

The Samaritans Are Witnesses for Jesus



SABBATH—OCTOBER 26

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: John 4:1–4; John 4:7–15; Ezekiel 36:25–27; John 4:16–24; John 4:27–29.

MEMORY VERSE: “The people said to the woman, ‘First we believed in Jesus because of what you told us. But now we believe because we heard him ourselves. We know now that he really is the one who will save the world’ ” (John 4:42, ERV).



In 722 B.C., the Assyrians took Jews away from the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The Assyrians made the Jews their prisoners.

WHO WERE THE SAMARITANS? In 722 B.C., the Assyrians took Jews away from the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The Assyrians made the Jews prisoners. The Assyrians forced the Israelites to live in different parts of their kingdom. The Assyrians also took prisoners from other countries to live in the Northern Kingdom. These people became known as the Samaritans. The Samaritans followed the Jewish religion but added some of their own beliefs. Those beliefs became mixed up.

The Jews and Samaritans did not have a good relationship. The Samaritans worked against the Jews when the Jews built their temple again after they came back to Jerusalem from Babylon to build their temple again. The Samaritans built their own temple on Mount Gerizim. But John Hyrcanus, a Jewish leader, destroyed this temple in 128 B.C.

The Jews and Samaritans continued to have a bad relationship when Jesus started to preach and teach. The Jews avoided Samaria as much as possible. Yes, the Jews and Samaritans bought and sold from each other. But that was all they did. The Jews and Samaritans did not help each other. During this time, Jesus meets with the woman at the well in the city of Sychar, a city in Samaria.

THE CITY OF SYCHAR (John 4:1–4)

What problem caused Jesus to travel through Samaria? Read John 4:1–4 for the answer.

The Pharisees, or Jewish spiritual leaders, learned that Jesus' followers were baptizing more people than the followers of John the Baptist. Some of John's followers got upset. John's followers cared what people thought about their master (compare with John 3:26–30). John said that Jesus must become more important while he, John, must become less important (John 3:30). Jesus wanted to avoid any problems between His followers and John's at this time. So, Jesus left Judea to go to Galilee. To save time, Jesus traveled through Samaria to get to Galilee. There were other ways to get to Galilee without going through Samaria. But these routes took longer. Most Jews would take the long way. They would go east through Perea and travel around Samaria. But Jesus wanted to preach in Samaria.

Read the story in John 4:5–9. How did Jesus use what happened in this story to start a conversation with the woman at the well?

Jacob's well was near Shechem. Sychar, where the woman was from, was about a mile away (1.5 kilometers). Jesus sat next to the well while His followers went into the city to buy food. Jesus didn't have any way to get the cool water from the well. When the woman came to get water, Jesus asked her for a drink.

When we read John 3, we were surprised when Nicodemus, a Jewish leader and teacher, lowers himself to come to Jesus. Nicodemus comes at night so that no one will see him. In John 4, the woman comes during the hottest part of the day when the sun shines brightest. Why did the woman do that? Maybe the woman wanted to avoid contact with other women. Most women came to the well at the beginning or the end of the day, when it was cooler. Why else would this woman go so far away from home to get water in the middle of the day when it was hot? Whatever the reason for her being there, her meeting with Jesus changed her life for the better.



When the woman came to get water, Jesus asked her for a drink.

THE WOMAN AT THE WELL (John 4:7–15)

Read about the meeting in John 4:7–15. How does Jesus use this meeting to share Bible truth with this woman?

“The hatred between Jews and Samaritans stopped the woman from offering help to Jesus. But the Savior was searching for a way to touch this woman’s heart. God’s love filled His heart and gave Him wisdom. Jesus asked her for a favor. If Jesus offered to help the woman, she may have rejected His offer. But when we show people we trust them, our trust in them helps them to trust in us.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 184, adapted.

Jesus knew what was in Nicodemus’s heart. In the same way, He knows what is in the heart of the woman. The woman is surprised that Jesus asks her for a favor. Jesus is a Jew, and she is a Samaritan. Remember, Jews and Samaritans did not help each other. Jesus answered, “ ‘You don’t know what God can give you. And you don’t know who I am, the one who asked you for a drink. If you knew, you would have asked me, and I would have given you living water’ ” (John 4:10, ERV).

The woman’s answer is much the same as Nicodemus’s answer. “Nicodemus asked, ‘How is all this [being born again] possible?’ ” (John 3:9, ERV). The woman said to Him, “ ‘Sir, the well is deep. You have nothing to get water with. Where will You get the living water?’ ” (John 4:11, NLV). In these two stories, Jesus gives Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman the important spiritual truths they needed to hear and understand. Jesus tells the Jewish teacher and the Samaritan woman the same thing: they need a new heart.



Water is a powerful symbol of everlasting life.

