

## Week 5

# The Source of Living Water

*John 4:1-30, 39-42*

### Day 1

#### The Samaritan Woman at the Well

She started with two big strikes against her: She was a woman, and she was a Samaritan. The feud between the Samaritans and the Jews had occurred several centuries before Christ, their differences both religious and ethnic. The Samaritans followed the Torah (Old Testament law) to a degree, but they had built a rival temple on Mt. Gerazim and worshipped there rather than in Jerusalem. To the Jews, who were nearly obsessed with genealogies and pure bloodlines, the mixed ethnicity of the Samaritans was equally distasteful. Back when the Assyrians had taken the northern tribe of Israel into captivity, the area had been resettled with foreigners, and they intermarried with the Israelites who were left behind (see II Kings 17). According to history the breach between the two was widened during the period from 175 to 163 BC, when the Samaritans denied all kinship with the Jews to avoid persecution by the Seleucid Empire.

The fact that hostility existed between the two peoples is evident in John 4:9: “For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.” Jesus, however, cared little for their petty prejudices.

**Bible Reading:** John 4:1-30, 39-42

*What do you know about the woman and her situation from this passage?*

*What kind of reputation do you think she had?*

*Why might a woman have gone through this many relationships?*

*Was she unlucky? Impossible to live with? Just plain wicked? Was she widowed? Divorced? Abandoned?*

*What do you think she had been looking for in these relationships?*

*Why was it unusual that Jesus talked to this Samaritan woman?*

*What kind of guilt trip did Jesus lay on the woman for her multiple marriages?*

*How long did Jesus spend discussing the woman's current sinful (unmarried) relationship?*

*What did their conversation focus on?*

*Did Jesus seem disgusted by this woman's sinfulness?*

*What tone of voice do you think Jesus used in talking to her?*

*What things about this woman's past and current experiences do you think Jesus may have considered as he talked with her?*

*What did Jesus offer the woman?*

*How did the Samaritan woman respond to this conversation?*

**Prayer Time:** Reflect on which people in your church or community might bear the same stigma as the Samaritan woman, then pray for them.

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## **Samaria**

In the first century, Samaria was a region in Palestine, located between the region of Galilee to the north and Judea to the south.

Samaria was named after the ancient city by the same name. The northern tribes of Israel had revolted following the death of King Solomon (I Kings 12-13) and split the kingdom in two (Israel in the north, Judah in the south). The city of Samaria was eventually established as the capital of the northern kingdom by Omri (I Kings 16:21-26).

Over the years Israel had maybe one king who even attempted to follow God's leading, so God finally sent the Assyrians to conquer Israel. That's the point at which the foreigners were brought into Samaria (II Kings 17).

One clue to the hostilities existing between the Jews and Samaritans in the first century was revealed during a heated conversation in which the Jews felt provoked to the point of insulting Jesus:

"Aren't we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?"  
(John 8:47-48)

Jesus took pains, however, to cast the Samaritans in a positive light. You probably know Jesus's familiar parable of a "good" Samaritan, who helped an injured traveler when a Jewish priest and a Levite passed him by the other side of the road (Luke 10:20-37).

Interestingly, not long before Jesus told this parable, he had been snubbed by a Samaritan village because he was on his way to Jerusalem. When James and John suggested he call down the wrath of God on these people, Jesus instead rebuked James and John (Luke 9:51-56).

In Luke 17:11-19 is the account of 10 lepers who asked to be healed by Jesus, but only one returned to thank Jesus for the miracle – a Samaritan!

And then, of course, there is the enthusiastic Samaritan evangelist in John 4...

*Remainder of the chapter not included in this sample*