



11

Christ Confronts the Woman at the Well

“Wow, did you hear that accent? I can’t believe she graduated college.”

“Don’t ask Rob to help with the church banquet. Guys can’t cook!”

“The new neighbors don’t speak a word of English. Why’d they move *here*?”

“Don’t ask me to sit with Keisha. Her clothes always smell weird.”

“Oh, great. Why do we always get stuck behind the old people?”

These are examples of *prejudice*. We are prejudiced when we form an opinion about a person, group, or idea before understanding the truth—and sometimes, *despite* the truth. When we act on prejudice, it becomes discrimination. This can turn into hatred or even violence toward others. Or we can discriminate by showing special favors to a person or group.

Both kinds of prejudice are condemned in Scripture. In James 2:1–9, the writer argues that the church should be free from such favoritism. We should love all our neighbors as we love ourselves (v. 8).

To illustrate impartial love, Jesus told a parable about a compassionate Samaritan (Luke 10:30–37). In the story, a traveler was attacked by thieves and left for dead by the side of the road. A priest came along and saw the wounded man, but passed by without helping him. Later, a Levite traveled by and ignored the man, as well.

Finally, a Samaritan came along. He saw the injured man and did everything he could to help him, despite being a total stranger. The Samaritan cleaned



up the man's wounds and carried him to an inn. Most people would consider that a great kindness, but the Samaritan didn't stop there. He gave the innkeeper money to take care of the man until he was well, and if further funds were needed, the Samaritan promised to return and pay. Of the people in this story, the Samaritan was the true, loving neighbor.

Jesus' story would have shocked those who listened. At this time, many Jews despised the Samaritans, who descended from Israelites that had intermarried with other ethnic groups. The Samaritans represented a kind of national betrayal at a time when Jews suffered under foreign rule. Jewish religious leaders therefore avoided Samaritans and looked down on them. How could a Samaritan show more love than a priest?

Jesus made clear that His kingdom was not made up of a specific ethnicity, but rather all those who loved and followed God. Prejudice has no place in the believer's life. Jesus taught this truth, and He lived it by reaching out to young and old, rich and poor, man and woman, Jew and Samaritan.

To follow Jesus, we must therefore show love to anyone willing to accept it. We must help those who hurt—physically and spiritually—no matter who they are. And when someone chooses to follow Jesus, we must accept them as our brother or sister in Christ. God makes no distinction based on ethnicity, sex, or economic status (Gal. 3:27–29), and neither should we.

Are some Christians prejudiced? Yes. Is it right for them to be? Definitely not. In this lesson, note how Christ offered love without discrimination. As we study Him, we can follow His example and let go of our prejudices. And over time, with grace and patience, we can help others do the same.



Student Work

Read John 4:1–42.



Why do you think John interjects a comment in verse 9 that the Jews did not associate with the Samaritans?



What did Jesus mean by “living water”? What is the difference between the water in the well and this living water?



 Why did Jesus tell the woman to go get her husband when He knew she did not currently have a husband?

This is an example of a well that would have been used in Christ's day. This well and the watering troughs are located at Tantur.

 What did Jesus mean when He said that a time was coming when neither a mountain in Samaria nor Jerusalem would be the center of worship?

 Imagine for a moment that you are the woman. Wouldn't it be embarrassing for you to go into the city to tell the men that Jesus knew everything about you? What would cause you to tell everyone about him so excitedly?

Notes from the Teacher's Lesson

Christ Confronts the Woman at the Well

The Occasion: Jesus Departed from Judea (4:1–3)

The Place and People (4:4)

- Between Judea and Galilee
- Populated by a mixed race with a heathen core
- Looked upon with disgust and disdain

The Lord (4:5–42)

- His (vs. 6, 9)
 - Grew weary (vs. 6)
 - Looked like any other Jew (vs. 9)
- His (vs. 14–18, 25–26, 32)
 - Offered eternal life (vs. 14)
 - Was omniscient (vs. 16–18)
 - Claimed deity (vs. 25–26)
 - Was sustained by spiritual food (vs. 32)
- His and urgency to do God's will (vs. 34–35)
- His for His disciples (vs. 35–38)

Conclusion

- Lessons about evangelism
 - Christ stirred her (vs. 7).
 - Christ made her face her (vs. 13–15).
 - Christ made her see her (vs. 16–18).
- Lessons about salvation (vs. 14)
 - Salvation is a .
 - Salvation brings .
 - Salvation is for whoever will .
 - Salvation is not related to race, wealth, or intellect.



