

BIBLE STUDY HELPS

TITLE: Whoever Drinks

TEXT: John 4:7-26

TARGET: SESSION IN A SENTENCE

We need to care enough about those who need to hear the Good News to take deliberate actions to engage people in spiritual conversations even if there are risks involved or if our journey takes us to people who others might view as unlikely or undesirable candidates for the gospel.

LOOK UP: FOCUSING THE GROUP

INTRODUCE:

Ask: What are some of the risks one might take when trying to help someone in danger? Can anyone share a story about someone they know or heard about who took a risk to save someone else?

Share: Perhaps you heard about the risks a 27-year-old took to at least 24 lives during the recent Christmas holiday blizzard (2022) that paralyzed cities like Buffalo, New York.

- **Video Option:** Here is his story as told by one news outlet. – (Play video – <https://youtu.be/DZda9jhc9RA>)
- **Story Option:** According to a Buffalo news outlet, during the height of the blizzard, this young Kenmore mechanic named Jay Withey, broke into a school to find shelter for himself and others who were stranded in their vehicles because of the blizzard.

Jay Withey's truck was stuck in the snow overnight during the blizzard. While trying to stay warm in his truck he took in a stranded child and an elderly woman, but, eventually, his truck ran out of gas. Whitley got out and trudged through the snow, knocking on the doors of 15 homes to find shelter, but the scared residents declined. He even offered them \$500 from his wallet, but the scared residents declined.

He eventually broke a classroom window of the Pine Hill Primary Center school, climbed inside, and opened a door to the heated building. He went back to his truck and brought the child and elderly woman to the school and then went back out to rescue others. He risked his life to save at least 24 complete strangers. While recalling the incident, Withey said, *"My muscles are cramping, my eyes are fogging up, and my vision's going black. It was super scary."*

(Source:

<https://buffalonews.com/news/local/kenmore-mechanic-heralded-for-saving-lives-by-breaking-into-school-during-blizzard/article fd089cb8-87b5-11ed-8bab-af209a848849.html>)

Our passage in today's continuing study of the gospel of John takes us to a time when Jesus took a huge risk to save someone. This risk required crossing the barriers of race, backgrounds, traditions, and cultures to rescue a Samaritan woman who was stranded in her sin, isolated from society, and desperately thirsty for something different in her life.

John has just given us the account of Jesus talking with Nicodemus about being born again. This took place in the region of Judea (**Option: Refer to the ETB study guide map on the inside back cover, or another Bible map resource**). John 4:1-6 tells us that the Pharisees were beginning to feel threatened by Jesus' ministry in the region prompting Jesus to leave Judea and return to the Galilee region.

Verse 4 indicates that Jesus *"had to travel through Samaria."* This would be very unusual and an unlikely route for most Jews even though it was the shortest route between the region of Judea and Galilee because the Samaritans were not held in high esteem by most Jews because of their past.

- The region the Samaritans occupied formerly belonged to the tribe of Ephraim and the half-tribe of Manasseh.
- While Nehemiah was engaged in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, the Samaritans vigorously attempted to halt the construction (Nehemiah 6:1-14).
- They built a temple for themselves on "Mount Gerizim," which the Samaritans insisted was designated by Moses as the place where the nation should worship. This led them to the idolatrous worship they practiced.
- Samaritans willingly received and protected Jewish criminals, greatly increasing the hatred which existed between the two nations.
- They accepted the five books of Moses, but rejected the writings of the prophets and all the Jewish traditions.

Because of this, the Samaritans were universally despised by the Jews and regarded as the worst of the human race (John 8:48). Despite this deep-grained hatred, Jesus knew He HAD to go through Samaria. This route took Jesus to a town called

“Sychar near the property that Jacob had given his son Joseph” (John 4:5). We are told in John 4:6 that, “*Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, worn out from his journey, sat down at the well. It was about noon.*” This is where Jesus intentionally spoke to someone with whom He wouldn’t have normally had a conversation; He also guided the conversation toward the woman’s greatest need.

LOOK IN: UNPACKING THE BIBLICAL TEXT

Let’s examine Jesus’ interaction with the Samaritan woman at the well to learn how to respond to those we encounter who need to be rescued.

Direct (Enlist two volunteers to read the script found on the last page of the teaching plan):

- Everyone turn to John 4:7-26 in your Bible.
- Follow along as the two volunteers read the interaction between Jesus and the Samaritan woman.
- Take note of how Jesus guided the conversation and how He interacted with someone who had preconceived ideas of how a Jewish person might treat her. Notice also how the woman responded to Jesus.

