

SPRING 2023

YOU



**MY ENCOUNTER
WITH JESUS**

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**DEALING WITH
TEMPTATION**



EDITORIAL

MARK CROSTON

My first flight on an airplane was from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to Cincinnati, Ohio. This took place not long after starting my first job after college with the IBM Corporation. I was so excited about going to the airport, fastening my seatbelt, and taking off. It was the first time I looked down on the clouds as we soared through a clear blue sky. That flight turned a 9-hour journey into a 90-minute joy. Over the years now I have traveled to 40 countries and flown over one-million miles. That initial trip was for me a life changing encounter.

Life changing encounters is what this issue of the *YOU Bible Study* is all about. The first study is from the Gospel of John and titled “My Encounter with Jesus.” An encounter with Jesus will change your life. It gives us what we need to live successfully while “Dealing with Temptation” and “Avoiding a Critical Spirit,” our other studies in this quarter.

We had an awesome experience at the Black Church Leadership and Family Conference in 2022. You can still catch the training On Demand at live.lifeway.com. Plan to join us as we gather July 17-21, 2023, at the Ridgecrest Conference Center in Black Mountain, North Carolina. This will be the 30th Anniversary of this conference, and our theme will be REIMAGINE! There will be a full program for every member of the family! This is the place to bring your church leaders and their families to reimagine and be revived, refreshed, and re-energized. Get all the details at Lifeway.com/BlackChurchConference.

Now, grab your Bible and allow God to speak through YOU!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping loop at the end.

Dr. Mark A. Croston, Sr.

YOU General Editor

National Director of Black Church Ministries

lifeway.com/BlackChurchLife

STUDY 1 MY ENCOUNTER WITH JESUS

HOW THIS STUDY FITS YOUR DISCIPLESHIP PLAN

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Share Christ

We have the responsibility and privilege to tell others about Christ. As we see how others were changed by their encounter with Jesus, we discover how we can tell others about our own life-changing encounter with Him.

Writer Bio

Chad Keck

serves as pastor of First Baptist Church Kettering in Dayton, Ohio. His wife, Candace, is a teacher, and together they have four children. Chad also teaches courses at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and Cedarville University.

Eulalia King

adapted this study for the *YOU* audience. She is a ministry leader, Bible teacher, conference speaker, singer, and songwriter, who has a passion for God and His Word. Eulalia has served in various ministry capacities across the Greater Houston area for over 20 years.

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wrote the Daily Readings for this unit. She is a freelance writer who lives in Fremont, Ohio, with her husband, Dr. James M. Williams. She enjoys spending time with family and contributing to community building.



A BIBLE STUDY ABOUT WHAT AN ENCOUNTER WITH JESUS MEANS

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We are living in an epidemic of loneliness and isolation. A recent study by Harvard revealed that thirty-six percent of Americans experience a serious level of loneliness.¹ That sense of loneliness and isolation is greater in some groups than in others. For example, many older African Americans are experiencing loneliness as a result of the pandemic. Social isolation in this group resulted in physical, mental, and emotional issues. Relationships and connections matter. We need those encounters in order to thrive.

Throughout this study, we are going to see what happens when people encounter Jesus in their moment of need. He reached out to a woman alone at a well, healed a man born blind, and showed compassion to a woman caught in sin. He willingly died on a cross and was raised from the dead to meet our greatest need. Jesus was

always meeting and transforming people just when they needed Him most.

Encountering Jesus is an important event in the lives of every believer. Our initial encounter with Him has led to our salvation. But we can continually encounter Him on a daily basis, through the practice of spiritual disciplines.

If you have ever needed Jesus to meet you, then this study is for you. If you have ever needed your life transformed, then there is a message for you in these texts. However, be prepared. Jesus often asked those He encountered difficult questions. He often caused them to reflect and think about their lives, their sin, and their future. He was even known to ask them to do difficult things, but this is how transformation works.

Transformation happens as we encounter Jesus.

SESSION 1

JESUS MET MY GREATEST NEED

Leader pages on pp. 102-105

THE POINT:
ONLY JESUS CAN TRULY SATISFY MY THIRST.