What does the Old Testament say about living water? Read Jeremiah 2:13 and Zechariah 14:8 for the answer.

We need water to live. We can’t live without water. So, water is a powerful symbol of everlasting life, too. That’s why Jesus says, “ ‘Whoever drinks the water that I will give him will never be thirsty. The water that I will give him will become in him a well of life that lasts [continues] forever’ ” (John 4:14, NLV).

Read John 7:37, 38. What is Jesus telling us in these verses? How do we experience what He promises?

“ ‘SIR, GIVE ME THIS WATER’ ” (John 4:15, 16, ERV)

“ ‘Then I will put clean water on you, and you will be clean. I will make you clean from all your unclean ways and from all your false gods. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. I will take away your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to follow My Laws and be careful to do what I tell you’ ” (Ezekiel 36:25–27, NLV).

Read Ezekiel 36:25–27. How do these verses show the important spiritual truths that Jesus wanted to teach Nicodemus and the woman at the well?

In both stories, Jesus wanted to help these people understand spiritual truths. Jesus uses examples from nature to touch their hearts.

Nicodemus and the woman at the well don't understand what Jesus means at first. How, asked Nicodemus, can a man be born again? How can he go back inside his mother's belly? Nicodemus thought Jesus was talking about the body. But Jesus was talking about being born again in a spiritual way. The woman also thought Jesus was talking about real water when Jesus was talking about spiritual water.

Look at the woman's answer to Jesus' offer of living water. “The woman said to Jesus, ‘Sir, give me this water. Then I will never be thirsty again and won't have to come back here to get more water’ ” (John 4:15, ERV). The woman felt that the water Jesus offered would end her need to walk to the well. Then other people wouldn't see her. Look at how fast the conversation moves from Jesus' asking for a drink to the woman's asking Him for one?

Read John 4:16. How did Jesus answer the woman?

Jesus changes the topic of conversation. He asks the woman to go get her husband. Why does Jesus change the topic so fast? The woman's behavior showed Jesus that she avoided the spiritual truth He wanted to give her. Jesus read her heart. The woman must confess her sin before she can be healed. “Before the woman could accept the gift Jesus wanted to give her, she must understand her sin and her need for a Savior.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 187, adapted.



“I will take away your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.”

JESUS TELLS THE WOMAN WHO HE IS (John 4:16–24)

Read John 4:16–24. What does Jesus do to show this woman that He knew her biggest secrets? How does the woman answer?

The truth about herself is too difficult for the woman to accept right away. The woman understands that Jesus is a special messenger from God. At the same time, she avoids the truth again. She asks Jesus a question about the disagreement between Jews and Samaritans. These two groups argued about the correct place to worship.

In answer, Jesus says that the Samaritans didn't know what they worshiped. Their worship was a mix of the Jewish religion and the worship of false gods. The Jews worshiped the God who shows Himself to His people.

Worship of the true God isn't connected with a place. So, the topic about a place of worship isn't important to the conversation. God is spirit. People who worship Him must do so in spirit and in truth. The woman accepts this truth from Jesus and is ready for more.



Jesus is interested in any lonely person who feels separated and alone.

How does Jesus show the woman who He really is? Read John 4:25, 26 for the answer.

There are four books in the New Testament about Jesus' life on earth. Jesus tells the woman that He is the Savior. This story is special because it is the only time in the four books before Jesus is arrested that He tells someone He is the Savior. Jesus does not make the announcement to a large crowd. He makes the announcement to an unnamed Samaritan woman. Jesus and the woman are alone at Jacob's well. Jesus is interested in any lonely person who feels separated and alone.

The Samaritan woman is a foreigner. She is living in sin. Jesus tells this woman who He is. Jesus tells her that He knows her biggest secrets. He also gives her a reason to believe in Him, too.

What are some of the behaviors that cause us to hide from each other? How does the Good News about Jesus help us to stop hiding from others? What does this story tell us?

THE STORY ABOUT THE SAMARITANS (John 4:27–29)

What surprising thing does the woman do? Read John 4:27–29 for the answer.

Jesus' followers break up His conversation with the Samaritan woman. The followers are surprised to see that Jesus is talking with a woman. But they don't ask Him about her. They try to get Him to eat.

At the same time, the woman forgets all about her water pot and leaves it at the well. She runs back to the city to tell other people her experience with Jesus.

What happens after Jesus' meeting with the Samaritan woman? What does this story teach us about how we can share the Good News about Jesus with other people? Read John 4:30–42 for the answers.

In the middle of the story about the Samaritan woman, Jesus tells His followers a picture story about picking crops. Why does John write the story in this way? John wants us to see how Jesus understood what was happening. Jesus wanted to share the Good News with the woman more than He wanted to eat. His job on earth was to save people from sin. Jesus used this experience at the well to teach His followers an important lesson about sharing the Good News with all people, including people who aren't the same as we are.

