



Woman at the Well

(John 4:5-42)

BIBLE
BACKGROUND

About This Story

All four Gospels tell of the hostility between Jews and Samaritans. Jews thought Samaritans were wrong in their religious beliefs and practices. It would not be too strong to say that Jews and Samaritans were enemies. But only in the Gospel of John do we hear of Jesus going into Samaritan territory *on purpose*. His travel to and subsequent stay in Sychar in this story was not only surprising, but scandalous. Also scandalous was Jesus talking to a Samaritan woman. Cultural expectations would strongly disapprove of a Jewish man speaking freely with a Samaritan woman.

There are a few themes we can explore in this story. The first main theme is living water. Jesus' conversation with a Samaritan woman begins with water understood as a drink. It ends with it understood as living water. Jesus is the living water because he brings life to the world. He brings God to the world—all of the world. Jesus came for everyone.

Asking is another theme we see in this story. The story begins with Jesus asking the woman for a drink of water. The Samaritan woman asks him a question: "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" Her questions continue. Then she hears the good news from Jesus that *he* is the living water. She then asks, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

A third main theme is discipleship. A disciple, even a new one like the Samaritan woman, invites others to "come and see." A disciple's job is bringing others to Jesus. Jesus came for all people everywhere. This means that disciples often find themselves in diverse and unexpected communities, as this story illustrates.

Why This Story Matters

This story shows us that Jesus came for everyone. Jesus teaches about God's love. He brought God's love to the whole world: no exceptions.

Jesus loves us no matter who we are. It is sometimes hard to believe and remember this. It is also sometime difficult to act on this knowledge! As Jesus' followers, we are called to ask for this living water and then spread the word about Jesus and invite others to "Come and see!" just like the Samaritan woman did.