

# A Jew and a Samaritan Walk into a Well, Part 2

John 4:1-42 (Part 2: John 4:19-42)

7 April 2019 | Grace Bible Church Corinda | Ben Shannon

**Big Question:** Jesus calls all people to worship him.

**Big Idea:** Who worships God properly?

## Introduction

At Grace Bible Church Corinda, we love having visitors.

If you're here for the first or second time this morning... a big G'day to you!

We're glad that you could join us as we gather together to worship the living God this morning.

If you're searching or you've got questions about spiritual things, we believe that the Bible has the answers you're looking for.

Only God can give us the answers to our deepest longings and those answers are found in knowing Jesus Christ.

Our sign out the front has the words, "All welcome" on it.

Every so often though, I hear about someone who has a conversation where they invite someone they know to church and their friend says, "I've been waiting for you to ask!"

Anyone who's spent time in a church will probably assume that the invitation's always there for people to come and find out more.

But many people don't know whether they're welcome or not.

Pressing into that a little bit more, I've met a number of people from different cultural backgrounds – especially international students – who want to find out about Christianity while they're in here.

Australia is a western country and in many places in the world, they assume that mean it must be Christian.

I've had a number of international students ask me whether you have to be a Christian already to come to church.

The answer is, "No!"

If you'd like to find out about Christianity, we'd love to tell you.

The message of Christianity – the message of what God has done in Jesus isn't exclusive to people like us.

Christianity began in the Middle East and it's spread around the world.

Today, in Asia, Africa and South America, the gospel is going gangbusters.

Because the news about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is great news for everyone, regardless of your gender or background or social status.

People from all walks of life need to hear about Jesus and church is a great place to do that.

Before we get into our passage this morning, would you please pray with me?

*Heavenly Father, you're the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. You're the God of Abdul in Iraq and Atu in Ghana and you're our God too. Thank you that you have rescued us from our sin through Jesus. Please satisfy our longings, allay our fears and make known to us what's unknown through the preaching of your word so that we might leave this morning full of hope and joy. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## Outline

I've cut this long section that goes from verse one to verse 42 of John chapter four into two.

The title I've given it is "A Jew and a Samaritan Walk into a Well," which sounds like a bad joke.

Which is intentional, not because this passage is a bad joke, but because like this passage, those kinds of jokes are made because of cultural divides.

And this passage revolves around a massive cultural and religious divide.

Last week, we saw Jesus was cutting through the region of Samaria on his way from Jerusalem to Judea.

Along the way, he met a woman at a well and asked her for a drink.

As the conversation developed, we saw that although she couldn't offer him a drink, he could offer her something much better than water from a well – living water, eternal life.

And with that, only Jesus could satisfy her greatest needs and deepest desires.

We're looking at Part Two this week: **Jesus calls all people to worship him.**

- Gospel Universality (19-26)
- Gospel Urgency (27-38)
- Gospel Uptake (39-42)

## Gospel Universality (19-26)

Jesus and the Samaritan woman were talking next to this well, when Jesus asked about her husband.

That's where we stopped last week – at verse 18.

Even though they'd never met, Jesus knew that she wasn't married to the man she was living with.

And he knew all about her relationship history, including that she'd been married five times before.

If that happened to a woman today, I'd imagine she'd probably be more than a bit freaked out, wondering what kind of stalker he is.

But Jesus couldn't track her on social media or look up some kind of government file.

The only way he could know about her past was by being supernaturally inspired.

That's why she concludes that he must be some kind of prophet, in fact, **THE** prophet.

Many people think that she tried to change the subject because Jesus was getting a bit too close to personal areas of her life that she didn't want to talk about.

I'm not so sure.

Is it really all that surprising that when Jewish man talks to a Samaritan woman about drinking the same water, that she wants to address the elephant in the room?

Last week, we talked a little bit about the animosity between the Jews and the Samaritans which comes out in the "we" and "yous" language that she uses.

This divide wasn't just cultural, there was a deep religious divide too.

Jew and Samaritans didn't start in the same **PLACE**, spiritually (if you'll excuse the pun).

