

# LifeGroup Notes - PARTICIPANTS'

## John 4:3-26

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The story of Jesus' encounter with a Samaritan woman at the well has captured the hearts and imaginations of many over the centuries. The story of the Samaritan woman is more than just a heartwarming tale of how God cares about some people. It's the story of God's scandalous grace (Jn 4:1-9), what is needed to receive that grace (Jn 4:10-26), and how that grace transforms (Jn 4:27-42).

### Prayer

Pray that the Holy Spirit will grant your group the joy of meeting Jesus through your study of John 4:1-42.

### Warming Up

1. According to one study psychologists have determined that we all carry at least 13 secrets. These are things we hope to take to the grave with us. These are secrets we don't even want our closest family and friends to know about us.<sup>1</sup>
  - a. Does this statistic make sense to you? Why or why not?
  - b. If everyone has secrets then why are we so bent on keeping them?
  - c. What kind of secrets do you think are the hardest for people to expose and why?

### Context

Before reading the text and diving into questions read the background information below together:

*Centuries before Jesus walked on the Earth, certain events had transpired to create the culture of the 1st Century A.D. Jerusalem was the capital city of Israel and the site of the Temple of God in ancient Israel. But in 931 B.C., the nation split into two parts. The southern part maintained Jerusalem as its capital and became known as Judah. The northern part kept the name Israel, and created a new capital in a city called Samaria. And in an effort to keep his people from going to Jerusalem to worship God at the Temple, the new king of new Israel created two idols and made idolatry the national religion of his nation. This act, by King Jeroboam, is called "Israel's sin" throughout the Old Testament. Judah and Israel endured a full-blown civil war during this era.*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.indy100.com/article/secrets-psychologists-keeping-secrets-13-5-real-ones-7761806>

*God eventually judged Israel for their idolatry. In 722 B.C. the empire of Assyria besieged Samaria, captured the city, and exiled the leading people. And Assyria had a particularly effective method of conquest. They spread the exiled Israelites throughout their entire empire and required those who remained in the land to marry Assyrians, who brought a variety of pagan religions with them. Through this technique, the Assyrians succeeded in "breeding out" the native Israelites. The descendents of Northern Israel became forever known as Samaritans (not Jews) since those events.*

*God judged Judah too, but to a lesser extent. Judah was captured by Babylon in 586 B.C. but Babylon had a completely different method of exiling captives. Many Jews even became leaders in the Babylonian government (see Daniel, for example). And then a kingdom called the Medo-Persian empire conquered Babylon and reversed the exiling process altogether. They allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem.*

*Many Jews did return. Some leaders from that time include Ezra and Nehemiah. They rebuilt Jerusalem and rebuilt the Temple of God. At the same time, however, Samaritans built a copy of the temple at a place called Mt. Gerizim for their false religion. The Jews destroyed that temple, but Mt. Gerazim continued to be a stronghold of idolatry for the Samaritans.*

*By Jesus' day, Jews from Judea (formerly Judah) hated Samaritans for political, historical, and religious reasons. They had experienced a two-hundred year war with Samaria (Northern Israel) years earlier. Moreover, these Samaritans had intermarried with enemies of God's people, and they were famous for their false religion. To quote one author, "Samaritans were filthy, inbred idolaters."<sup>2</sup>*

Read John 4:1-30.

2. What insights does the background provide for your understanding of the text?
3. In your own words have someone retell the story of the passage in a 2020 Canadian context.
4. Why is "living water" a good metaphor for what Jesus was offering the woman?

Read John 4:16-30 again.

5. The woman accepted Jesus' honest evaluation of her situation (4:18-19). She could have tried to deny the truth as many of us do when we get caught in sin. How might this story have ended if she refused to be painfully honest with God?
6. Compare and contrast the differences in story between Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman. Why do you think it was harder for Nicodemus to believe in comparison with the Samaritan woman?
7. How was the woman changed as a result of her encounter with Jesus? Try to come up with five. Your LifeGroup leader will give you the first one but you have to come up with the rest! Have you experienced any of these changes in your walk with Christ?

## Application

8. The way Jesus relates to the woman at the well teaches us much about how to evangelize (live on mission for God). With your group think specifically about how Jesus interacted with the

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<sup>2</sup> Adam Dixon, *Gospel of John - Nobody Understands Jesus*, (cru.com), pp 14-15.

Samaritan woman. How can we live out the same principles in our contemporary world so we can boldly engage our community and communities?

9. Quietly think through the following questions:
  - a. In what areas of your life is God asking you to be brutally honest with Him? Do you need to share these with a safe person (confession)?
  - b. Where is your Samaria or who is your Samaritan?

## Prayer

Pray together as a group for the people and places that your group labeled as “Samaria.” Spend some time specifically praying for God to give you a deeper love for these people, as well as opportunities to engage with them.

Pray specifically for the COVID-19 virus. This is not because we are afraid but because as Christians we want to demonstrate trust in God and hope in His provision. Pray against anxiety and fear and for Christians to live boldly in this season.