his day; because of love and for a purpose.

Scripture Focus – The woman was surprised, for Jews refuse to have anything to do with Samaritans. She said to Jesus, “You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?” **John 4:9 NLT**

Blurb: She came at noon; the wrong **time**, the wrong **place**, and she was the wrong **person**. But Jesus was already there, waiting.

In a world that had shifted women into silence and insignificance, Jesus **pulled up a seat to speak to her**; He **spoke with her**. And in doing so, Jesus found the one person who could speak to her own people about who he really is. Jesus redefined what it means for **someone** to matter.

We are in our series WOMANHOOD and today Robin and I are going to talk about how Jesus elevated women.

How are we going to do that?

We are going to share one of our favorites stories from the Bible that explores what Jesus did and how he behaved towards a woman with a sketchy past. But not only that – Jesus had to cross several political, religious, and cultural barriers to show us how God feels about us!



Jesus knew the Pharisees had heard that he was baptizing and making more disciples than John (though Jesus himself didn't baptize them—his disciples did). So he left Judea and returned to Galilee. He had to go through Samaria on the way. Eventually he came to the Samaritan village of Sychar, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there; and Jesus, tired from the long walk, sat wearily beside the well about noontime. **John 4:1-6 NLT**



Soon a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Please give me a drink." He was alone at the time because his disciples had gone into the village to buy some food. The woman was surprised, for Jews refuse to have anything to do with Samaritans. She said to Jesus, "You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?" Jesus replied, "If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water." "But sir, you don't have a rope or a bucket," she said, "and this well is very deep. Where would you get this living water? And besides, do you think you're greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us this well? How can you offer better water than he and his sons and his animals enjoyed?" Jesus replied, "Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again. But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life." "Please, sir," the woman said, "give me this water! Then I'll never be thirsty again, and I won't have to come here to get water." **John 4:7-15 NLT**



"Go and get your husband," Jesus told her. **"I don't have a husband,"** the woman replied. Jesus said, **"You're right! You don't have a husband—for you have had five husbands, and**

you aren't even married to the man you're living with now. You certainly spoke the truth!" "Sir," the woman said, "you must be a prophet. So tell me, why is it that you Jews insist that Jerusalem is the only place of worship, while we Samaritans claim it is here at Mount Gerizim, where our ancestors worshiped?" Jesus replied, "Believe me, dear woman, the time is coming when it will no longer matter whether you worship the Father on this mountain or in Jerusalem. You Samaritans know very little about the one you worship, while we Jews know all about him, for salvation comes through the Jews. But the time is coming—indeed it's here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way. For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth." **John 4:16-24 NLT**



The woman said, "I know the Messiah is coming—the one who is called Christ. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." Then Jesus told her, "I AM the Messiah!" Just then his disciples came back. **They were shocked to find him talking to a woman, but none of them had the nerve to ask, "What do you want with her?" or "Why are you talking to her?"** The woman left her water jar beside the well and ran back to the village, telling everyone, "Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did! Could he possibly be the Messiah?" So the people came streaming from the village to see him. **John 4:25-30 NLT**

What was our "well woman's" world like in the Roman Empire?

In the first century Roman world, **a woman's value was defined almost entirely by her relationship to men;** first her father, then her husband. And, if she had neither, society would lean towards her brother. She could not vote, hold public office, or serve in the military. Her primary role was to bear children and manage the household. In elite families, some women gained informal political influence through their husbands, but this was the exception, not the rule.

Then verses Now

Roman women could not vote. Remember...American women could not vote until the summer of 1920, nearly 2,000 years later. It's only been a hundred years or so.

What was our "well woman's" religious world like in the Jewish culture?

In first-century Jewish practice, the public/private divide was strict. **A woman's world was the home.**

- **She was exempt from many synagogue obligations and could advance no farther than the Court of Women in the Temple.**
- **Rabbis typically did not greet women in public**, even their own family members.
- **Women could not serve as legal witnesses in court.** Of course, neither could Gentiles or minors.

