

The iFollow Discipleship Series

# Jesus in Samaria

What Happens at the Well,  
Doesn't Stay at the Well

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# About the Author



Pastor Kirk King is the founder and president of Service Safari and Traverse, a pair of linked non-profits located in Colorado, dedicated to helping young adults traverse the gap between adolescence and adulthood. He is the co-author, with Ron Pickell, of *The Word on Campus: A Guide to Public College Ministry* and other curricula related to the development of Adventist ministry on non-Adventist college campuses. Previously Kirk served the Adventist church as a pastor for children, youth, and young adults, district pastor, and teacher. Kirk's passion is helping people understand God's immense

love for them, especially as it was revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and to experience personally that same love as it flows freely into and through their lives today. He is also dedicated to helping Christians learn how to have meaningful conversations and effectively share their faith in Jesus with skeptical friends.

# Foreword

## **Drinking From the Well**

I grew up in a small Michigan town with a McDonalds, Dairy Queen, and a Meijers Thrifty Acres grocery/department store as our biggest attractions. As a young boy, what I remember most from the downtown area was the stone water fountain in front of the city hall building. It was in the shape of a circle with a step all around it so children could easily climb up and get a drink of their own delicious cold water erupting from a natural spring in the ground below. The water gurgled up from the fountain through a kind of lobed orifice spilling out on top of the fountain. It was slow, cold, clear and constant. An ever-flowing stream.

I will never forget this fountain as long as I live. It's one of my most favorite childhood memories—stepping up to take a long drink of that cold, clear, sweet, refreshing water. Of course as a child I didn't know how special it was. I thought every town had a fountain just like ours—but I was wrong. Dead wrong! In fact, I have never seen another fountain like it in the middle of town anywhere except in my home town. When I read the story of Jesus sitting by the well of Sychar I think about the fountain I remember from my youth. Jesus offered the Samaritan woman a drink of “living water” that would become a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

Kirk King and I have reflected a great deal on this story of the Samaritan woman and the drink from Jacob's well. There is much to consider in this story about the many obstacles that Jesus crossed to even have this conversation with a woman, not to mention a woman of Samaria and the kind of woman she may have been with so many men in her life. We have also written about the amazing harvest gathered in by Jesus and His disciples through the witness of this one woman. Also, previously untouched topics that Kirk points us to so well in this deeper study of the story, are how accessible the well was for some of the most unlikely people (Samaritans), and how perfectly natural it seemed for Jesus to sit with her and share this living water.

Like the overflowing fountain at the center of my small town, John reminds us in this very simple story how the same water from a river of life in the last book of the Bible has already erupted in a fountain of life through Jesus Himself. It is no wonder that John paints with the same brush stroke a vivid picture of a flow of blood and water at the closing death scene of Jesus from the cross. Jesus' own body became a literal overflowing stream of life-giving water when pierced by the soldier's spear. In Him, a river of life erupted for our personal salvation becoming available and accessible to all. It is ours to drink freely, flowing like a river of life to those around us. He is here for the drinking. He is ours to drink freely and to share with others. Like the woman, the experience begins with our first drink from the Jesus well. It is a drink that we will never forget as long as we live. We have never tasted water this good. Like the Samaritan woman, we are compelled to tell the story of how we came to find such a life-giving stream and to drink so freely. This is what transforms us into a well of water springing up to eternal life. It was never just about quenching our own thirst. It is always about leading others to the same cold, clear, sweet, refreshing stream.

Ministry at the well is a perfect metaphor for reaching people today. Like Jesus, we need to pay attention to the places where people are gathering and look for ways to hang out with them. We may also need to become vulnerable and ask them for a drink first, as Jesus did here, before we offer them anything from our cup. Comparing the water that Jesus gives with what others have to offer is a good start for many conversations. But most importantly, we need a mission shift to the pattern of Jesus of meeting people where they are. If we are going to have any success of getting people to taste the life-giving water from the Jesus well, we are going to have to spend much more time with them than most of us are doing now. Going to church or getting others to go was not the mission of Jesus. Being with people who have not had a drink of the water of life—that is joining Jesus in His mission of gathering people for His kingdom.

