When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?”

His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.

The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”

“Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?

Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?”

Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again,

but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”

He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.”

“I have no husband,” she replied. Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband.

The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.”

“Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet.

Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”

“Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.

You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.

Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.

God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”

The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”

Then Jesus declared, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he.”

Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, “What do you want?” or “Why are you talking with her?”

Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people,

“Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?”

They came out of the town and made their way toward him.
39 Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, “He told me everything I ever did.”

40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days.

41 And because of his words many more became believers.

42 They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.”

John 4:39-42

7 There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.

8 (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.)

9 Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.

10 Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

11 The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?

12 Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?

13 Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

15 The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.

16 Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.

17 The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband:

18 For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.

19 The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.

20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.

22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.

23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

25 The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.

26 Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.

27 And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?

28 The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men,

29 Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?

30 Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.

39-42

39 And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.

40 So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days.

41 And many more believed because of his own word;

42 And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.
The election of Barack Obama as President of the United States was a source of great pride for many African Americans. Obama was born in Honolulu, Hawaii to an interracial couple. Years later, while at Harvard Law School, he became the first African American editor of the Harvard Law Review. While Hawaii had provided a backdrop of numerous cultural groups for him as a biracial child, he at times seemed to struggle to find his identity as a young black man living on the US mainland. Because of his race and heritage, many saw him as an outsider. Nonetheless, he exemplified the fact that with determination and hard work, opportunity is open to everyone.

The Samaritan woman’s conversation with Jesus at a community well, the focus of this lesson, ensured her that no one, regardless of cultural or racial background, is exempt from God’s love. Jesus’ words changed her life and the lives of those in her community.

**A Samaritan Woman**

In the previous lesson, we saw Jesus on the road to Jericho. In this lesson, we see him traveling on the road to Samaria. John’s Gospel provides us with an ordinary story that yields extraordinary results in the life of a Samaritan woman. After Jesus had finished his visit in Judea, he then returned to Galilee. John says that “Jesus had to go through Samaria” (John 4:4). Given the years of racial and religious bickering that existed between the Jews and Samaritans, we may wonder why Jesus felt so compelled to travel this route. Many if not most Jews would have taken a detour around Samaria in an effort to bypass this part of the country. Yet Jesus, as he did on the hazardous road to Jericho, took this route without regard to what people may have thought. He allowed nothing to prevent him from ministering wherever there was need.

Sychar was a Samaritan township located near Mount Gerizim. It became for Jesus and his disciples a stopping place where they could rest from their journey. A community well provided a cool drink for Jesus while the disciples went into the city to buy food. It was in the heat of the day, and Jesus was tired, yet not so tired that he could not minister life to a bewildered soul. Jesus initiated the conversation saying, “Give me some water to drink” (verse 7). As harmless as this may sound to us, it broke rank with tradition and the expectations of society. In what

| August 3 | Jeremiah 2:4-13 |
| August 4 | Luke 9:51-56; Acts 8:25 |
| August 5 | John 5:31-40 |
| August 6 | Romans 1:8-14 |
| August 7 | John 4:4-14 |
| August 8 | John 4:15-26 |
| August 9 | John 4:27-42 |
may have been an honest effort to correct a social offense, the Samaritan woman confronted Jesus about his actions. Jews and Samaritan people do not associate, sir! Where have you been? This social and cultural barrier had existed for so long in the community that most everyone understood that it was the “right” thing to do.

How regrettable is it that barriers still separate people! Prejudice and racism are not new problems. “Ethnocentrism” is the sociological word that describes the attitude and act of judging other cultures with our personal standards of right and wrong. In other words, we may look at individuals or other groups of people and somehow conclude that we are better or more deserving than they are. No one group is totally innocent. This skewed attitude of superiority and its resulting discrimination might be based on appearance, sex, age, national origin, language, or just a desire to control and dominate. Whatever the reason, racism and other forms of discrimination are ugly and have no place in the body of Christ.

In verse 10, Jesus took the conversation with the woman to a deeper dimension. The need for physical water paved the way for him to talk about people’s need for spiritual water. In Scripture, water often symbolizes new life, and with that, the power that comes only from a relationship with Christ. Water soothes, refreshes, and nourishes our bodies. Many dietitians conclude that water is the only drink that can completely satisfy thirst. I have experienced this after drinking lots of pop, only to become fully satisfied when I drank a glass of cool water. Jesus wanted this woman to understand that he represented heaven’s living water and that “whoever drinks from the water that I will give will never be thirsty again” (verse 14). Although she was likely still trying to grasp the meaning of “living water,” the woman accepted Jesus’ offer and said, “Give me this water, so that I will never be thirsty” (verse 15). We may not always fully understand spiritual truth at first, but faith in God’s word enables us to reap the blessing of God’s grace.

Jesus’ request for her to “Go, get your husband, and come back here” may have been a test of this woman’s truthfulness. Divorced for five times would have rendered her a social outcast. Whatever the case, she passed the test honestly saying, “I don’t have a husband” (verse 17). Her honesty again opened up a door for her to see the prophetic side of Jesus. Indeed, this was more than a weary traveler on his way through the land. Her conversation immediately turned to worship and what is necessary for worship. She would learn that true worship transcends cultural and social barriers.

What might you do to break barriers that hinder you from sharing your faith with others?

