

The Samaritan Woman

The Samaritan woman believes Jesus and immediately goes and tells others. She models what it means to be a disciple who saw the fields were ripe for harvest (4:35). Her recognition of Jesus as Messiah and faithful discipleship in action to share the Gospel stands in contrast to the absence of action by Jesus's disciples in this passage. They miss the opportunity of the harvest while being preoccupied with procuring lunch. When they find Jesus deep in conversation with this woman they are "astonished" (4:27). After the Samaritan woman departs to share the Gospel, Jesus admonishes his disciples for misunderstanding the "food" of most importance to Him is to do His will and work toward the harvest of souls for the kingdom.

The Samaritan Woman's story provides an example of a woman who was not afraid to ask Jesus theological questions. Her story displays faith seeking understanding and understanding blossoming into belief and action.

The Samaritan woman acted faithfully in the moment, based on years of faithful searching. At one level, she has the energy of a new convert. At another level, she is like that person who thinks long and hard about God, and then one day, has an encounter with the Living God. She knows her tradition and her Bible, and is ready to learn more. But she moves from seeing Jesus as a teacher and a prophet, to the I AM, and that changes everything. He is the Savior of the World, the way to the Father is through the I AM, His Son.

Pray

Like the Samaritan woman, pray for understanding to blossom into faithful action.



a devotional guide
brought to you by the



Prayer

Holy Father,
As we open your Word
May the truth of Scripture
Reveal Your love for us,
And may we in turn, love others.
In the gentle name of Jesus we pray,
Amen.

Read Scripture

John 4:1-42

The Story

John chapter four tells the account of the Samaritan woman, the “Woman at the Well.” The longest dialogue in John occurs between her and Jesus, and it is a deeply theological exchange. She becomes the first person in John’s gospel to whom Jesus reveals himself as “I AM” (4:26). The Samaritan woman emerges as the first evangelist who brings others to believe in Him (4:39). Even though Scripture clearly describes these events, the Samaritan Woman’s story has been defamed and disregarded throughout the history of the church. Looking more closely at the text, a different story unfolds, proclaiming her a faithful and inspirational disciple of Christ.

The prevailing narrative has assumed the Samaritan woman as immoral and an outcast in her community. On closer reading of the text, accompanied with an effort to understand the historical and cultural context of the passage, a different story emerges.

The maligning of this woman’s character arises from focusing on the wrong part of the story and not continuing through the narrative to discover the greater meaning of the entire account. As the woman carries on a theological discussion with Jesus, she immediately recognizes him as a prophet due to his knowledge of her past and present circumstances. Jesus is not chastising her; He is demonstrating who He truly is. He never calls her to repentance. In her context, women had no agency in getting married or divorced. Perhaps she divorced once or twice, possibly not voluntarily, and experienced the tragic loss of some of her husbands. Her current situation implies she may be a concubine for the man Jesus mentions as “not her husband.” Jesus recognizes her pain. The text reveals that later, numerous people in the town believed her words about Jesus being the Messiah and followed her back to meet Him.

Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, “What do you seek?” or, “Why are you talking with her?” So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, “Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?” They went out of the town and were coming to him. (4:27-30) Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me all that I ever did.” So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. (4:39-41)