One ancient Jewish prayer, recited by men, included a line of thanksgiving: **"I thank God I was not born a Gentile, a slave, or a woman."**

The rabbis weren't bashing Gentiles, slaves, and women; they were thanking God that they were men, because Gentiles, slaves, and women were not allowed to participate fully in the community of faith. The blessing, in other words, was about religious obligation and privilege, not superiority. [Boston College](#), [myjewishlearning](#).

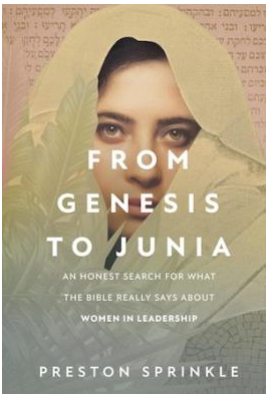


Aimee Semple McPherson preached to thousands of people here in Los Angeles and all over the world. She prayed for people and they were healed right then there, and thousands of them came to Jesus. McPherson went on to start the Four-Square Movement from which came Calvary Chapel.

Amiee McPherson On Trial charged with faking her kidnaping. She was a powerful anti-evolution movement, working to get a proposition on the upcoming California ballot requiring that a Bible be placed in every single public-school classroom in the state.

[History of Foursquare Church founded by Amiee Semple McPherson](#) -

Do a full study on egalitarianism vs. complementarianism it is worth your time.



Prestons Sprinkle's book, [From Genesis to Junia](#) and it is thorough and terrific. The short answer, there is a place for everyone who surrenders their life to Jesus to do big things in His name, everyone. Jesus knows guys and gals each have unique gifting and capacities and Jesus calls and compels us to bring those gifts so the world might see him and know him.

Then verses Now

Jewish women in the first century could not testify in court. In the U.S., women were barred from jury duty in many states until the late 1960s.

- Under early American law (rooted in English common law), women were deemed unfit to serve on juries under the doctrine of *propter defectum sexus* — literally, "defect of sex." As of 1927, only 19 states allowed women to serve at all.*

Lastly, our "well woman" was also a Samaritan?

The woman Jesus meets was not just any woman — **she was a Samaritan. Jews despised Samaritans as religious "half-breeds," descendants of Israelites who had intermarried with foreign settlers.** Most Jewish travelers went miles out of their way to avoid even passing through Samaria. **To speak with a Samaritan woman was a triple offense: she was the wrong gender, the wrong ethnicity, and the wrong religion.**

The social wall between Jews and Samaritans mirrored the worst **racial and class divides we still wrestle with today.** Jesus didn't avoid it; he walked straight into the middle of it.

How did Jesus elevate women?

Jesus did not challenge her or encourage her to:

- Shed their home and family responsibilities.
- Encourage them to run for office or get involved with the religious or secular politics of the day.
- Protest and lead a revolution to further women's rights.

Jesus wanted to redeem and restore her – giving back her value, dignity and purpose.

As always, Jesus had much bigger plans for the salvation of humankind – men and women alike.

And Jesus had much bigger plans for our well woman!

REFLECTIONS

**Notice this... Jesus didn't even instruct her on what to do next!
He didn't tell her to go therefore and preach the gospel.**

What she did was of her **own volition**.

- The woman **left her water jar** beside the well.
- **She ran** back to the village.
- She told everyone, "**Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did!**"
- She proposed this question: "**Could he possibly be the Messiah?**" (Even though Jesus **told her who he was**, she wanted them to experience the same process of believing as she did – **she created a holy curiosity in them!**) **Can our experience with Jesus create a holy curiosity in others?**
- So the people came streaming from the village to see him. [John 4:28-30 NLT](#)

I actually believe this woman began a work in the Samaritan community that eventually yielded the miraculous moment when Philip met with a group of Samaritans who eager to hear the message of Jesus and later received the gift of the Holy Spirit!

John 4 is Jesus sowing in Samaria; Acts 8 is the church reaping in Samaria. Acts 8:4-15 NLT

The woman at the well helped open the door; Philip walked through it.

APPLICATION

What This Means for Us

- If Jesus crossed ethnic, religious, and gender lines to reach one woman, no one in our lives is too far outside our circle to matter.
- Jesus treated her as a person with a soul worth saving — not a category to avoid. That is the model.
- She left that well as Sychar's first missionary. Jesus did not just restore her — He empowered her with truth. That pattern still holds. **Our past, redeemed, makes for a path for others.**
- Jesus story **through us** has massive implications in future lives!

