

# Lesson 5 Notes

John 4:1-30

## Focus Verse

"But whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (John 4:14)

## Outline

- A Divine Appointment – John 4:1-6
- A Life-Altering Conversation – John 4:7-26
- A Transformed Woman – John 4:27-30

## Engage

**Everyone seeks satisfaction.** Our hearts are bottomless pits of discontent. Whether we admit it or not, we desperately strive for relief from the restless void that lurks deep within. Children often seek satisfaction in new toys, friends, or parental approval. As we grow up, we pursue fulfillment through education, popularity, or athletic achievements. As adults, we think a bigger house, more money, a better job, or a healthier body will finally quench our thirst and ease our fears of not measuring up. But inevitably, we find ourselves disappointed, disillusioned, and exhausted. Yet we seek more. Where does true satisfaction lie?

Ministering to people, Jesus moved from a private evening conversation with a puzzled, pious Jewish man to a tender midday appointment with a sinful, shunned Samaritan woman. Carrying fear and shame along with her water jug, this woman encountered Jesus. He engaged her in conversation to gently expose her sin and offer a powerful solution. He invited her to drink from His spring of living water that would quench her every thirst and never run dry. Jesus offers this same living water to all who come to Him. **Only Jesus can fully satisfy our deepest longings.** Nothing in this world will ever be enough. Those who seek fulfillment in Christ experience freedom and fellowship with Him. By the power of His indwelling Holy Spirit, Jesus transforms lives. He enables His people to worship God genuinely in spirit and truth.

## ✦ A Divine Appointment – John 4:1-6

John recorded the second of three successive, life-changing encounters Jesus had with individuals:

- Nicodemus the Pharisee (3:1-21)
- Samaritan woman (4:1-30)
- Gentile official (4:43-54)

Though Nicodemus did not respond immediately, each of these spiritually thirsty people became a witness to Jesus. Individually, each encountered the source of abundant life and eternal satisfaction.<sup>1</sup> Each represents people Jesus came to seek and save—the Jew, the Samaritan, and the Gentile. Jesus would later command His disciples to follow this pattern in their Great Commission—to witness “in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”<sup>2</sup>

## From Judea – 4:1-3

After His nighttime meeting with Nicodemus, Jesus traveled south with His disciples from Jerusalem to the Judean countryside. The Pharisees’ hostility toward Jesus steadily grew as they observed His ministry. The fact that Jesus’s disciples were baptizing more people than John the Baptist did not escape the Pharisees’ attention and caused them grave concern. **Because His rising popularity would soon provoke direct conflict with the current religious establishment, Jesus led His disciples out of Judea toward Galilee to avoid a premature confrontation.**

## Through Samaria – 4:4

Though Israel was only 120 miles (190 km) from north to south, the land was divided into three territories. The province of Samaria lay between Judea in the south and Galilee in the north. The shortest travel route between Jerusalem and Galilee passed through Samaria. **Jews, however, often took the six-day journey around Samaria—across the Jordan River and east through Perea.**

Why would Jewish travelers take this detour? **Bitter distrust and conflict had long separated Jews and Samaritans.** Their fierce rivalry stretched back more than 700 years to the days of the Assyrian Empire. Assyria crushed the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BC, taking captive and deporting most of the population. To replace the exiled Israelites, Assyria forcibly resettled peoples from other conquered lands in Samaria.<sup>3</sup> The Israelite population who remained intermarried with imported Gentile settlers in direct violation of God’s command.<sup>4</sup> Their descendants combined the worship of other gods with a confused belief in the God of Israel.<sup>5</sup> This represents the Jewish version of the origin of the Samaritan people, while the Samaritans tell a different story. Traveling Israelites would cross back over the Jordan toward Galilee to avoid the “contamination” of Samaria.

**Samaritans accepted only the five books of Moses (the Pentateuch) as authoritative Scripture.**

Centuries before, when Jewish exiles returned from Babylon to Jerusalem, the Samaritans’ offer to help rebuild God’s temple was rejected.<sup>6</sup> Later, around 110 BC, the Jewish king John Hyrcanus attacked Samaria and burned down the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim. A century later, during the period of Roman rule in Judea, a group of Samaritans defiled the Jerusalem temple with bones of dead people.<sup>7</sup>

With this history in mind, Jesus seems to deliberately take the direct route to Galilee through Samaria. When we read, “Now he *had to go* through Samaria” (emphasis added), we sense the Lord had a predetermined appointment. **Jesus broke with the bitterness of history out of divine necessity.** He intentionally bypassed centuries of hostility to reach a despised and discontented woman to whom He would extend a gift of love.<sup>8</sup>