The Samaritans weren't allowed to worship in the temple in Jerusalem.

So, they built their own temple on top of Mount Gerizim.

From where they were talking at the well, both Jesus and the Samaritan woman would've been able to see that mountain.

How did the Samaritans justify building a second temple?

It might seem a little bit strange because the Old Testament's quite clear that the temple was meant to be built in Jerusalem.

Well, the Samaritans only used the Pentateuch – the first five books of the Bible.

The wisdom books weren't on their radar.

They didn't think any of the prophets (major ones like Jeremiah or Isaiah or minor ones like Amos or Obadiah) were legit – that also included the history books, which are often called the "former prophets".

From the Pentateuch, both Jews and Samaritans agreed that God's name needed a place to dwell, Deuteronomy 12:5.

But without the later books, exactly where was a bit of a mystery.

The Samaritans' tradition said that Mount Gerizim is where Abraham met Melchizedek and where he went to sacrifice his son Isaac.

It was also the place that all the blessings were to be called out from in the book of Deuteronomy,<sup>1</sup> so in the Samaritans' minds, they could justify Mount Gerizim as the kind of holy place where the temple should be.

So, in about 388BC, under Alexander the Great, they built their own temple on Mount Gerizim.<sup>2</sup>

It was destroyed in about 128BC by a Jewish king, but even after the temple was gone the Samaritans continued to worship there.

The Samaritans retaliated in about 6-9BC by desecrating the temple in Jerusalem by putting a dead man's bones in there.

In 2007, there were about 700 people who still identify themselves as Samaritans and they continue sacrificing on Mount Gerizim today.

The woman at the well wanted to know from Jesus who was right – the Jews or the Samaritans?

When he answers her, Jesus dodges both 'Option A' and 'Option B' by coming up with his own: 'Option C'.

"Believe me!" Jesus says. Or it's actually better to say, "Believe in me".

Jerusalem or Mount Gerizim – it doesn't really matter because soon you won't need to worship God the Father in any particular place.

Place was so important to both Jews and Samaritans but the hour was coming when there would be a change in worship.

When Jesus says "the hour" in John's gospel, he's always referring to the cross.

If you were reading John's gospel in one sitting, you couldn't help but remember what Jesus said in the temple at the end of chapter two.

His body would be the temple.

The Jews would destroy the temple and he'd raise it in three days.

That would've been scandalous on so many levels.

Firstly, Jesus is saying that Samaritans can worship God as Father!

Jesus is saying that people outside of Israel could become God's spiritual children.

Which, according to 1:13, is exactly what Jesus came to do.

That would've been shocking to Jewish ears, even though it shouldn't have been!

Salvation comes from the Jews as Jesus says in verse 22.

But it was never meant to stop with them.

According to what God promised Abraham, a true Jew isn't just blessed with knowing God though.

They were also meant to be a blessing to all kinds of people from all nations.

Secondly, Jesus was saying that the **WAY** Jews would worship would change too.

For the record, the Jews had worshipped God in the right way, verse 22.

But only because the Samaritans didn't have as much of God's revelation of himself as the Jews did.

Worshipping in a physical temple was God accommodating his people for a period of time until he built a better one.

What does this new worship look like?

The kind of worship we give is tied to the kind of God we're worshipping.

God isn't physical and fleshly like us, he's divine.

We only get to see him when he reveals himself to us – the Word had to **BECOME** flesh.

That's what John means when he says that "God is spirit" in verse 24.

True worship, then, is in Spirit and truth.

I think the NIV gets it right when they give Spirit a capital "S".

That phrase sounds really deep and religious, but what does it mean?

I've read a lot of people who I'm not sure know quite what it means, but I'll give you my best shot.

For a start, you're not a true worshipper because you go to a particular place.

Worship of God isn't tied to one location because the physical place isn't all that important.

Jesus is the new temple.

Australians or people from Chad or Argentina or France don't have to travel to Jerusalem or Mount Gerizim to worship in him.

That has implications for this building.

There's nothing particularly special about this building.

It's dedicated to God so that we have a place where we can worship him rather than being out in the rain and the cold.