SCRIPTURES

John 4:1-6 NLT ON SCREEN

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Soon a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Please give me a drink." He was alone at the time because his disciples had gone into the village to buy some food. The woman was surprised, for Jews refuse to have anything to do with Samaritans. She said to Jesus, "You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?" Jesus replied, "If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water." "But sir, you don't have a rope or a bucket," she said, "and this well is very deep. Where would you get this living water? And besides, do you think you're greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us this well? How can you offer better water than he and his sons and his animals enjoyed?" Jesus replied, "Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again. But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life." "Please, sir," the woman said, "give me this water! Then I'll never be thirsty again, and I won't have to come here to get water."

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What Jesus Did That No One Expected

Jesus crossed every line that day at the well.

- He **initiated a conversation** with a woman He did not know.
- He **asked her for a favor**, a drink of water, which gave her dignity instead of dismissing her. **She was shocked!** She asked him, "Why are you asking me for a drink?" John inserts that she knew the religious, societal, cultural rules, "**Jews do not associate with Samaritans!**"
- Jesus also **shared her water bucket (antléma – baling vessel)** "But sir, you don't have a rope or a bucket." This was a Jewish purity issue; the Samaritan woman was considered "unclean." Sharing the bucket would make Jesus ceremonially unclean as well.
- **He spoke to her about theology**, worship, and the coming of the Messiah. This Samaritan woman knew And then, remarkably, **He revealed His identity to her** — "I who speak to you am He" (John 4:25-26); She was the first person he specifically told about being the messiah. She said, "I know the Messiah – the one called Christ is coming." Jesus told her, "**I am the one.**"

His own disciples returned and were astonished to find Him talking with a woman. They said nothing; but their silence spoke volumes about how unusual this was.

The significance: Jesus first revealed Himself as Messiah not to a priest, a Pharisee, a rabbi, or one of the Twelve. **He told a Samaritan woman with five failed marriages and a complicated reputation. He met her at a well, with all her issues she carried to simply get water for her family.**

A Pattern, Not a One-Time Event

This was not an accident. Throughout His ministry, Jesus consistently elevated women beyond what their culture assigned them. Women were part of His traveling ministry (Luke 8:1–3). A woman was the first to witness the resurrection and the first to proclaim it (John 20:16–18). Jesus defended women, taught women, healed women, and restored women — in public, without apology.

Then vs. Now: Culture sorted people by class, gender, and ethnicity. Jesus consistently reordered those categories with grace.



Jewish Prayer - "I thank God I was not born a Gentile, a slave, or a woman."

This prayer is known as part of the *Birkat HaShachar* ("Blessings of the Dawn"), a set of Jewish morning blessings. Here's the history:

Origins — mid-2nd century CE

The prayer is attributed to Rabbi Yehuda ben Ilai (mid-2nd century CE), recorded in the *Tosefta Berakhot* 6:18. It teaches that every Jewish man is obligated to recite three daily blessings expressing gratitude for his station in life: thank God that I am not a gentile, a

woman, or a slave. This also appears as a legal dictum in the Babylonian Talmud, *Menahot* 43b.

Possible earlier roots

The text may actually derive from an even older aphorism, attributed sometimes to Socrates and sometimes to the pre-Socratic philosopher Thales of Miletus, who reportedly thanked the gods that he was born "human and not animal, man and not woman, Greek and not barbarian." A prayer fragment found in the Cairo Geniza is a close parallel: "Blessed is God who made me human and not animal, man and not woman, Israelite and not gentile, circumcised and not uncircumcised, free and not slave."

Becoming a standard liturgical prayer

These blessings, which modern scholars call the "blessings of identity," gradually became part of the preliminary prayers to the daily morning service. They are found in the earliest preserved Jewish prayer books from the end of the first millennium, though not yet universally recited as public prayers.