There are many wonderful parts in the Book of John. For sure, John 4:39–42 is one of them. Many of the Samaritans believed Jesus was the Savior because of the story the woman told them about Jesus. "She said, 'He told me everything I ever did' " (John 4:39, NLV).

The Samaritans asked Jesus to stay with them. Then many more people believed because of what Jesus said to them. "The people said to the woman, 'First we believed in Jesus because of what you told us. But now we believe because we heard him ourselves. We know now that he really is the one who will save the world [sinners]' " (John 4:42, ERV).

What does this story tell us about how powerful one person's story about Jesus can be? How powerful is your story for Jesus? What has He done in your life?



The woman runs back to the city to tell other people her experience with Jesus.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “At Jacob’s Well,” pages 183–195, in *The Desire of Ages*.

“As soon as the Samaritan woman found the Savior, she brought other people to Him. She was a better worker for Jesus than His own followers. The followers saw nothing in Samaria to show that it was a place filled with people that needed their help. They thought only about their important work in the future. The followers didn’t see that right around them were people who needed saving. The followers didn’t like the Samaritan woman. But Jesus used this woman to touch the hearts of a whole city. Because of this woman, the city came to hear the Savior. This woman carried the truth to her people right away.

“This woman is a symbol for how faith in Jesus works. Every true follower of Jesus is born into God’s kingdom as a worker for God. When we drink the living water, we become the same as a spring of water. Jesus gives to us so that we will give His blessings to other people. Jesus’ mercy in our hearts is the same as water coming up out of the desert. This water flows out of the earth to give life to everyone. Then those people who are ready to die and need the water of life will be ready to drink it.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 195, adapted.



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① What are some of the actions, beliefs, dislikes, hatreds, and behaviors, good or bad, that are not accepted in your community? Be very honest. How can these forbidden things get in the way of your sharing Jesus with other people?
- ② The Samaritans welcomed Jesus so warmly and invited Him to stay in their city, while some of His own people didn’t welcome Him. Why do you think that is so?
- ③ Imagine in your mind that you are the Samaritan woman. A total stranger comes and tells you that He knows all your secrets. How can Jesus know things that nobody told Him? No wonder the woman felt amazed! What does her story teach us about how the Lord knows everything about us, including the secrets we don’t want anyone to know? What does this story say to us about the way God loves sinners?

A BOOK IN THE MAIL

Rob Schetky was a retired U.S. Navy officer. He tried to read the Bible his whole life. But he had a hard time understanding what he read.

At one time, Rob didn't believe in a personal God. Now Rob wanted to know God's plan for his life. He got upset when people didn't go to church and did everyday things on Sunday. Rob asked, "Why are you playing golf on Sunday?" But inside Rob wondered, "Where in the Bible did God change the Sabbath?"

Rob stopped going to church on Sunday. He looked for a new church in Fairbanks, Alaska, USA. Then a book arrived in his mailbox at the post office. The book was named *The Great Controversy*. Rob thought, "That's an interesting name. I wonder what it means?"

Rob left the post office. He passed a stack of *The Great Controversy* books on a counter that other people didn't want. Someone mailed the book out to everyone who had a mailbox at the post office.

At home, Rob started to read the book. He got excited as he read how man, not God, changed the day of worship from the Sabbath to Sunday. Rob thought, "Wow! Someone is telling the real history of the church."

Rob contacted a friend. Rob said, "I've found a book about the history of Christianity. The book is named *The Great Controversy*." Later, the friend called Rob back. "You've got to stop reading that book. It's from the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They're a crazy religious group! Stay away from them!"

Rob was surprised. He didn't notice the name of the book's author, Ellen White, or know that she was one of the people who started the Adventist Church. He said, "No, they're not crazy. They believe in the Bible."

After the conversation, Rob wondered if Adventists worshiped in Fairbanks. He found a church only 10 minutes away from his home. On Sabbath, Rob grabbed his Bible and *The Great Controversy* and went to church. The first person to greet Rob at church was a Sabbath School teacher named Helen. She was surprised when she learned that Rob came to church because of *The Great Controversy*. In the past, Helen complained that the small size of the words in the book made it hard to read. So, why should the church bother to give a copy of the book to anyone? But after a month, Rob already read more than half the book. Then he came to church to learn more Bible truth.

Today, seven years later, Rob is 70 and a church leader. He continues to read the Bible and Ellen G. White's writings daily. He says, "When I found the Seventh-day Adventist Church, I found a home, and I found Bible truth."

INSIDE Story

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



Rob got excited as he read how man, not God, changed the day of worship from Sabbath to Sunday.



Rob Schetky