Students on today's college and university campuses have their own wells to drink from. Unfortunately, most are dry, polluted, poisoned streams. I have spent over thirty years connecting with students and sharing the living water with anyone who entered the space God provided for my ministry. I can tell you that today's college/university campus is a great place to hang out with thirsty people who need a drink from the Jesus well. Most students today don't even know about the well of water that Jesus offers, let alone have had a drink from it. Like the Samaritan woman they cannot even imagine the kind of water Jesus is talking about and have never considered sharing it with others. It is my

prayer that as we reflect on this passage with Kirk as our guide, we will see and understand it in a brand new way. I pray that our own drink from this fountain compels us to do exactly as the woman in the story and drop our stale and empty water jars and run to the people around us, splashing them with the water from this life giving well.

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# Introduction

My grandfather had scoured the place just west of Custer, South Dakota, called Tepee Canyon, for years looking for rocks that contained a gem, an agate, something valuable to cut, polish, display, and sell. Nearly every summer he would take us grandkids, with a bucket to help collect these precious, valuable stones. Most of the rocks that contained a well-formed agate looked just like all the other rocks to the untrained eye, and it was easy to pass over a gem without noticing it. Someone else, especially grandpa, could cover the same ground later and pick up a precious stone you had completely missed. Studying the Bible is like agate hunting in Teepee Canyon. No matter how many times you read its pages and contemplate its message, there is always something left to discover. Augustine, who lived in the fifth century after Christ, said in his famous book, *Confessions*, that, “The Bible was composed in such a way that as beginners mature, its meaning grows with them.” We can read through and study the same passage of Scripture thousands of times and still there will be new insights to be discovered.

The story of Jesus at Samaria in John 4 is one of those stories with inexhaustible gems to be mined. Ron Pickell, the co-author with me in our book, *The Word on Campus: A Guide to Public College Ministry*, found in this story a window into Christ’s methods for reaching the public college campus of the twenty-first century. Often during Campus Catalyst training events we have asked participants to read through the story in groups and make a list of what we can learn from this story about sharing the good news. Without exception, every time we do this ideas are drawn from the story that we have never before considered. We have read the story in nearly every available translation and paraphrase, we have discussed its meaning with each other and with numerous groups of campus ministry leaders, and still, each time there are fresh insights.

You have probably heard this story before and perhaps so many times that you wonder why another study on John 4 is even necessary. I encourage you to set aside any previous pre-conceived understanding of this story and look at it again as if for the first time. Not because I believe that I am the final authority on the subject—I am not—but because the Holy Spirit has a new life-changing

message for all of us each time we open His written word with an open mind. You are free to disagree with my conclusions, and I hope that you at least question them. I have included in some cases ideas and quotes from other authors that I myself may not fully agree with, just to stir up the thinking processes. There are, however, certain aspects of this story that I do believe are critical to a complete understanding of who Jesus was and is, why He came, and what His message was and still is for us today.

The first and central point I will introduce is this: This is a story about Jesus! We often refer to this story with the title, “The Samaritan Woman,” or “The Woman at the Well,” but if a modern day actress played the role of this woman in a movie today, she could never receive an Oscar for best actress in a leading role, because her role is a supporting role. This is a story about Jesus. All other actors in this drama portrayed in John 4 are included to help explain the purpose and methods of Jesus. We want the story to be about the woman because then it can be about us. We want to focus on her past or her sudden transformation and speculate about her changed life and the power of her testimony. I believe, however, that John is drawing attention to Christ and His mission. I believe this because the content of the story tells me that, because the identity and mission of Christ is the message of the Gospel of John throughout, and because Jesus is the central character of all of Scripture.

This is not to say that the woman is unimportant, or that the transformation that took place in her life or ours is not a significant aspect of this story. We should walk away recognizing that what Jesus offered the Samaritan woman, he offers us today; but the focus is on Jesus, who He is and what He does. Jesus had and always has something bigger and greater in mind than our practiced prejudice allows us to even imagine. Once our personal and corporate barriers are dismantled, our hearts and minds will be freed to understand and accept the fullness of who Jesus really is, “the Savior of the world” (John 4:42). That is what this story—and this study—is about.