Context and intent

The rabbis weren't bashing Gentiles, slaves, and women; they were thanking God that they were men, **because Gentiles, slaves, and women were not allowed to participate fully in the community of faith.** In the Temple, there was a court for Gentiles and a court for women, both with restricted access into the Temple's inner areas. **The blessing, in other words, was about religious obligation and privilege, not superiority.**

Modern developments

The American Conservative Movement opted to replace the negative formulation with an affirmation of what one *is* — free, Jewish, and "created in God's image" — citing the precedent of older alternative texts. Many liberal Jewish communities today use similar positive reformulations.



Five Layers of Separation at the Well

- Gender — Jewish men did not initiate conversations with unknown women in public.
- Ethnicity — Jews avoided Samaritans; most traveled miles out of their way to bypass Samaria.
- Religion — Samaritans worshiped on Mount Gerizim; Jews considered this heretical.
- Reputation — She had five ex-husbands (rabbinic tradition capped remarriage at three times); she was living outside of marriage.
- Time of Day — Respectable women drew water in the morning with others. Noon, alone, was the hour of the outcast.



How did this Samaritan woman know so much about Samaritan theology?

What we know about her knowledge: The woman demonstrates remarkable theological fluency in the conversation. She references Jacob's heritage, the historical dispute between Jews and Samaritans over worship locations, and has a clear understanding of the coming Messiah — all specifically from a Samaritan perspective. That's not casual knowledge for someone presumed to be a social outcast.

Theory about the five husbands: Here's where it gets interesting. In Jewish law, a man could divorce a woman with a simple writ of dismissal. Samaritan practice was similar. But your instinct to ask *why* raises a question scholars have actually wrestled with — **why five dismissals?**

Traditional. She was simply a woman who had been married and divorced or widowed five times. In the first century, the power of divorce rested almost solely with the man — only the husband could initiate a divorce, regardless of his wife's desires. So it's historically inaccurate to portray her as solely or even primarily responsible for her situation. Notably, Jesus reports the facts of her life without the slightest hint of condemnation — He never tells her to repent or to "stop sinning," which He does say to the man He heals at the pool of Bethesda in the very next chapter.

She Was Asking the Theological Question All Along Some scholars suggest that the woman, possibly perceiving the metaphorical meaning behind Jesus' words, genuinely asked a theological question about true worship — not to change the subject or deflect from an uncomfortable past, but because she had a sincere interest in theology and recognized she was speaking to a prophet.

Here's the kicker! **Jesus wasn't just having a personal conversation with a marginalized woman.** He was addressing the *entire spiritual history of the Samaritan people* through her. She understood the subtext — which is exactly why she pivoted immediately to the deepest theological question dividing Jews and Samaritans: *where should God be worshipped?*

He didn't just save her — He deployed her.

And consider what she had going *against* her as a candidate for missionary work:

- **Wrong gender** — women didn't speak publicly in that culture
- **Wrong ethnicity** — Samaritan, despised by Jews
- **Wrong religion** — her theology was considered corrupt
- **Wrong reputation** — five husbands, living outside of marriage
- **Wrong time of day** — she was at that well *alone* at noon precisely because she was avoiding people

By **every metric her world used to measure human value and credibility, she was disqualified. She was the last person anyone would have chosen.**

Yet, Jesus chose her first.

Not the disciples. Not a synagogue leader. Not a Samaritan elder. *Her.*

And she didn't go back with a polished testimony or a theological treatise; she went back with the most powerful, raw, honest message imaginable:

"Come see a man who told me everything I ever did."

That's it. **No training. No credentials. No preparation. Just an encounter,** and a willingness to go tell it.



The Influence of Greek Thought on Jewish Practice

Scholars note that the strict seclusion of women in first-century Judaism was not original to the Torah — it was largely imported from Greek cultural influence following Alexander the Great's conquests. The Talmudic restrictions on women participating in synagogue life mirrored Hellenistic household codes more than Mosaic Law. Jesus, in many ways, was calling people back to what Scripture actually said — and forward to something even greater.



Roman Women — Status by Class

In the Roman world, freedoms available to women were almost entirely determined by wealth and class. Aristocratic women could own property, manage estates, and wield informal political influence through powerful husbands or sons. Lower-class and enslaved women had virtually none of these options. The woman at the well, drawing her own water, was clearly not among the elite. She was a working woman, marginalized by circumstance, with no social safety net.