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1. **Life in His Name:** John 20:31
  2. **Great Commission:** Acts 1:8
  3. **Samaria settlement:** 2 Kings 17:24-34
  4. **Intermarriage:** Deuteronomy 7:3-5
  5. **Mixed faith:** 2 Kings 17:41
  6. **Opposed temple:** Ezra 4:1-5
  7. Josephus, Antiquities 18.2.2 §22
  8. **Love:** 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

## Jacob's Well – 4:5-6

Jesus's route through Samaria followed the ridge of land that passed by Sychar, the location of Jacob's Well. Scholars today identify two possible locations for the village of Sychar: ancient Shechem at the foot of Mount Gerizim, or modern-day Askar on the slope of Mount Ebal. Scripture does not record Jacob digging this particular well, but Shechem was where the patriarch Jacob first bought land in Canaan.<sup>9</sup> Jacob seems to have included this land in his deathbed gift to his son Joseph. When God delivered His people from slavery in Egypt, the Israelites brought Joseph's bones with them and buried his bones at Shechem.<sup>10</sup> A well more than 100 feet (30 meters) deep can still be seen at this spot.

Jesus and His disciples arrived at the well at midday when the heat was most intense. Exhausted from His long journey, Jesus needed physical refreshment. So He sat by Jacob's Well. While the disciples went into the nearest town to buy food, Jesus set the stage for His interaction with a spiritually thirsty and emotionally weary woman.

## ✦ A Life-Altering Conversation – John 4:7-26

Jesus's exchange with this Samaritan woman is the Lord's longest recorded conversation in the Gospel accounts. Jesus loves to pursue human hearts. In this encounter, Jesus probes into the heart of the Samaritan woman, inviting her to see what she truly desired—the "living water" that only He provides.

## Jesus Meets Us Where We Are

In John 3 and 4, Jesus encounters two vastly different people, demonstrating His love and desire for all He meets to know and believe in Him.

Nicodemus	Samaritan Woman
Came to Jesus at night	Conversation at midday
Initiated conversation with Jesus	Conversation initiated by Jesus
Thorough knowledge of Scripture	Knew Samaritans' mixed religion
Fully Jewish	Despised Jews
Moral and religious	Five failed relationships; living with man outside marriage
Highly respected man	Outcast woman
Rich and influential	Poor and powerless
Named	Nameless
Slow to believe and receive	Quick to believe and receive
Honored Jesus later	Confessed and shared her faith in Jesus immediately

9. Jacob's land: Genesis 33:18-19

10. Joseph's burial: Joshua 24:32

## Developing a Relationship – 4:7-9

### Taking the Initiative – 4:7-8

While the disciples were in town, the woman arrived at the well. **Drawing water at noon, the hottest time of the day, was unusual.** Water's necessity for daily chores led local women to gather early each day at the well where they could enjoy conversations with one another. **Perhaps this woman came later to avoid encountering her peers.**

Imagine this woman's surprise when she observed Jesus sitting at the well. As a Jewish rabbi, Jesus would most likely have **withdrawn 20-30 feet from the well** to indicate His permission for her to approach. **Men did not usually converse with women publicly. Certainly no Jewish man dared to speak to a Samaritan woman.** **Cultural limitations did not limit Jesus.** Instead He took the initiative to speak with her.

"Will you give me a drink?" asked Jesus, who was tired, thirsty, and in need of a cup of cool water. **Jesus's desire to meet this woman's deeper need mattered more than His thirst.** **Jesus knows the hearts of all people.**<sup>11</sup> **Jesus saw a wounded heart and the unsatisfied thirst of this woman's soul.**

**By asking for water, Jesus placed Himself in her care.** Our Lord was thoughtful, unselfish, empathetic, understanding, and humble as He sought to win the confidence of this lonely woman.

### Woman's Reply – 4:9

**Surprised that Jesus would speak to her,** this woman replied, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" **The Lord deliberately broke down manmade cultural barriers and began His divine process of softening this woman's heart.**

## Introduction to Living Water – 4:10-12

**Jesus's request spurred the woman's interest, if not her confidence.** She likely did not realize His intent to awaken her desire for what she desperately needed. **With patience and love, Jesus progressively revealed Himself as the giver of soul-satisfying living water.**

### Jesus's Offer – 4:10

Four points stand out in Jesus's offer of "living water":

- **Living water is God's gift.**
- **Living water is tied to Jesus's identity.**
- **Living water is available to those who ask.**
- **Jesus gladly gives living water.**

The woman still saw Jesus as an ordinary man. Jesus graciously revealed His true identity to her. **She needed to recognize Him as the Messiah.** Only Jesus can give God's gift of living water to those who ask.