JOHN 4:7-18, 25-26

⁷ A woman of Samaria came to draw water. “Give me a drink,” Jesus said to her, ⁸ because his disciples had gone into town to buy food. ⁹ “How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?” she asked him. For Jews do not associate with Samaritans. ¹⁰ Jesus answered, “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.” ¹¹ “Sir,” said the woman, “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.” ¹³ Jesus said, “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.**”

MEMORY VERSE

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¹⁵ “Sir,” the woman said to him, “give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and come here to draw water.” ¹⁶ “Go call your husband,” he told her, “and come back here.” ¹⁷ “I don’t have a husband,” she answered. “You have correctly said, ‘I don’t have a husband,’” Jesus said. ¹⁸ “For you’ve had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.”

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²⁵ The woman said to him, “I know that the Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” ²⁶ Jesus told her, “I, the one speaking to you, am he.”

KEYWORDS

Living water (v. 10)—This reference to Jesus involves a double meaning. Literally, the phrase refers to fresh spring water (Gen. 26:19; Lev. 14:6). God was known as the source of life (Gen. 1:11-22) and “the fountain of living water” (Jer. 2:13). This phrase also refers to the spiritual birth that cleanses

from sin and brings spiritual transformation.

Five husbands (v. 18)—Or five “men” with whom she had affairs.

I . . . am he (v. 26)—“I Am” is a self-identifying vehicle Jesus used to announce a theological idea about Himself. It is used here without a description.

HOW DOES JESUS SATISFY OUR DEEPEST NEEDS?

Several years ago, I was training for a marathon. As you know, running a marathon requires hours of training and strict discipline. One morning I set out on a 16-mile run. When I began, the temperature was about 50 degrees, but quickly rose into the 80s. It was at that point I realized I had not brought enough water. Being determined, or stubborn, as some might say, I pressed on. It wasn't long before I became extremely thirsty. I became so thirsty that my kidneys hurt. That's dangerous. Thankfully, I was able to make it back to my car, rehydrate, and recover.

Physical thirst tells us we need water, but what are the signs of spiritual thirst in our lives? Perhaps, we start to lose our temper over little things, become consumed by worry, or experience a growing sense of guilt, and even fear. These symptoms may serve as a warning sign to our deeper need for the living water that is only found in Jesus. When we come to know the One who sees past our brokenness, our spiritual thirst is exposed as in John 4:7-26.

Jesus Revealed a Greater Thirst in Me // John 4:7-14

“A woman of Samaria.” That is how this passage begins. We do not know her name, but we know where she was from. Knowing she was from Samaria gives us the context we need for the conversation we are about to overhear.

In John 4:3-4, we read that Jesus chose to travel this path. He and His disciples were heading out of Judea and back to Galilee. The fastest route between the two was to go through an area called Samaria. While this was the fastest route, it was not always the most traveled route for Jews, due to the long history of animosity between the Jews and the Samaritans. Some biblical scholars suggest that Jews would often take a longer route to Galilee just to avoid traveling through Samaria.

That wasn't true of Jesus, who never let ethnicity, religion, gender, or physical circumstances hinder his compassion for the hurting around him. Jesus always looked



THE POINT: ONLY JESUS CAN TRULY SATISFY MY THIRST.

beyond the external, to the need of the soul. But the Samaritan woman did not know this when she first arrived at the well.

We do not know exactly why this woman came to the well at noon (v. 6), but it was most likely because she was seen as an outcast. If that was the case, she had probably come at midday to avoid the scornful looks from the women who would come in the morning hours to get water. We will learn later that she had some issues in her personal life.

Instead of being able to privately draw water, the woman was greeted with a request from a Jewish man. “How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?” she asked him. “For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.”

As they began to discuss something as simple as His need for water, Jesus shifted the conversation to her eternal need for redemption. She thought they were talking about His need, but they were talking about her need!

The Samaritan woman was confused at first. She did not understand how this man was going to give her water that would cause her to never thirst again. Her next question revealed her thinking; “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” (John 4:12). To her, Jesus’s statement implied He was claiming to be greater than the patriarch Jacob.

FROM THE START OF THIS CONVERSATION BETWEEN JESUS AND THE WOMAN AT THE WELL, WHAT STANDS OUT TO YOU?