This building makes worshipping easier, but it's not necessary.

You can worship God just as legitimately in a park or on a boat.

True worship can only happen through the Holy Spirit.

In some traditions, that means having some kind of other-worldly spiritual experience in worship, but that's not what it means.

The role of the Holy Spirit is to connect us to God.

He's also described as the "Spirit of truth" a number of times in John's gospel.<sup>3</sup>

Only those who've been born again by the Spirit can see the kingdom, let alone worship God.

And true worship is done in truth.

That means we worshipping knowingly, just like Jesus said the Jews.

But we know God in Jesus Christ because (as we're told in chapter one) it's in Jesus that God fully shows himself.

In John's gospel, Jesus is the truth.<sup>4</sup>

True worship is possible because of the truth that Jesus has died so that our sin can be forgiven.

True worship focuses on the great truths of what God has done in Jesus.

What does that look like?

Some church traditions would say that worshipping in spirit and truth is all about the feeling of being connected to God.

And then often they use music and lighting to create that feeling.

If you need loud music or soft music, bright lights or mood lighting, new songs or old songs (this cuts both ways), or a smoke machine to worship Jesus, then it's not true worship.

I don't want to throw the baby out with the bath water.

I'm not saying that our physical environment doesn't matter.

Where we meet can definitely help or hinder our worship.

But having or NOT (as some traditions sometimes pride themselves) having these things doesn't make our worship authentic in spirit and truth.

Worship in Spirit and truth is thoughtfully grounded in what God has done in Jesus.

Well, it seems like the Samaritan woman isn't completely sure.

What she does know is that the Samaritan Messiah, *Taheb*, would come and explain everything to them.

The Samaritans were waiting for the great prophet that God had promised in Deuteronomy 18 to come.

And they believed that there wouldn't be another prophet until him, that's why they didn't believe in other prophets.<sup>5</sup>

Messiah will be the umpire on these matters, she said.

Jesus replies by saying that he's the Messiah, verse 26.

God revealed himself to Moses in a burning bush by calling himself, I AM.<sup>6</sup>

Jesus reveals himself to the Samaritan woman by the well by calling himself, "*egō eimi*, I am."

Jesus is clearly revealing himself as God, saying that he's the prophet who's been sent by God.

And his coming opened the way for all people to worship him.

Jesus' death on the cross was for all people.

It doesn't matter that you're white and Anglo, Asian or Callithumpian, our middle-eastern Jewish saviour even died for every kind of people in the world.

You don't have to be Australian, you simply need to repent of your sins and trust in Jesus.

His free gift is that your sins can be forgiven and you can receive eternal life.

We no longer need to worship in Jerusalem.

True worship can happen anywhere that it's done in Spirit and truth.

And so people from everywhere are invited to come and worship Jesus.

In his final words to his disciples before he rose into heaven, Jesus said:

*Acts 1:8 (NIV11) <sup>8</sup> But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

This is the key reasons that we, as a church support missionaries.

So that people all around the globe can hear this good news.

And so that international students can hear about Jesus and become true worshippers when they come to study in Australia.

Because Jesus is universal, he's the only way for anyone to be saved.

### **Gospel Urgency (27-38)**

Secondly, we see that there is gospel urgency.

The disciples come back from their shopping trip.

If you can remember back to verse 8, they'd left Jesus alone at the well and gone into town to buy supplies.

They come back to find Jesus – a Jewish bloke – talking to a Samaritan woman.

This was quite a remarkable situation – pretty much unheard of... and yet the disciples say nothing.

John explicitly tells us that they didn't ask the woman or Jesus about their intentions.

Why?

From the way the rest of the book unfolds, I'm not sure that it's because they trust Jesus completely.

It seems that they had their mind on other things, which made them largely indifferent to the Samaritan woman.

Instead of being particularly interested in her, they were much more interested in food.

They're wondering if lunch has gone cold on the way back from town and whether Jesus has had anything to eat.

Jesus isn't interested in their food though.

Yes, he's the word who became flesh and he needed to eat – that isn't the point.