**Living water refers to fresh, flowing spring water, rather than the still, stagnant water in a cistern.** In the Old Testament, God said, **"They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water."**<sup>12</sup>

11. Knows hearts: John 2:25

12. Living water: Jeremiah 2:13; Zechariah 14:8

**Jesus's offer of living water includes the Holy Spirit, who gives eternal life.**<sup>13</sup> The Holy Spirit indwells all who receive Jesus, producing an inner spring of joy that continually renews and satisfies the heart of the true believer.

## Woman's Reply – 4:11-12

The woman's reply reveals that her mind remained fixed on the impracticality of Jesus drawing fresh water from a 100-foot (30-meter) deep well. **Jesus seemed to offer the impossible.**

As if uncertain how to respond, she blurted out, "Are you greater than our father, Jacob?" **Did her comment express an accusative or defensive reply?** Perhaps the woman's thoughts turned toward the promise accepted by the Samaritans that God would send a prophet like Moses—one who could produce water out of a rock.

## Divine Satisfaction – 4:13-15

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. **Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.**"

### Temporary Satisfaction – 4:13

Ordinary water cannot permanently satisfy. Earthly pleasures can only temporarily quench thirst, and emptiness soon returns. This woman's unhappy life left her emotionally thirsty and continually unsatisfied. **Without God, earthly gifts come up empty.**

### Eternal Satisfaction – 4:14

Jesus's words reach beyond this woman to us. **To drink the living water Jesus promises means He meets our deepest inmost needs.** Through faith in Jesus, we find true love, peace, joy, and meaning. Jesus satisfies our soul's deepest thirst immediately and eternally.


Inevitable trials come to every person. **Believers find that God's gift of living water produces profound contentment and peace in Him no matter what life brings.** As we trust Him, we gain unshakeable confidence in His wise and loving purposes, even in our darkest hours.<sup>14</sup>

### Desire for Satisfaction – 4:15

This woman's reply represents another example of people misunderstanding Jesus by being too literal.<sup>15</sup> She missed the spiritual symbolism of the living water. However, Jesus, always patient, continued to probe and stir within her a desire for continual satisfaction. **As Jesus continued to unfold His revelation of Himself, she began to want what Jesus offered and asked for this gift.**

## Conviction of Sin – 4:16-18

### Confronting the Truth – 4:16

Always the Great Physician,<sup>16</sup> Jesus gently opened a wound in this woman's heart so His divine healing could begin. "Go," Jesus said, "call your husband." **Conviction of sin is the first step in receiving living water from Jesus.** 

13. Holy Spirit: John 6:63; 7:37-39

14. Contentment: Romans 8:28; Philippians 4:11; 1 Timothy 6:6; Hebrews 13:5

15. Misunderstanding: John 2:19-22; 3:4

16. Great Physician: Mark 2:17

## Partial Confession – 4:17a

“I have no husband,” she replied. Imagine the tension and likely shame this woman might have felt. Yet the man standing before her came not to condemn but to save.<sup>17</sup> She gave a truthful but incomplete answer—the man with whom she was living was not her husband. **Jesus would expose her situation, shining His light on what she attempted to conceal.**

## Jesus’s Full Knowledge – 4:17b-18

**Jesus knows our hearts—He understands our hurts and comprehends our sin.** In the wake of five failed relationships, this woman likely felt hopeless. Resigned to failure and scorn, she may have seen no other choice than to live with a man out of wedlock.

Rather than condemn, Jesus called her to see her sin and her true state from God’s perspective. In compassion, Jesus revealed He knew her completely. The secrets of her heart were open to Him.<sup>18</sup> Jesus’s words did not scold or condemn but offered hope. Jesus loved this woman deeply. Knowing the worst, Jesus would offer His best.

## One Worthy of Worship – 4:19-24

### Misplaced Worship – 4:19-20

**This woman recognized Jesus as a prophet but would discover He is so much more.** Was she repenting or changing the topic because Jesus was so close to seeing her deepest hurts? Either way, her shift in the conversation allowed Jesus to continue to offer hope.

**Like eyes adjusting from deep darkness to dazzling light, this woman could not yet fully comprehend everything about Jesus.** The only religion she had known mixed false religions and an abridged version of the Old Testament. Samaritans believed their own version of history that revised some facts. Their altered beliefs elevated themselves over the hated Jews and their own Mount Gerizim over the temple in Jerusalem.