This is where Jesus turns the conversation. In just one sentence Jesus shifted from a discussion about the physical to one about the spiritual. Jesus declares that He is greater than Jacob, not because He knows of another water source, but because He is the source of this “living water,” springing up into eternal life revealing that He is the answer to a problem she didn’t even know she had.

Jesus Revealed My Sin // John 4:15-18

The woman thought she had found a secret source of water that would allow her to avoid the shame of coming to this well alone, an escape from her embarrassment and having to face



DIGGING DEEPER HYPOSTATIC UNION

The “hypostatic union” is a theological term used to explain how God the Son, Jesus Christ, took on human nature, yet remained fully God at the same time. In John 8:58 Jesus says, “Truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am,” which testifies to His divine nature. In John 1:14, at the incarnation, Jesus became a human being, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” This verse attests to the God-man, Jesus Christ, as one Person, fully God and fully man. In Jesus, two natures are united but not mixed; they remain distinct and separate forever. We see this doctrine in our text today. In John 4, Jesus is physically “worn out from His journey,” walking about 64 miles from Judea to Sychar. Later, Jesus reveals that He is the Messiah. “I, the one speaking to you, am He.” Our divine Savior.

How does the hypostatic union influence the way you think about Jesus?



the reality of her public sin. But Jesus did not point out the location of a running stream. He did not show her a better way to draw water from the well. Instead, Jesus—this stranger—identified her sin, a sin she would prefer not to talk about. Jesus told her to go get her husband and bring him to the well.

Most of us, when confronted with something shameful, we hide, deflect, or shy away from the truth. If you remember, this is the same way Adam and Eve handled their confrontation with God in the garden of Eden after they had eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 3:8). The Samaritan woman responded in the same way. She thought she could avoid the issue by admitting she had no husband, but she did not realize who she was talking with.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM JESUS'S EXAMPLE AS HE CONFRONTS THE WOMAN WITH HER SIN?

When Jesus initiated the conversation with the woman, He already knew her situation, her marital status, and her history. Knowing all this did not prevent Him from meeting with her at the well. In fact, it was the very reason Jesus chose to travel through Samaria. It was certainly no accident that Jesus met this lady, on this day, at this time, and under these circumstances.

Jesus does this with each person He encounters; meeting them right where they are.

An encounter with Jesus is transformational. But, before transformation can take place, there is usually some type of pain, shame, or confession involved. Yet it is that very pain, shame, or confession that forces us to see our own need. The woman at the well had many hardships in her married life. She had already had five husbands and was currently with a man who was not her husband. Even in our contemporary world, where the marriage covenant is not held in high regard, a woman having five husbands is startling. How much more in her day? In just a brief conversation Jesus pinpoints the place of shame and hurt in this woman's life. The good news is He had the remedy for her brokenness.

Jesus Revealed He Is the One to Trust // John 4:25-26

The Samaritan woman may not have known much about the nature of worship (John 4:19-24), but she did know the Messiah would be coming. What she heard next would change her life, and eternity, forever. "Jesus told her, 'I, the one speaking to you, am he.'" The man that had asked her to get Him a drink was the very One she had been waiting for. He was the One who knew her sin and shame. He was the One who would love her unconditionally. That walk in the heat of the day, led her to the well, and quenched a thirst that only Jesus could satisfy. Our Jesus does the same for us. He meets us on our road of shame and sin, and then amazes us with His extravagant grace.

WHY IS JESUS'S ENCOUNTER WITH THE WOMAN AT THE WELL SO SIGNIFICANT IN SCRIPTURE?

We all have needs. Some are physical, some emotional, some relational, but none are greater than our spiritual need, our need to be saved.

THE POINT: ONLY JESUS CAN TRULY SATISFY MY THIRST.

We do not always recognize our need, going through life, attempting to fill it with all sorts of other counterfeit water. But the reality is that our thirst can only be satisfied by Jesus. The woman at the well was not going to find rest in another husband nor in water from a stream. She needed the unconditional love and forgiveness that only Jesus can give. Jesus, the One who formed her in her mother's womb, who knew her from the inside out, was not deterred by her brokenness. He, in His great mercy, opened wide His arms, welcoming her into His Kingdom.