But he's showing that there's more important food to be concerned with.

Richer nourishment drives him than physical food.

In fact, he's got food that they know nothing about.

This confuses the poor disciples.

They're wondering if someone came along with some nosh while they were gone.

Like usual, they've got completely the wrong end of the stick though.

Jesus has much bigger priorities than eating bread.

The thing that really nourishes him is doing the work his Father gave him.

Jesus saw that there are people who are hungry and need to be satisfied... he'd just met one.

So he wants to do his father's mission.

Verse 34:

*John 4:34 (NIV11) <sup>34</sup> "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.*

His job was to satisfy spiritual hunger, rather than physical hunger.

And there was an urgency to the mission.

Jesus compares his mission to what they knew about wheat.

When you plant wheat, it takes time to grow.

It's green for most of the time that it grows.

But when it reaches maturity, it turns white in colour – in fact, I always think that it looks more like it's dead.

The Jews had a saying that said that there's normally four months between sowing and harvesting.

Jesus says, open your eyes and look around you.

Wake up and see.

*John 4:35b (NIV) I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest!*

There's no need to wait... now is the time for the harvest to begin.

With the woman by the well, Jesus has already begun the harvest.

The crop he's interested in is people, in this case a Samaritan woman.

As well see, she and others just like her are ready to receive eternal life.

As the reaper of the crop, Jesus isn't standing around, waiting.

Jesus offers his disciples a share in harvesting the crop.

He's offering them a share in his food, when they'd been the ones who were trying to offer food to him.

Just like the woman offered him water and Jesus ended up offering her water instead.

They went to town to get food, when really they should've gone to give the food of eternal life.

They didn't plant the crop, but they get the privilege of helping to bring it in.

They didn't have to do the hard work of sowing, but they get all the reward of reaping the harvest.

And everyone is happy because it means eternal life for more and more people.

You can't help but wonder if he was anticipating the mob of Samaritans who even at that moment were coming down the road.

The gospel time had started.

Eternal life is at stake.

The time for reaping wasn't still in the future... it'd already begun.

There's still the same gospel urgency today.

There are people around us who need living water.

Without it, they'll perish.

It's easy for us to lose gospel urgency.

Living life, doing life, takes up so much of our energy.

And rightly so to a degree.

I think that the apostle Paul was well aware of this reality because of what he wrote in 1 Corinthians 7.

Note that he doesn't condemn it at all.

*1 Corinthians 7:33 (NIV11) <sup>33</sup> But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife—*

But it's also true that the affairs of the world can distract us from gospel .

Paul goes on to write:

*1 Corinthians 7:34 (NIV) <sup>34</sup> and his interests are divided.*

There's a very real danger that gospel urgency is lost as we chase cool water rather than living water.

It's a question of balance – we can lose sight of the gospel for the sake of everyday affairs, just as we can lose sight of everyday affairs for the sake of the gospel.

this can affect us personally.

Like in the Parable of the Sower, Jesus talks about the seed that falls amongst the thorns:

*Matthew 13:22 (NIV11) <sup>22</sup> The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life.. choke the word, making it unfruitful.*

And if it affects us, then there will be an effect on others too.

We can be so busy with food that we forget the greater mission and just focus on making it through each day.

We all feel it.

The gospel is unchanging and will last into eternity.

And so we tell ourselves that we can share Jesus whenever.

We think that there's always tomorrow.

"I'll wait for an opportunity to come up and then I'll share about living water."

But there is an expiry date on accepting that gospel.

When Jesus comes back, it'll be too late.

And we don't know when he'll come back.

The gospel is urgent – now is harvest time, friends.

### **Gospel Uptake (39-42)**

Out of all the people that a pious Jew would expect to turn to Messiah, the Samaritans probably would've been at the bottom of the list.

Their response to Jesus was quite overwhelming though.

Can you imagine what it would've been like when this woman rocked up in town?

She was the woman who was the social outcast, the one who avoided everyone else by going to the well in the middle of the day.

She leaves her jug behind and runs straight into town, where she can't stop talking.

Compare her to the disciples after they came back from buying lunch – they didn't even ask the obvious questions.