Discuss:

- How did Jesus move the conversation toward a discussion of spiritual things?
(Used the need for water to introduce living water. Answered questions. Directed the conversation toward her need for Salvation. Wasn’t judgmental. Was patient. Clarified the message of salvation and who He was. Explained how salvation was also available to her.)
- Did Jesus avoid talking about sin? How would you have handled the situation if you knew the woman’s past and current situation?
- How would you summarize the woman’s initial response?

“Like patients reacting to doctor’s probes, people with painful issues often shy away from dealing with uncomfortable problems. As Jesus engaged in conversation with the Samaritan woman about physical water, she shifted the focus by responding to Jesus’ comment about *living water*. Her previous response (see v. 9) may have contained a sense of scorn—or, at least, skepticism. In her past experiences, she had likely suffered the prejudice that Jews showed toward *Samaritans*. When Jesus offered her *living water*, though, her tone changed.” (ETB Leader Commentary)

Jesus earned the respect of this woman and the right to be heard by the way He treated her, but He did not gloss over her sin or spiritual needs. He used her current circumstances to reveal the need for something more than the water she came to get from the well. It’s obvious that she was listening because she addressed Him as *Sir* and asked additional questions based on her spiritual knowledge. This led to a life-changing encounter with Christ for her!

Apply Option: How would you respond to the following situations based on our study today? How could you use the situations to have a gospel conversation?

- You are in a waiting room waiting on your spouse to finish out-patient surgery. A woman beside you begins to share that tests are being conducted on her husband for possible cancer.
- You are sitting beside a parent at your child’s/grandchild’s ball game. He begins to tell you about his recent heartbreaking divorce.
- You are walking your neighborhood and you see one of your neighbors sitting on his front porch.
- You are walking down the sidewalk downtown and a woman approaches you for money to buy food for her children.
- A contractor is visiting in your home to bid out a remodel project. He begins to talk about the health challenges his child is facing.

Consider: How observant are you when something is said or done that could lead you to have a gospel conversation with someone?

LOOK OUT: LIVING OUT THE TARGET

John 4:28-30 reveals the transformation that took place in this woman's life because of her encounter with Christ: ²⁸ *Then the woman left her water jar, went into town, and told the people,* ²⁹ *"Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?"* ³⁰ *They left the town and made their way to him.*

Sadly, verse 27 indicates that the disciples didn't get it, nor could they believe Jesus was even talking with this woman. They missed out on the joy that comes when someone has a life-changing encounter with Christ.

Here are four takeaways all believers should consider as they read about Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well:

1. We should take the unlikely and sometimes difficult path to share and show the Good News of Jesus to others.
2. We should look for ways to intentionally engage people in gospel conversations.
3. We should ask questions that will help others understand who Jesus is and what is required for salvation.
4. We should celebrate when anyone receives Christ!

Closing Challenge: Remember our opening story about the risk Jay Withey took to save so many lives during the winter blizzard? Remember he knocked on the doors of 15 homes, but no one offered to help, even when he offered them money?

One person Jay saved said something that is applicable when taking risks to share the gospel: *"We were all from different races and backgrounds and cultures, and we all just bonded. We're going to be friends for life."* This statement describes the beauty of sharing the gospel with others. Jesus made an intentional choice to take a risk to talk with a stranger from a strange land, and now this woman has an eternal relationship that not only changed her life but the lives of countless others in her village!

Let's share and show the Good News of Jesus Christ with others, even if they are from "different races, backgrounds, and cultures." It is well worth the risk because many will not only become "friends for life" but friends for eternity!

Perhaps you are one who is looking for something to "quench your thirst" but haven't ever come to Jesus. Please talk with someone today before you leave.

The Samaritan Woman

Based on John 4:7-26

Jesus

"Give me a drink,"

Samaritan Woman

"How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?"

Jesus

"If you knew the gift of God, and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would ask him, and he would give you living water."

Samaritan Woman

"Sir, you don't even have a bucket, and the well is deep. So where do you get this 'living water'? ¹² You aren't greater than our father Jacob, are you? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and livestock."

Jesus

"Everyone who drinks from this water will get thirsty again. ¹⁴ But whoever drinks from the water that I will give him will never get thirsty again. In fact, the water I will give him will become a well of water springing up in him for eternal life."

Samaritan Woman

"Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and come here to draw water."

Jesus

"Go call your husband, and come back here."

Samaritan Woman

"I don't have a husband,"

Jesus

"You have correctly said, 'I don't have a husband,' For you've had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband."

Samaritan Woman

"What you have said is true. Sir, I see that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem."

Jesus

"Believe me, woman, an hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²² You Samaritans worship what you do not know. We worship what we do know, because salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But an hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth. Yes, the Father wants such people to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and in truth."

Samaritan Woman

"I know that the Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

Jesus

"I, the one speaking to you, am He."