Recently, an 80-year-old church member introduced me to a young lady in her twenties. The older woman had been bitten by the younger woman's dog, but instead of getting mad and reporting it, the senior adult invited her to church. Perhaps the young lady attended because she was feeling a bit guilty about her dog, but then something happened. She heard the gospel and trusted Jesus as her Savior. Having her life completely transformed by Jesus was not on her to-do list the day her dog bit her neighbor, but it was on the Father's.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Samaritans were regarded by the Jews as despised half-breeds, the offspring of the cruel Assyrians who transported large groups of conquered Jews to other conquered sites and repopulated the partially vacated sites with other conquered peoples (2 Kings 17:5–6, 24). The result was an intermingling of peoples who in the mixing of the races lost much of their former national identities. The Jewish desire for a pure and loyal people of God, particularly after the return from the Babylonian exile, led Ezra to develop a segregation policy that excluded Samaritans and others of mixed backgrounds (Ezra 9–10). There is little doubt that a story like the “good Samaritan” (Luke 10:25–37) would hardly be received with enthusiasm among the Jewish listeners. Indeed, the lawyer in that story called the man “the one who showed mercy,” avoiding acknowledging this good man as a Samaritan.

What does Jesus's attitude toward the Samaritan woman teach about how to encounter people who are different?

LIVE IT

What do you do with your unmet needs?

We only need to read a few posts on Facebook to confirm what we already know. We are a needy people aching to be heard or seen by whoever will listen or pay attention. Regrettably, like the woman at the well, we will try to satisfy our needs by pouring ourselves into broken cisterns that cannot hold water. Jesus reveals that only in Him do we find profound significance. Do the following to remember this:

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- **Journal your encounter.** When did Christ come into your life? Do you remember that moment? Journal your thoughts as a reminder of His care.
- **Connect with others.** Who around you may feel isolated like the woman at the well? Take a moment to write a card, make a call, or send a text.
- **Consider Fasting.** Skip a meal or two one day this week. Fasting helps us prioritize the need for spiritual food more than physical food.

DAILY READINGS

1. THIRSTING FOR MORE THAN WATER // JOHN 4:10

So, you drink your daily requirement of eight glasses of water, right? But something still is not quite right! You have a desire for something else, but you can't put your finger on it. It isn't soda. It isn't your favorite breakfast juice. Maybe, just maybe, your need is spiritual. You have not put in your daily requirement of time with Jesus. The Samaritan woman at the well was drawing water, but Jesus assured her she would still be thirsty. Only her acceptance of Christ as Savior and only the woman living her life as God commands would satisfy her thirst. The same is true for us. Only when we receive God's Living Water can our deepest thirst be quenched.

Only the Messiah can give what the soul desires.

2. "DOMINUS REGIT ME" // PSALM 23:1-6

In Latin, the first words of Psalms 23 are "Dominus regit me:" The Lord guides, directs, rules me. In English this is translated as "the Lord is my shepherd." Also, the Latin phrase, "I non vis" means "I shall not want." When many of us were younger we learned Psalm 23. But we don't always break those verses down to understand specifically what the psalmist meant. First, we need to know that we are the sheep who are completely dependent on the Shepherd. In the New Testament Jesus is referred to as our Shepherd (John 10:11; Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 5:4). Psalm 23 helps us to understand that because Christ is our Shepherd, we will not be in need.

When we recognize the Shepherd in our lives, we should trust Him to care for us.

3. THE WRONG LIST // 2 PETER 1:3

Imagine that you find a magic genie in a bottle. What would your three wishes be? Too often we want things we shouldn't have. Too often we want things out of selfishness. That's the wrong list. God wants to provide us with something for our good. He wants

to give us the power to live for Him and what we need to grow spiritually. The apostle Peter tells us that God has given us the Spirit to help us grow spiritually. He guides us to create a different list, one that includes love. Have you heard the song "What the World Needs Now Is Love"? Love is a spiritual need of every believer as well as peace, harmony, faith, fairness, and unity. So, if you find a magic genie in a bottle, wish for these things.

Ask God for those things that will honor Him, help us in our walk, and bless others.