Please, put this idea to the test as you work your way through this study of Jesus at the well in Samaria. Since I am the author I get to name the chapters and in my effort to show how important it is to allow Jesus to remain the central character, I have put the name of Jesus at the beginning of the title of the study guide as well as the beginning of each chapter.

*Jesus in the Gospel of John*

*Jesus in Judea*

*Jesus in Samaria*

*Jesus with the Woman at the Well*

*Jesus Teaches his Disciples*

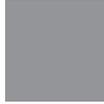
*Jesus, the Savior of the World*

The title of this study, *Jesus in Samaria: What Happens at the Well, Doesn't Stay at the Well*, is drawn from the woman's uninhibited and unrestrained response to Jesus' proclamation that He was the Messiah. It is taken from the lesson His disciples learned about the harvest, that it reached beyond their ethnic and religious boundaries. The title is also meant to stress the reality of Jesus today and that once we drink of His water of life, nothing should or will keep us quiet. It is a play on the well-know phrase about Las Vegas that says, "What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas." The idea is that what we do in sin city will be hidden. But our sins cannot be hidden in the light of Christ's life, nor is the reality that Jesus is the Savior meant to be kept to ourselves. Jesus' life is not a secret to be kept, a creed to be recited to prove our allegiance, or a tool to prove our superiority.

The story of Jesus in Samaria gives insight into how Jesus opened hearts and minds to His message of love and salvation for the world. There is a flow in this story, an organic process, that parallels how skeptics become believers. The Bible Study (Questions) section of each chapter in this study follow the same process and move from an initial "connection with Jesus," through a "conversation" with the Word (both the written and living Word of God), into His kingdom or "community," where an ever increasing "conviction" leads to an overwhelming "commitment" to share.

This is one of the most personal and yet deeply theological encounters recorded in the gospels. I have attempted to bring both of those aspects into this study. So, as you read and consider this story, look for new ideas and especially for connections that tie this to the larger gospel. Sometimes those connections are found simply in the original meaning of a word or in a metaphor. Throughout the process, keep in mind that this is a story about a personal encounter with Jesus and that the reason this story is included in John's gospel and the reason we engage in a study of this story is to join the woman in that personal encounter. As you gather in your group to discuss your personal experience and to share the gems you have each discovered, continue to find focus in the closing words of the people of Sychar, "We know that this man really is the Savior of the world" (John 4:42).

—Kirk King



*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.”*

*“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

— John 1:1,14 NIV

# Chapter One

## Jesus in the Gospel of John

**T**he Gospel of John is a love story. The author's primary intent is to reveal the depth of God's love as demonstrated in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of the world. Each of the stories he chooses to tell builds on the theme that, *"God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*<sup>1</sup> John makes use of words that are rich with multiple meanings, allowing the reader to easily place themselves in the story. His metaphors connect Christ with the universal questions and longings of the human heart. John's Gospel is like a love song designed to woo the beloved to the lover. His message is in fact the response of the beloved to the appeal of the lover. John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved,"<sup>2</sup> describes the beauty of Jesus, and why He is worthy of John's love and ours. The fourth Gospel is the result of John's personal journey into a relationship of love with his Savior. His passion is to declare Christ's love for all in a way that draws the reader to "come and see," and ultimately proclaim with the Samaritans, "We no longer believe because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."<sup>3</sup>

### Who is Jesus?

John begins the story long before he met Jesus, before time on Earth began. He begins in eternity, for he wants to make it clear that Jesus Christ is the Eternal

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1 John 3:16 NIV

2 A phrase repeated six times in John's Gospel: 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20, 24

3 John 4:42



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## RESOURCES FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

- Take the time to go to You Tube and watch the full 3-hour film, *The Gospel of John*. It is available in DVD format, but a full HD version is available on YouTube. The film is a word for word version using the American Bible Society's *Good News Bible*, which is a dynamic translation that uses a "thought for thought" method rather than "word for word." One link to this resource on YouTube is: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=47OkuvT5JFo>. Otherwise just do a browser search or purchase the DVD.

*The Gospel of John*, Visual Bible International, Inc. in association with Garth H. Drabinsky and Joel B. Michaels, is a Philip Saville film starring Henry Ian Cusick as Jesus and narrated by Christopher Plummer. A Canada/UK Co-production A THINKFilm release, 2003.