True Worship

Jesus’ conversation with the woman about worship was direct and straightforward. God is concerned about worship in the life of the believer. Jesus quickly settled the question about the “right” place to worship. Is it at the Samaritan temple
built on Mount Gerizim or the Jewish temple built in Jerusalem? The answer is, neither one! Jesus told the woman that true worship will come, but it will be “neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem” (verse 21). That is, true worship is not so much a matter of place but of the heart. The first stanza of a familiar hymn *The Church is Not a Building* says it so well, “The church is not a building, the church is not a steeple, the church is not a resting place, the church is a people,” followed by a beautiful refrain that says it all for me, “I am the church! You are the church! We are the church together! All who follow Jesus, all around the world! Yes, we’re the church together!” Worship starts with you. You are the “right” place.

Jesus next made a statement that might seem at first a little harsh to us. “You and your people [Samaritans] worship what you don’t know; we worship what we know because salvation is from the Jews,” he told the woman (verse 22). However, this statement is softened when we look at it in light of Samaritan history and theology. While Samaritan believers worshipped God, some Bible scholars tell us that they only used the first five books of the Old Testament (the Pentateuch) as their Scriptures. Hence, their faith in God was not inferior to the Jews; nonetheless Jesus pointed out to the woman that Samaritans did not have the complete revelation of the coming Messiah as did the Jews. Rather than arrogance, “salvation is from the Jews” is simply a statement of God’s historical act and choice in using a people through which salvation would come into the world. The wonderful bottom line truth of this story is that Jews and Samaritans alike can worship God in spirit and truth. Everyone can come to the table!

God is serious about worship. The Exodus story and other stories in the Old Testament testify to this truth. God goes the extra mile and takes unprecedented steps to seek out and deliver people from their distress so that they can worship. The centerpiece of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt was that the people might go into the desert and establish themselves through worship and obedience as a new spiritual nation. Jesus told this woman that God is actively looking for worshipers (verse 23). It is a call to connect to the only One who can give us purpose and meaning in life.

John Wesley referred to this seeking love as “prevenient grace.” It is not so much that we are seeking God as God is first seeking us. God is the one who makes the first move in terms of looking for the least, the last, and the lost. Prevenient grace is that love that goes before and seeks to bring us into relationship with a loving Savior in spite of our sins. It is comprehending what John meant when he wrote, “We love because God first loved us” (1 John 4:19). God offers this love to us whether we accept it or not. Jesus wanted this woman to understand that God seeks to connect with our human spirits so that we might know that “we are God’s children” (Romans 8:16).

We can only imagine the awe that came into the heart of this Samaritan woman when Jesus identified himself.
She told Jesus that she knew that the Messiah or Anointed One would come one day, only to hear the Lord say, “I Am—the one who speaks with you” (verse 26). Again, we do not know her thoughts, but her actions were clear. In her short and unassuming conversation with Jesus at Jacob’s well, new life and purpose had been birthed in her.

What is your understanding of true worship?

Many Samaritans Believe

Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman was abruptly interrupted by the returning disciples who were “shocked” to see this Jewish rabbi talking with a foreigner (verse 27). The impression is that they were just as culturally and socially marred in their thinking as was the Samaritan woman. Their decision not to question Jesus about his actions suggests that they were perhaps embarrassed and lost for words. Jesus, however, gave no apology for his actions. The conversation was over but the impression on this woman had just begun. Her witness was twofold. She first told those whom she met to “Come and see a man,” then asked, “Could this man be the Christ?” (verse 29). Some Jewish scholars interpret this as saying, “Surely, this cannot be the Christ?” It was as if she could not believe what had just happened, yet she could not deny the effects of Jesus’ penetrating and life-changing words on her life. She was convinced that other people needed to see Jesus.

Never underestimate the power of one. It is easy to think that one person cannot make a difference. However, history records numerous individuals in all walks of life who took bold positions of courage and determination in what appeared to be hopeless situations. Their hearts connected with other kindred hearts and something great happened. Enthusiasm is contagious! Despite this Samaritan woman’s lack of moral and social credibility in the community, the townspeople could not overlook her enthusiasm. Something very real had just happened in her life. People heard her confession and saw her zeal. “Come and see” was the urgent request. The result was “They left the city and were on their way to see Jesus” (verse 30). Through the power of one person, cultural barriers would be broken and the stage set for spiritual renewal in her community.

A heart on fire can set other hearts on fire. This is what happened in the case of the Samaritan woman. “Many Samaritans in that city believed in Jesus because of the woman’s word” (verse 39). Upon going and seeing Jesus for themselves, these townspeople asked the Lord to stay a little longer. Their curiosity and hunger for truth overrode any apparent prejudices. No one questioned the authenticity of Jesus’ identity and witness. Instead, they offered Jesus an invitation to stay with them longer so that they might hear the message of God’s redeeming love. John does not give us specific details of Jesus’ actions on his two-day visit in the city; however, it is highly likely that our Lord spent much time teaching and sharing kingdom principles. It was a gathering I certainly would
like to have attended!

The conversation of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well is a conversation for all of us. It is a conversation that confronts us with the reality of who we are as members of the human family. This Samaritan woman, unfortunately like many today, was locked into a social and moral attitude that kept her from seeing the inclusiveness of God’s love. She needed this conversation. She needed to experience for herself the power of divine love and to know that, “There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). Take advantage this week of the many opportunities to hear and share the love of Christ with those around you. People need a word from God and you may just be God’s instrument for the day.

What has your relationship with Christ motivated you to do?

Lord, open our hearts and minds so that we might hear your wonderful words of life and worship you in spirit and in truth. May others see your glory in us; in Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

1 From theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/12/ta-nehisi-coates-obama-transcript-iii/511475/.