4. LACK NO GOOD THING // LUKE 12:24

King David shares about the goodness of God (Ps. 34:10). God provides for young lions and even strong lions that sometimes go hungry. Jesus reminds us of the same thing. If God can meet the needs of ravens, then He can supply all our needs. Take time to tune in to how creatures survive. Notice birds, squirrels, and other animals. Jesus wants us to know that God takes care of all His creatures. He even takes care of us. All He asks is that we put Him first and depend on Him.

When you are in need, turn to God first for help. He has promised we will lack no good thing.

5. EASY YOKE // MATTHEW 11:29-30

How many times must we be told to worry about nothing and pray about everything? When we worry, it is an insult to Christ who gave His life for us. He has assured us that we need not be brokenhearted, worried, or doubtful. In very plain English, Jesus told us that His yoke is easy. The yoke we carry is a heavy burden of unbelief, but Jesus frees us from this burden. He says we will find rest for our souls. That's because we will not fret. We will not worry. The rest that Jesus promises consists of love, healing, and peace with God.

A relationship with Jesus changes everything. So, stop worrying, take His yoke and rest.

LEADER GUIDE

STUDY 1 MY ENCOUNTER WITH JESUS

INTRODUCTION

Every life tells a story. When we each tell our stories, we tend to focus on those things that matter most to us. For many, it is a story of family, a life focused on a certain career, or major choices we've made. Our stories often include those events that altered our plans and the course of our lives. No event is more transformative than an encounter with Christ

that leads to salvation. That's the story we can—and should—share with others so that their story, too, can include a life-changing encounter with Christ.

Writer Bio

Heather Johnson

wrote the leader pages for this study. Heather is an educator, writer, and Bible teacher. She teaches high school and is the assistant director and instructor with the Thrive Ministry Wives certificate program at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. She loves the challenge of doing life with her husband and four children while pursuing a Ph.D. in Christian Education at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

BEFORE YOU TEACH

Consider Others

Take time to connect to the topic of needs. Set aside time to pray and ask God to grant you sensitivity to see the needs of those around you. Take a day and consider others, without being judgmental, and reflect on their possible needs. Pray for their salvation and for God to speak to their hearts during this study.

Consider Yourself

Allow this lesson to minister to you as you prepare to teach. After praying for the needs of others, make a list of your own needs. How are you seeking God to provide for your current needs? Take a moment to pray about your concerns. Then, write the word “salvation” at the bottom of your list and highlight it. Remember your salvation experience and thank God for the day He met your greatest need.

LOOK BACK

Remind learners of the last study “How to Discern the Voice of God.” Ask volunteers to recount some life-changing truths from the study and the difference what they learned has made in their lives. Ask them how knowing God’s voice will empower their walk with God.

TEACHING PLAN

INTRODUCTION

DEFINE: Share the definition of “needs.” Dictionary.com defines a need as “a lack of something wanted or deemed necessary and an urgent want, as of something requisite.”

GUIDE: Lead by sharing one or two of your needs and ask learners to share a need. If the conversation moves slowly, ask learners to share common needs individuals face. List responses on the board. Invite learners to write these down.

EXPLAIN: Share about a time you petitioned the Lord regarding one of your needs. Invite one or two learners to share how they have prayed about a need. Affirm that we often seek God for our earthly needs. However, everyone should seek God for spiritual needs.

TRANSITION: Read **The Point: Only Jesus can truly satisfy my thirst** and the question: “How does Jesus satisfy our deepest needs?” Review the list of needs again and ask learners: “What would you identify as your deepest need?”

PACK ITEM: Use **Pack Item 1: “My Encounter with Jesus”** poster to provide a preview of the session titles for this study.

DIG INTO THE TEXT

Jesus Revealed a Greater Thirst in Me // John 4:7-14

PACK ITEM: Distribute **Pack Item 2: “Book of John”** handout to introduce the book of John.

READ: Read aloud John 4:7-14.

GUIDE: Invite two volunteers to “act out” the roles of Jesus and the Samaritan woman. Instruct them to take turns reading their parts from verses 7-14.

ASK: “What stands out about Jesus and the woman at the well?” (p. 13)

DID YOU KNOW?: Use “Did You Know?” (p. 15) and the commentary (p. 104) to share about the nationality of the Samaritan woman and explain why Jews avoided Samaritans. Ask the question included.