- Over the first three verses in the prologue of John's gospel we can write *Multum In Parvo*, or "Much in little," for here we have a compendium of divine knowledge. This trinity of verses, 1:1-3, offers a classic example of maximum truth in the minimal words. Think of it — in the brief compass of 42 words, eternity, personality, deity, co-equality, and creatorship are ascribed to Him whom John describes in a wonderful combination of sublimity and simplicity! The full prologue takes in John 1:1-8, in which we have:

Christ in Relation to God (vv. 1, 2, 14, 18).

Christ in Relation to the Material Universe (v. 3).

Christ in Relation to Humanity (vv. 4, 6-9, 12, 15).

Christ in Relation to the Old Testament (v. 17).

Herbert Lockyer, D.D. *All the Divine Names and Titles in the Bible*. p. 270.

- Research the background for the Gospel of John. Many Bibles include an introduction to each book that will include some background about the author and the issues facing God's people when the book was written. Commentaries are another good source. I would recommend the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 5, "Matthew to John." The Introduction to John begins on page 891. William Barclay's, *The Gospel of John*, vol. 1, which is part of *The Daily Bible Study Series*, is another source for this information, though nearly any commentary will be helpful. An internet search can also bring up useful information. It is fascinating to consider differences of opinion and see what facts and ideas are constant through different commentaries.

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God. His part in the story started with Jesus' invitation to the disciples, including John, to "come and see."<sup>4</sup> They did, and the remainder of the book records what they, His disciples, saw and heard. John was a front row, first-hand witness of the God of the universe as He lived as a man among men and women. He was present as God touched humanity up close and personal. He was a witness of the

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<sup>4</sup> John 1:39, 46



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## INSPIRED THOUGHTS

- “If Christ made all things, He existed before all things. The words spoken in regard to this are so decisive that no one need be left in doubt. Christ was God essentially, and in the highest sense. He was with God from all eternity, God over all, blessed forevermore.  
“The Lord Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God, existed from eternity, a distinct person, yet one with the Father. He was the surpassing glory of heaven.  
..  
“There are light and glory in the truth that Christ was One with the Father before the foundation of the world was laid. This is the light shining in a dark place, making it resplendent with divine, original glory. This truth, infinitely mysterious in itself, explains other mysterious and otherwise unexplainable truths, while it is enshrined in light unapproachable and incomprehensible.”  
Ellen G. White Comments on John 1:1-3 (RH April 5, 1906). *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 5, page 1126.
- “With the calling of John and Andrew and Simon, of Philip and Nathanael, began the foundation of the Christian church. John directed two of his disciples to Christ. Then one of these, Andrew, found his brother, and called him to the Savior. Philip was then called, and he went in search of Nathanael. These examples should teach us the importance of personal effort, of making direct appeals to our kindred, friends, and neighbors. There are those who for a lifetime have professed to be acquainted with Christ, yet who have never made a personal effort to bring even one soul to the Saviour. They leave all the work for the minister. He may be well qualified for his calling, but he cannot do that which God has left for the members of the church.”  
E.G. White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 141.
- “Philip said to Nathanael, ‘Come and see.’ He did not ask him to accept another’s testimony, but to behold Christ for himself. Now that Jesus has ascended to heaven, His disciples are His representatives among men, and one of the most effective ways of winning souls to Him is in exemplifying His character in our daily life. Our influence upon others depends not so much upon what we say as upon what we are. Men may combat and defy our logic, they may resist our appeals; but a life of disinterested love is an argument they cannot gainsay. A consistent life, characterized by the meekness of Christ, is a power in the world.” E. G. White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 141.  
The book, *Desire of Ages*, by Ellen White, chapters 1, 2 and 11-17 includes stories and teachings covered in the first three chapters of the Gospel of John.

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crucifixion and resurrection of the Savior, and of His promise to return again.

Though this study is focused on one specific story in John’s journey, “Jesus in Samaria,” that story contains elements and themes employed through the gospel to describe Jesus and His life and methods. Before diving into the story of

Jesus in Samaria it is important that we first discover John's key themes, words, and metaphors that he uses to clarify his purpose in writing. While there are meaningful and powerful lessons in each story on its own, the full picture is only clear through an understanding of the larger context.