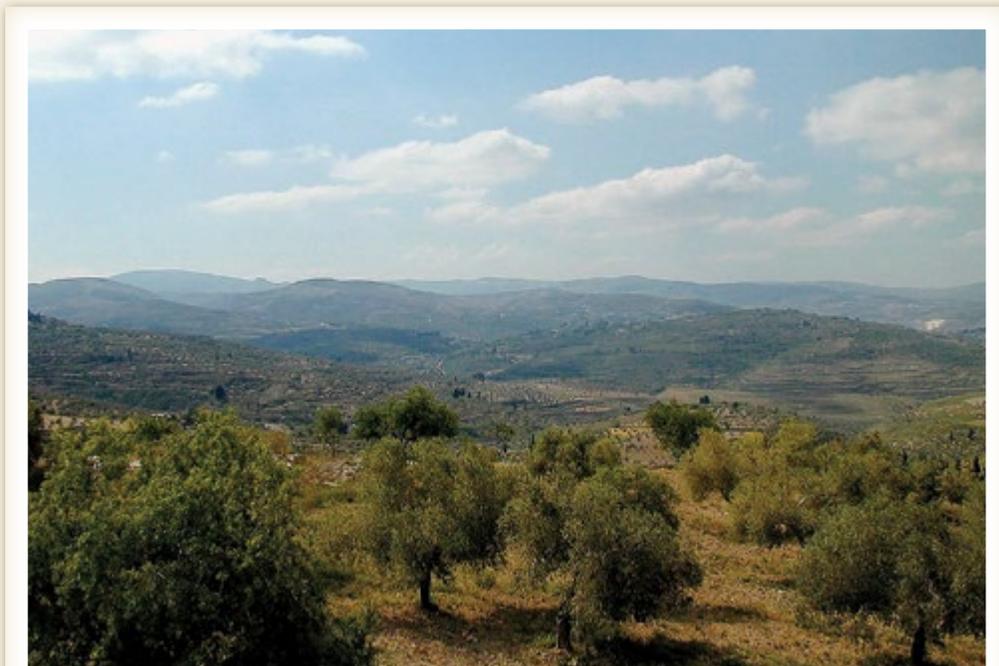
In 1866 a Lieutenant Anderson described the inside of Jacob's Well. He descended through "a narrow opening, just wide enough to allow the body of a man to pass through with arms uplifted, and this narrow neck, which is about 4 ft. long, opens into the well itself, which is cylindrically shaped, and about 7 ft., 6 in. in diameter. The mouth and upper part of the well are built of masonry, and the well appears to have been sunk through a mixture of alluvial soil and limestone fragments, till a compact bed of mountain limestone was reached, having horizontal strata which could be easily worked; and the interior of the well presents the appearance of having been lined throughout with rough masonry."

(The Recovery of Jerusalem. New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1871.)

Digging Deeper



1. Conduct a study of racial prejudice in the modern church. (A good starting point for such a study might be Charles Ware’s book *Racial Prejudice and the People of God*. What are the author’s main points? Do you agree or disagree with him? Why?)
2. Read and study the lyrics of the song “Fill My Cup, Lord.” Where in Scripture did the author of the lyrics get the ideas for this song? What is the central message of the song?
3. Read John 3:22–36; 4:1–42; and Acts 8:5–14 and then answer the following questions.
 - Who preceded Jesus to the villages in Samaria?
 - How did his visit prepare the people for Jesus’ visit later?
 - Who followed up Jesus’ ministry in Samaria a few years after His visit?
 - How was he received by the people and why?
 - What were the results of his work?
4. Study the work of a preacher, teacher, or evangelist of your choice. What kind of “advance work” can help people prepare before they hear an important message? What steps do you think a church can take before holding a special meeting or conference?



Samaria became the capital of the northern ten tribes of Israel after the nation divided following the death of Solomon. After the Assyrian King Sargon II defeated Israel in 722 B.C., he carried the Jews into captivity and repopulated the land with foreigners. Because these people worshiped the gods of their native countries, God sent lions among them to torment them. Eventually the king sent a priest to teach them how to worship Him, but they merely mixed that worship with their existing rituals.

By the time of Christ, Samaritan worship had been reformed to the point that Samaritans obeyed most of the Pentateuch (Genesis through Deuteronomy), but they maintained their own center of worship on Mt. Gerizim. Many Jews hated them because of their mixed ancestry and their modifications to the Law of Moses. Some Jews even went out of their way to avoid traveling through that region.