EXPLAIN: Share that Jesus did not avoid contact with the Samaritan woman. Knowing her background, He was willing to take a drink from her. He also offered to meet her greatest need. Remind learners of the list of needs and ask them why we have a tendency to hold onto needs rather than release them to Jesus.

OBJECT LESSON: Use the “Object Lesson” (p. 104) to help learners visualize the world around

THE POINT: ONLY JESUS CAN TRULY SATISFY MY THIRST.

them as a global society. Challenge them to be more aware of their surroundings.

SUMMARIZE: Explain that today, we often refer to the world as a global society. We don't have to go overseas to serve people from other nations.

ASK: "What are some ethnic, religious, or cultural bridges you need to cross to start a spiritual conversation with someone in your life?"

Jesus Revealed my Sin //

John 4:15-18

READ: Invite a learner to read John 4:15-18.

GUIDE: Guide learners to describe how Jesus approached the Samaritan woman.

EXPLAIN: Confirm that Jesus did not have an angry or demeaning tone. Explain that He was patient and focused on the facts. He surprised the woman when He told her everything about her, even things she sought to hide. Jesus allowed the woman to reveal her own sin. He was affirming and made connections with her to reveal what He knew about her sin.

ASK: "What can we learn from Jesus's example as He confronts the woman about her sin?" (p. 14)

EXPLAIN: Use the commentary for verse 18 (p. 105) to explain how the woman did not tell Jesus the whole truth.

ASK: "Why is it difficult for us to acknowledge and confess our sins to ourselves or others?"

SUMMARIZE: Share that Jesus showed the woman that it would be necessary for her to deal with the tragic nature of her sinful life. When she tried to avoid the issue of a husband, just as she apparently sought to avoid coming for water along with the other women, Jesus told her the truth.

Jesus Revealed He Is the One to Trust // John 4:25-26

GUIDE: Read verses 19-24 aloud to share the woman's desire to worship God in response to Jesus's revelation about her.

ASK: "Why do you think worship was important to the woman?"

READ: Invite a participant to read John 4:25-26.

DIGGING DEEPER: Use "Digging Deeper" (p. 13) to contrast who the Samaritan woman was with who Jesus is. Identify Him as God incarnate, the Messiah. Ask the question that follows. Also ask: "What did the woman know about the Messiah?"

EXPLAIN: Share that the Samaritan woman knew about Jesus, but she had never met Him. Fortunately for her, Jesus decided to travel through Samaria on His journey to Galilee.

PACK ITEM: Use **Pack Item 3: "Routes from Galilee to Judea"** poster to discuss the route Jesus had to take.

GUIDE: Invite a learner to read the paragraph that begins "Recently, an 80-year-old . . ." (p. 15) to discuss the fact that an older woman helped a younger woman meet Jesus. Remind learners that Matthew 28 is often referred to as the Great Commission and Jesus told His disciples, and us, to go and make disciples. This requires us to tell others about Jesus.

ASK: "Why is it even more important today for believers to share our encounter with Christ with the world?"



PACK ITEM 1



PACK ITEM 2



PACK ITEM 3

CLOSE THE SESSION

DO: Download and play the song “Give me Jesus” by Jeremy Camp or read the lyrics to the group. Listen to the song as time allows. Highlight the stanza, “You can have all this world, but give me Jesus.”

CHALLENGE: Invite a volunteer to read “Live It” (p. 15) to discuss a response to the question: “What do you do with your unmet needs?” Challenge learners to apply the bulleted list to their lives this week.

PRAY: Close in prayer, saying: “Thank You God for meeting our greatest need of salvation. We pray for the souls of those we encounter who don’t know You. Help us to share You with them this week.”

OBJECT LESSON

DO: Locate an image of people on a crowded street or subway. Print the picture or display it on a screen during class.

EXPLAIN: The North American Mission Board estimates that more than 273,000,000 people in North America have not experienced salvation in Jesus Christ.¹⁶ This means that every day is an opportunity to share Jesus with those around us.

GUIDE: Share the picture with participants and remind learners that many of us are surrounded by a variety of cultures every day.

ASK: “What are some experiences you’ve had with someone from another culture?”



