

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
Presbyterian Church

“THE SEEKING AND SATISFYING SAVIOR”

For individual study or group discussion

In Acts 1:8, Jesus tells his disciples that they will be witnesses “*in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*” This widening circle of witness mirrors a pattern evident in Jesus’ own ministry. Long before his ascension, he models the outward flow of the Gospel to all nations. He begins in Jerusalem with his nighttime conversation with Nicodemus, then moves into the Judean countryside, where he and his disciples baptize believers. Next, in John 4:1–26, Jesus travels into Samaria and engages an outsider at Jacob’s well. He continues this trajectory of “*to the end of the earth*” to Galilee where he heals the Gentile official’s dying son (vv. 46–54). Throughout his life, we witness **the seeking and satisfying Savior** offering the living waters of eternal life to all those who thirst.

Jesus seeks the outsider (vv. 1–9)

For over five hundred years, deep ethnic and religious hostility divided Jews and Samaritans. Yet Jesus breaks all social, cultural, and gender boundaries to seek an outsider in Samaria. The encounter with the Samaritan woman reveals the character of God’s upside-down Kingdom, in which Jesus overturns human hierarchies and extends covenantal blessings to outsiders. He converses with the woman at the well as an equal, just as he did earlier with Nicodemus in Jerusalem. In Jesus’ eyes, there is no real difference between a scholarly, male, Jewish religious leader and a lowly foreign woman. Reflecting on the radical social implications of this meeting, New Testament scholar Lynn Cohick observes, “*Jesus challenges social prejudices, and brings visibility and voice to the invisible and silent in society.*”¹

- Read Genesis 24:11–14; 29:4–12; and Exodus 2:15–22. How does reading Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well against the backdrop of these OT “well scenes” (where brides are found at wells) reshape your understanding of the text as a symbolic betrothal site where Jesus (recently identified as the *bridegroom* by John the Baptist in John 3:29) intentionally seeks his covenant bride (the Church) among outsiders?
- How might understanding the historical context influence our interpretation of the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman?

Jesus satisfies the thirsty (vv. 10–26)

When Jesus offers the Samaritan woman “*living water*,” he points beyond physical thirst to the deeper spiritual need for communion with God. This imagery resonates with the prophetic promise of God’s life-giving Spirit in Isaiah 44:3 and 55:1, where water symbolizes abundant blessing and restoration for those who seek the Lord. As New Testament theologian G.K. Beale observes, this living water signifies Jesus himself as the true temple, the source from which eternal life in God’s presence flows (cf. John 7:37–39).² By revealing intimate details of her life, Jesus draws the Samaritan woman into recognition of his messianic identity, and she responds in faith, proclaiming him to her community. (See John 4:28–29)

- Read John 1:47–49. How does Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman mirror that of Nathanael?
- In what ways do Isaiah 44:3, 55:1, and Revelation 22:1 tell the story of divine life-giving water that culminates christologically in Jesus’ self-revelation in the Gospel of John? (cf. John 2:19, 3:16, 4:14, 6:35, and 7:37–38)
- In verse 26, Jesus identifies himself to the woman as “*I am he*” (v. 26, NIV). This is a powerful echo (and the first of 7 times in John) of when God revealed himself to Moses as “*I AM who I AM*” in Exodus 3:14. Why might Jesus have chosen this moment, this woman, to speak this identity? (cf. Galatians 3:28)

DATE: March 8, 2026

SPEAKER: Brian/Aaron

SERIES: The Gospel of John

PASSAGE: John 4:1–26

Family Dinner Table

Crossing a Centuries-Old Divide

In John 4:1–26, the racial, cultural, and theological barriers at Jacob’s well were enormous. When Jesus asked the Samaritan woman for a drink, she was stunned, because “*Jews have no dealings with Samaritans*” (v. 9). That was an understatement! For centuries, hostilities between the Jews and Samaritans had hardened into hatred. After the Assyrian conquest of the northern kingdom in 721 B.C., foreign nations flooded the land and intermarried with the remaining Israelites (2 Kings 17). They blended the worship of the Lord with pagan idols, creating a hybrid faith that faithful Jews considered compromised and corrupt. When the southern exiles returned from Babylon and began rebuilding the temple, the Samaritans offered to help. The Jews rejected them as impostors and enemies (Ezra 4; Nehemiah 4). Resentment festered. Around 400 B.C., the Samaritans built their own temple on Mount Gerizim in rivalry with Jerusalem. In 128 B.C., the Jewish leader John Hyrcanus burned it down, intensifying generations of suspicion and anger. By Jesus’ day, Jews traveling between Judea and Galilee often crossed the Jordan River to avoid Samaritan soil altogether. That was how deep the divide ran. And yet, Jesus walked straight into it.³

- What cultural, relational, racial, or spiritual barriers do you tend to avoid today? How does Jesus’ intentional journey into Samaria challenge you to cross those divides with the Gospel?

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¹ Lynn H. Cohick. *Was the Samaritan Woman Really an Adulteress?* October 2015. Christianity Today. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/2015/10/was-samaritan-woman-really-adulteress/>

² G.K. Beale. *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*. 2004. Downers Grove, IL. InterVarsity Press. 196–197

³ Kenneth E. Bailey. *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*. 2008. Downers Grove, IL. IVP Academic. 201–203