### True Worship – 4:21-24

Jesus cited the past, present, and glorious future. He revealed the profound impact of living water. **A time would come when all who believe—Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles—would worship the one true God in Spirit and in truth.**

### A Prophecy – 4:21

God symbolically dwelled in Jerusalem’s temple. **Jesus promised that a time would come when there would no longer be one place of worship.** All the symbolism of the temple, especially the sacrifices, pointed toward God’s Son.<sup>19</sup> Jesus’s sacrifice on the cross provided the only way to renewed fellowship with God.<sup>20</sup>

### God’s Revelation in the Old Testament – 4:22

As He continued, Jesus corrected the woman’s wrong assumptions. He addressed the false worship of the Samaritans—no small matter. Jesus stated, **“You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.”** **God first revealed Himself to the Jews and through the Old Testament.** And through the Jews came the promised Messiah.

17. **Save not condemn:** John 3:17

18. **Knows our hearts:** 1 Samuel 16:7; Psalm 44:21; 1 Corinthians 14:25; Hebrews 4:12-13

19. **Temple sacrifices:** Deuteronomy 12:11, 13-14; 16:5-6; 1 Kings 12:25-30; Hebrews 9

20. **Only way:** John 14:6; Romans 5:1-2

## Worship in Spirit and Truth – 4:23-24

Salvation would come first through the Jews but would not be restricted to them.<sup>21</sup> Jesus repeated the phrase “a time is coming.” But here He added, “and has now come.” **Jesus’s presence merged the past and the future, offering to all the world full entry into His kingdom through faith in Him.** Jesus’s perfect life, atoning crucifixion, and death-defying resurrection and ascension inaugurated the eternal life He promised. The Holy Spirit would be poured into believers.<sup>22</sup> This same Spirit now lives permanently within all who receive Jesus.<sup>23</sup> As Jesus foretold, no temple currently stands in Jerusalem.<sup>24</sup> **The temple of God is built within the hearts of those indwelt by the Holy Spirit,<sup>25</sup> enabling His people to worship in Spirit and truth.**

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## Meet the Messiah – 4:25-26

### Woman’s Desire – 4:25

The woman confessed longingly, “I know that Messiah ... is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” **Though not Jewish, this woman knew the Messiah was also meant for her.** After Jesus had dug a well in this woman’s heart, she revealed her real need. **Jesus would reveal the real answer.**

### Revelation of Jesus – 4:26

“I, the one speaking to you—I am he.” **Sometimes the simplest words carry the deepest meaning.** The Messiah—the Savior of the world, God’s only Son, the perfect Lamb—revealed Himself to this broken, previously hopeless, lonely outcast from a small village of an idolatrous nation. She was met and understood by Jesus. Through this unexpected, unconventional encounter, this woman believed and trusted the Light of the World.

## ✦ A Transformed Woman – John 4:27-30

### Disciples Return – 4:27

Surprised and speechless, the disciples returned with their groceries. Yet no one asked what they all wondered. **Why was Jesus, a Jew, speaking to someone who was both a Samaritan and a woman?** Confused, the disciples remained unaware that this woman would soon join their cause in telling the world about Jesus. **Jesus came for anyone and everyone who would believe in Him.**

### New Possession – 4:28-29

This woman approached the well for physical refreshment. She left with so much more! She encountered Jesus, her Savior. His boundless gift of eternal refreshment was not hers alone but meant to be shared. **Like the first disciples who followed Jesus, she left behind what she had.** As if on wings, she hurried to tell others the good news, “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. **Could this be the Messiah?**”

21. First the Jews: Romans 1:16

22. Spirit poured out: Acts 2:1-4, 33; 10:45

23. Sealed by the Holy Spirit: Ephesians 1:13

24. Jerusalem temple: Matthew 24:2

25. Temple of the heart: 1 Corinthians 3:16

# Transformed into New Life

## The Doctrine of Redemption

The Samaritan woman lived an empty life carrying an empty jar. Then she encountered Jesus—the One who offers life to the full. Enslaved by her sin and seeking fleeting satisfaction, this outcast woman's life seemed to offer little value in a broken world. Yet Jesus found this woman precious in His sight, and He graciously gave of His time, His love, and His life. **Like this woman, all people are broken by sin and ripe for redemption.**

The term “redemption” comes from the ancient world of commerce where enslaved people were bought and sold. **Jesus has purchased, or redeemed us, from sin's slavery.** Jesus died in our place. His blood frees us from sin's penalty and power—and ultimately sin's presence. He transforms our lives, declaring us righteous in His sight.