The Samaritan woman goes off to tell everyone about the man she's met.

She can't stop talking about the latest bloke she met, but instead of thinking, "Here we go again," they're interested.

She tells them that she's met someone who knew everything that she ever did.

Perhaps she was exaggerating because John only records Jesus talking about her husbands, but perhaps he said more.

Either way, she was convinced that he was worth listening to.

Verse 39:

*John 4:39 (NIV11) <sup>39</sup> Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did."*

Testimony is powerful.

2017 research found that for 51% of Australians, "stories/testimonies from people who have experienced change because of their faith [would] attract them to investigate further."<sup>7</sup>

People want to hear about your story of change.

Interestingly though, "hearing from public figures and celebrities who are example of that faith" is one of the top three **repellents** to religion and spirituality.

Most people aren't all that interested in whether or not something's true.

You don't have to look far to see that's the case.

Not just when it comes to religious ideas, but any idea.

What really matters to them is whether or not something works.

Yes, I know that people are spiritually blind and that only God can open their eyes to the gospel, but if they can see that Christianity works, then they're much more likely to give it a hearing.

Your story is a powerful way of leading others to God.

Especially your story of how God has been at work in your life to change you.

Use your story by sharing what God has done – not just when he saved you but also in the everyday.

The rest of the Samaritans were convinced by the woman.

They go to find Jesus and they urge him to stay.

There's no way they're going to let this fish get away.

So they invite him to stay for two days.

During those two days, the word of the woman was replaced by the words of Jesus.

John really digs down into what it means for people to believe.

If you were reading John's gospel in one go, the words you'd just read at the end of chapter 2 would come to mind.

There were all the people at the Passover festival who believed in Jesus:

*John 2:24 (NIV11) <sup>24</sup> But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all people.*

The Samaritans believed at first because of the woman's testimony.

But God's words save.

Their belief went to a whole different level when they heard Jesus' words for themselves.

*John 4:42 (NIV11) <sup>42</sup> They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Saviour of the world."*

God's Words are powerful.

They were fortunate enough to hear Jesus' words coming directly from his lips.

The normal way that we expect God to speak today isn't with a loud voice from heaven though.

It's from His holy, powerful, written word – the Bible.

*Hebrews 4:12 (NIV11) <sup>12</sup> For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

As they listened to his words, they discovered that Jesus could be their Saviour.

*John 3:16 (CSB17) <sup>16</sup> For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.*

The Samaritans' conclusion was that Jesus isn't just the Saviour of a particular kind of people – the Jews.

He could be their Saviour because Jesus is the "Saviour of the world," verse 42.

And Jesus can be your Saviour too.

If you trust in his death and resurrection as the solution to your sin, then your sins can be forgiven.

You can walk in new life too.

You can have the joy and hope of eternal life.

The gospel message changes people's lives.

There was gospel uptake.

## Conclusion

As you consider Jesus this morning, what will you do with him.

I hope and pray that you will see that no matter what your background is, Jesus welcomes you.

Regardless of what language you speak, what religion you grew up with or the colour of your skin, Jesus can be your Saviour.

Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> They also said that's where the altar was set up in Deuteronomy 27:4-7, but that was actually across the valley on Mount Ebal.

<sup>2</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities*, 11.321–24.

<sup>3</sup> John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13.

<sup>4</sup> John 1:14; 14:6

<sup>5</sup> Deuteronomy 34:10

<sup>6</sup> Exodus 3:14

<sup>7</sup> McCrindle Faith and Belief 2017

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**Big Idea:** Who worships God properly?

## Discussion Questions

1. Do you think that everyone in our community feels welcome to come to a church? Should they? If so, is there anything we can do to overcome this?
2. How does worship change with Jesus dying on the cross?
3. What does it mean to worship “in Spirit and truth”?
4. Did Jesus need to eat?
5. Do you think there is a gospel harvest today?
6. How can we keep everyday living and gospel urgency in balance?
7. Are you surprised by the McCrindle stats about people’s faith stories?
8. Do you think that Jesus is the Saviour of all people, or only some?