

John 4:7-30 • The Nature of True Worship

Introduction

The theme of this lesson involves the nature of true worship, in that true worship must be done in spirit and in truth. The truth issue is addressed in Jesus confronting the woman's lifestyle and place of worship. The spirit issue is addressed by whether or not she is worshipping (ritual) or has a relationship (Jesus). The application of this overall lesson is to examine yourself (or participating members of a group study to examine their selves) to determine if your own worship involves a relationship, not just a ritual.

⁷There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." ⁸For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

⁹Therefore the Samaritan woman said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)

¹⁰Jesus answered and said to her, "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."

¹¹She said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water?" ¹²You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?"

¹³Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; ¹⁴but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

¹⁵The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw."

¹⁶He said to her, "Go, call your husband and come here."

¹⁷The woman answered and said, "I have no husband."

Jesus said to her, "You have correctly said, 'I have no husband'; ¹⁸for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly."

¹⁹The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. ²⁰Our

[Read v.7-14]

Q: Where was Jesus when He was at the well?

A: Context can be found in verses 1-6. He was in Samaria.

Q: Who were the Samaritans and what kind of relationship did the Jews have with them.

A: The Samaritans were hybrid Jews, the descendants of Jews and other peoples who were brought in from other nations during the Babylonian exile. Some Jews remained in Palestine during the exile and intermarried with the foreigners. Their descendants gathered in the area known as Samaria, which was between Judea and Galilee. The city of Samaria was the capital of the Northern Kingdom which fell in 722 BC to the Assyrian Empire. Relations between Jews and Samaritans were poor, and a Jew would typically have nothing to do with Samaritans. (See the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke.) The Samaritans worshipped at their own mountain, Mt. Gerizim, where they had their own temple. They followed only the first five books of the OT, the books of Moses. Their theology was flawed.

Q: How kosher was it for Jesus to drink water drawn by a Samaritan?

A: Not! (see v. 9)

Q: In v. 10, how does Jesus respond to the woman's question? Did He give her a direct answer? And how does He go directly to the core problem in her life?

A: The key words are "If you knew...." The clear implication is that she doesn't "know" the truth, either about the Samaritan faith or about who Jesus is. He does not directly answer her question but points out to her the flawed theology of the Samaritans, and people in general.

Q: How does Jesus respond to her continued inquiry?

A: He states very clearly the facts. Earthly water satisfies only for a while, but the living water satisfies the soul for all eternity.

[Read v.15-20]

Q: If you were sharing the gospel with a stranger, what would be the next tack in the conversation after v. 15?

A: You would probably ask them if they want to receive the living water, right?

Q: How does Jesus continue the conversation?

A: He very subtly brings up the touchy and uncomfortable issue of personal sin. (v. 16)

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fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.”

Application: How do you feel about those evangelicals who teach that repentance of sin is not a necessary part of the salvation issue, that you only need to “believe”?

Q: How does Jesus not so subtly address the issue of her sin? Does He condemn her? How did He know this?

A: He goes right to the heart of the issue, the fact that she has led a loose life and is presently living in adultery. Note that this fact has nothing to do with the fact that she is a Samaritan. Jesus knew about her sin from His divine perception, the same way He knew about Nathanael sitting under the fig tree in John 1:48.

Q: How does the woman avoid the issue in verse 19?

A: She points the conversation back to Him. She tries to avoid the issue about her personal sin and weaknesses. She brings up theological issues.

Application: How do people turn the conversation away from personal sin? By asking theological questions like, “How can a good and loving God allow innocent people to suffer?” What does this tell us about how we present the Gospel?

[Read v.21-24]

²¹Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. ²²You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. ²⁴God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Q: How does Jesus answer her question and yet point her in the direction that He wants to go? How is Jesus’ statements in verses 21-24 counter-cultural today? Does Jesus ever condemn the woman?

A: He deals directly with the truth, that “salvation is from the Jews.” Nor is He apologetic about it and is not concerned that He might “offend” her by appearing “insensitive” to her belief system. He also states that a time will come when worship will be defined, not on the basis of **where** one worships but **how** one worships. The true worshiper must worship in spirit and in truth; that is, devoid of a geographic place, but that which is a matter of the heart. Jesus never condemns the woman, but condemns the sinful behavior.

Jesus’ statements are counter-cultural in that He is stating that there **is** absolute truth, it can be known, and that His beliefs are right and hers are dead wrong. Today He would be viewed as “intolerant.” He also says, against the assertion of post-modernism, that what she believes is **not** okay.

Q: What does it mean to worship in spirit and in truth?

A: It means that worship must come from the heart and can only involve a relationship with God. It means that there clearly is a right and a wrong when it comes to who and how one worships. One cannot worship effectively while knowingly in sin or embracing false doctrine.

²⁵The woman said to Him, “I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us.”

²⁶Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am He.”

²⁷At this point His disciples came, and they were amazed that He had been speaking with a woman, yet no one said, “What do You seek?” or, “Why do You speak with her?”

²⁸So the woman left her waterpot, and went into the city and said to the men, ²⁹“Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?” ³⁰They went out of the city, and were coming to Him.

[Read v.25-30]

Q: Again in verse 25 the woman tries to throw off the issue of personal sin by asking Jesus’ opinion about the Messiah. How does Jesus respond?

A: He responds with one of the great “I AM” statements in John. Literally it reads in the Greek, “I AM is speaking to you.”

Q: What was the reaction of the disciples when they returned? Why is that ironic?

A: They questioned who He was associating with. It was ironic because some of their own weren’t well regarded in the community (e.g., Levi).

Application: Relate Jesus’ witness to the Samaritan woman to other ministries around today, such as “Bikers for Jesus”.

Q: What was the woman’s response?

A: She went and told all the men in the village.

Application: What ought we to do after hearing the Good News?