The Gospel of John is concerned first with Christ's identity. Clarifying the identity of Jesus is the primary objective of the prologue, and to do that he takes the reader into the Messiah's past as one with the Eternal Creator God. Throughout his gospel John relates stories, miracles, and teachings of Jesus that paint Jesus as fully God and fully human. He also makes it clear that his goal is that the reader might understand their own identity relative to Christ's. He is the creator—we are His creation. He is the promised Messiah—we are sinners in need of His salvation; and by the end of John's gospel story, we are all sinners—saved by His sacrifice.

The last half of his gospel is spent on the weeks surrounding and including Jesus' death and resurrection. Christ's act of redemption is painted as the culmination of everything that came before, so that every story, miracle, and teaching in the first half of his gospel is included to help the reader more fully understand the deeper meanings of Christ's suffering and sacrifice related in the last half of the gospel. John paints the picture of Jesus as both the messenger and the message. Jesus is able to reveal God, because He is God. He is able to lay down his own life and offer eternal life to fallen humanity, because He is the giver of life and is life.

## **Word Pictures**

Sharing truths that reach beyond our world, our personal sphere of understanding, is a difficult task. First, we must find a way to grasp these truths ourselves, and then find a way of expressing them in a way that helps others discern these deeper truths. John does this in his gospel masterfully as he relates the story of the Eternal God revealing love to finite mankind through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Using music as a metaphor again, the fourth gospel is like a symphony, because John takes words and ideas common to his readers and turns them into themes that he repeats and enlarges again and again throughout his gospel.

The prologue to John's gospel, which includes chapter 1:1-18, may be the most concise statement in all of Scripture of who Jesus was from eternity and why He came to earth as a human. These few verses contain the heart, the core, and the soul of the Gospel. William Barclay says, "The first chapter of the fourth



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## OTHER VOICES

- “Even though the book of John covers the same basic outline of Jesus’ life as the other three Gospels, it displays marked differences in content and viewpoint. John highlights many encounters with the Son of God that are found nowhere else: the miracle at Cana, the visit by Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman at the well, a lame man at the pool of Bethesda, the man born blind, the beloved Lazarus. John’s choices of what to include are governed by a clear goal: “These are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God” (20:31).” *Walk Thru the Bible* (09-26-2013). *The Daily Walk Bible NLT: 31 Days with Jesus*, (Kindle Locations 5734-5738). Kindle Edition.
  - “John’s interest in Jesus at this point in history (ca. A.D. 90-95) is shaped in particular by false prophets who are denying the Incarnation and the saving significance of Jesus’ death and resurrection, and who are marked by a failure to love others. So part of his post-resurrection perspective may be traced to his historical setting. You should note how often John emphasizes that Jesus is rooted deeply in flesh-and-blood history (he grows weary, thirsts, weeps at death; blood and water flow from his side while on the cross). The point is that the one whom John and his readers know as the exalted Son of God lived a truly human life on planet Earth and did so within the context of historical Judaism.” Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible Book by Book, A Guided Tour*, p. 306.
  - “In Genesis, the first book of the Bible, God is presented as speaking the creation into existence. God speaks the word and it happens: heaven and earth, ocean and stream, trees and grass, birds and fish, animals and humans, everything, seen and unseen, called into being by God’s unspoken word. In deliberate parallel to the opening words of Genesis, John presents God as speaking salvation into existence. This time God’s word takes on human form and enters history in the person of Jesus. Jesus speaks the word and it happens: forgiveness and judgement, healing and illumination, mercy and grace, joy and love, freedom and resurrection. Everything broken and fallen, sinful and diseased, called into salvation by God’s spoken word. For somewhere along the line things went wrong (Genesis tells that story, too) and are in desperate need of fixing. The fixing is all accomplished by speaking — God speaking salvation into being in the person of Jesus. Jesus, in this account, not only speaks the word of god; he is the Word of God.” Eugene Petersen, *Conversations: The Message Bible With Its Translator*, p 1634.
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