The Old Testament story of Hosea's purchase of Gomer exemplifies this transaction.<sup>1</sup> In the New Testament, Peter advances this truth in 1 Peter 1:18-19: “It was not with perishable things such as silver and gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.” **At the moment of our redemption, we become Christ's possession.**<sup>2</sup> We are redeemed *from* our empty lives and *for* belonging to Jesus.

**Failure to accept Christ's redemption leads to an empty life void of God's forgiveness and unable to experience God's love or wisdom.** Those who refuse Christ's sacrifice remain under God's wrath and will live separated from God forever.<sup>3</sup>

Understanding the price Christ paid for our redemption magnifies His grace for sinners. God did not abandon us to our helpless estate.<sup>4</sup> **Only through faith in God's Son, Jesus Christ, can our lives be redeemed and transformed.** The Holy Spirit seals and indwells believers, who are reborn into a new life and can live a life filled with joy even in the most difficult circumstances. **God's children live as salt and light on earth,**<sup>5</sup> sharing the good news of the gospel. The redeemed are assured they will worship in God's presence forever.

1. **Hosea and Gomer:** Hosea 3:1-2

2. **Christ's possession:** Romans 6:22-23; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 1:7

3. **Eternal separation:** Mark 16:16; John 3:18, 36; 5:28-29; 8:24; 15:6; Revelation 21:8

4. **God did not abandon us:** John 3:16-18

5. **Salt and light:** Matthew 5:13-16

## People's Response – 4:30

Filled with effusive joy, this woman's message must have overflowed with profoundly convincing truth.<sup>26</sup> **The same townspeople who considered her an outcast ran to meet the only One who could satisfy their thirst.** **Only Jesus can fully satisfy our deepest longings.** The curious townspeople who headed to that Samaritan well found Jesus waiting, prepared to give them all they truly needed.

26. **Overflow of the heart:** Matthew 12:34



# ✦ Take to Heart

## Hold Fast

After His nighttime encounter with Nicodemus, the respected Pharisee, Jesus chose to travel through the forbidden territory of Samaria. By a well in the heat of the noonday, He met an outcast woman. **Jesus pursues all people—both the favored and the forgotten.** A thirst that cannot be satisfied by anything or anyone other than God abides within us. The greatest need of all people is to know Him. Yet Jesus comes to us, and He comes *for* us.

Jesus shows us that we remain thirsty, like the Samaritan woman, when we search for satisfaction apart from Him. **Our sin and this world's pleasures cannot satisfy the deepest longings of our hearts.** In loving grace and with no condemnation, Jesus lifts the cover of our lives to expose our sin and reveal the dissatisfied heart within.

Freed from the burden of our sin, Jesus opens our eyes to new life in Him. **Complete satisfaction lies in Jesus.** In Jesus, the Samaritan woman found true love, compassion, understanding, wisdom, and power. She had a story to tell. This new, overturned, exciting life propelled her from being rejected to telling others of the Messiah.<sup>27</sup> The salvation Jesus brings not only deals with sin, it enables redeemed people to walk with God.

## Apply It

Do you feel like you never measure up? Who or what has continually failed to meet your expectations? The fragmented relationships, bruised egos, and smeared reputations of this life can paralyze us with disappointment and doubt. **Jesus continues to love us in our brokenness. He continues to pursue us.** Jesus came from heaven into this shattered world to save us. **He comes to where we are to reach us as we are.** His love cannot be deterred by our sin. How will you turn to the only One who came to redeem our broken lives?

A relentless thirst grips every single person today. The pursuit of wealth, notoriety, possessions, and acclaim leads many to want more and more, only to find that fulfillment escapes them. Jesus alone offers what truly satisfies. Jesus knows we need more than a cool drink of water on a scorching day. **Jesus provides newfound peace and joy in this life and for eternity. Only in Him can our souls find rest.** Where do you find satisfaction—in things of God or things of this world? Turn to Jesus. Ask Him to satisfy you with the living water that springs up into eternal life.

**People who respond to Jesus's offer of eternal life have good news to share.** The Samaritan woman did not understand everything about Jesus and eternity, but she responded in life-transforming faith to what she did know. She ran to her town and shared what she knew. Jesus welcomes all who turn to Him and transforms those who believe in Him to become salt and light on earth.<sup>28</sup> Do you hesitate to talk about Jesus because you are afraid of questions you cannot answer? If you have accepted the living water Jesus Christ offers, you have a story to tell. Will you turn to Him and ask to who He is calling you to share His good news? What a privilege!

27. Witness: Matthew 28:18-20; John 4:39-40

28. Salt and light: Matthew 5:14-16