COMMENTARY

JOHN 4:7-14

Verses 7-10. The risk of trouble from the Jewish leaders prompted Jesus to leave Judea and return to Galilee. Extreme prejudices of Jews against Samaritans allowed them to justify traveling around the region. But Jesus led the disciples directly into Samaria. They stopped at a well to rest. A woman came to draw her daily water supply. Jesus's disciples had gone into town to buy food. Jesus asked the woman to give Him some water to drink. The woman shot back at Him with a pointed question. Through her Samaritan eyes, she saw Jesus as just another **Jew**. But prejudice didn't shape how Jesus saw the woman. He was influenced only by compassion. He wanted her to have **the gift of God** He alone could offer her. If she took His gift, she would enjoy the eternal blessings of **living water**.

Verses 11-12. Old Testament prophets used the picture of living water to describe the work of the Lord (Isa. 55:1; Jer. 2:13). However, these didn't appear to register with the woman. She thought Jesus had actual water in mind. Immediately, she pivoted their conversation to **our father Jacob**. She wanted Jesus to know her national connection with Israel and her sentimental connection. She **drank from** the same well that had provided water for him, his family, and his livestock.

Verses 13-14. Jesus kept focus on the water He alone could offer. The well water had limited value. As long as it was within reach, she would be satisfied. But when she ran out of water, her thirst would return. By contrast, the water Jesus offered would satisfy her for eternity and would bring spiritual satisfaction. He used the picture of water to introduce her to His gift of salvation that would give her **eternal life** through Him.

JOHN 4:15-18

Verses 15-17. The woman reasoned that the water Jesus offered would help her in two ways. First, she would never have to deal with her thirst any longer. Second, she would not have to return to the well every day. She missed Jesus's point. He turned attention to her **husband**. Asking the woman to bring her husband took their conversation to the need she hadn't recognized yet. The woman's response to Jesus exhibited her keen interest in the living water He offered. But it also suggested she misunderstood the kind of water Jesus was offering her. When Jesus directed her to bring her husband, however, the conversation began to take a more serious and somewhat prickly turn. He had gotten much more personal. In order for her to grasp what He meant by living water, she would need to be acquainted with the reality of her sinful condition. Jesus tenderly guided her one step at a time so she could see her sin for herself.

Verse 18. The woman had told Jesus the truth when she said she didn't have a husband. However, she had not told the whole truth. Jesus pointed out she had been married five times. To make the encounter even more tense, Jesus told her He knew about the current man in her life. They lived together, but they weren't married. Sunlight is always the best disinfectant. It's an old saying, and it's absolutely true, especially when dealing with our sin. When people ignore their sin, call it something else, or explain it away, they deceive themselves into thinking it doesn't matter. They can only see it as sin when the light of Christ shines on it. Seeing sin through Jesus's eyes enables people to comprehend how much they need the living water He alone offers.

JOHN 4:25-26

Verse 25. Calling Jesus a prophet, the woman attempted to pivot their conversation to true worship. Instead of getting involved in the debate, Jesus directed her to see what worshiping God actually involved (John 4:19-24). That's when the woman brought up the **Messiah**. Like other

Samaritans, the woman had no doubt Messiah would be coming one day. In the meantime, she would have to live with uncertainties. The mysteries that swirled around God and His ways would have to remain unresolved. When Messiah came, a new day would dawn. He could be trusted to bring reliable instruction, inspiration, and direction. For that reason, she looked forward to Messiah's arrival.

Verse 26. Once the woman acknowledged her confidence that Messiah would come, Jesus shared good news with her—Messiah had come, and He happened to be speaking to her at that very moment. Jesus chose remarkably simple but striking terms to declare to the woman that He was the Messiah. His **I . . . am he** declaration bore an arresting similarity with something God said in the Old Testament. God made a strikingly similar declaration to Moses. When He called Moses to liberate the people of Israel from Egyptian bondage, He referred to Himself as "I am" (Ex. 3:14). Jesus wisely used the "I am" declaration in His conversation with the woman. By speaking about Himself that way, Jesus showed her He was the Messiah, and she could trust Him. Jesus's remarkable declaration to the Samaritan woman continues to make an eternal difference in all people who give their lives to Him. Anyone who receives His gift of salvation will testify He's the Messiah in whom they place their trust. Jesus alone can satisfy a person's spiritual thirst for the living water that can give eternal life in Him.