

# Daily Discipleship

## Third Sunday in Lent (A) – John 4:5-42

**Discipleship:** *An Instrument of Hope and Light*

**Focus Question:** *This week how might you be an instrument of God's hope and light?*

### word of life

**“Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, ‘He told me everything I have ever done.’”** John 4:39 (NRSV)

Read John 4:5-42

It is an ordinary day. Jesus is tired from the journey and stops by a well at noon. A Samaritan woman comes to the well to get water. Unlike the other women who get their water in the cool of the morning, she comes alone in the heat of the day.

1. *What do you know about Samaritans?*
2. *What do you know about the role of women in the times of Jesus?*
3. *How is being a Samaritan and a woman a double concern for credibility in the first century?*
4. *What might restrict the Samaritan woman from mingling with the other women at the well?*

The conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman has a similar pattern as the one between Jesus and Nicodemus described in John 3:1-21. Both conversations begin in a comfort zone, before Jesus shifts the discussion to a deeper theological level. The woman and Jesus begin by talking about water. That makes sense. They are standing by a well. The water is a common denominator and serves as an ice-breaker.

5. *What can we learn from Jesus about talking to strangers concerning their faith?*
6. *Why is it unusual for Jesus to have a theological conversation with a woman?*

The Samaritan woman is not foolish or ignorant. She is well aware of the division between Jews and Samaritans as well as the roles of men and women. She even knows about her ancestor Jacob, the father of the twelve tribes of Israel. She is not going to be taken in by this stranger at the well. He talks like he knows a great deal about water, but in reality, where is his bucket?

Jesus is not joking. “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.” (John 4:13-14 NRSV)

7. *What is living water?*
8. *What does it mean to never be thirsty again?*
9. *Why is Jesus taking all this time to teach a Samaritan woman?*

The conversation shifts again as they discuss her five husbands in addition to the current man who is not her husband. She is shocked at the intimate details known by this stranger. Yet, his words are not spoken in judgment and condemnation. His gift of salvation and eternal life transcends the actions of her past. The woman makes the connection between the words of this stranger and the anticipation of the coming of a Messiah. She abruptly leaves her water jar to go tell others. One of the most shocking parts of this story is found at the end of the story. “Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony.” (John 4:39 NRSV)

10. *What surprises you about his story?*

## **word** *among us*

For decades Mr. Jones had washed and waxed his car every Saturday morning. If his family had a commitment on a Saturday, Mr. Jones would awake early in order to get his task done. He loved every minute spent on caring for his vehicle. But that was not the whole story. He loved visiting with the neighbors as they stopped by for a brief visit. Not every neighbor came each week. Nor did they stay long. It didn't seem right to stay while Mr. Jones worked so hard on his car.

The conversation usually began with the weather, moved to gasoline prices, and slowly shifted to things more important to the visitor. Mr. Jones was a deeply faithful man and usually found a way to weave God into the discussion. In fact that is precisely how Mr. Jones listened. He patiently and deliberately listened for ways God desired to enter into the conversation with a word of hope. Consequently, Mr. Jones was never pushy. He spoke with love and kindness.

1. *Have you ever known anyone who listened like Mr. Jones?*
2. *When did you have an opportunity during the last week to offer a word of hope?*
3. *When did someone last week offer you a word of hope?*

One Monday Mr. Jones became ill and went to the doctor for some tests. The prognosis was not good. News traveled fast in the neighborhood. The neighbors knew he would not be able to wash his car on Saturday. Each neighbor independently decided to get up early and wash Mr. Jones' car on Saturday. But it was like someone had posted a sign for a car wash. Neighbors woke at dawn and went to the Jones house to wash his car. All the neighbors knew his meticulous routine.

It was as if each person who had been blessed by Mr. Jones wanted to give him something back. The driveway overflowed with people. Laughter and joy filled the air. Finally, they noticed the curtain in the bedside window pulled back. There was Mr. Jones leaning on his wife, taking a glance, and smiling at the scene.

4. *How do you explain the crowd in the driveway?*
5. *How can a simple conversation become a life-changing blessing to someone?*
6. *How can simple conversations about the weather or water lead to deeper discussions?*
7. *Is it possible to listen to another person and to God at the same time? How so?*

Jesus had a lengthy conversation with the woman at the well. Despite her history with men, her gender, and her Samaritan roots, Jesus took her seriously and taught her about living water and eternal life. Jesus gave her hope. Life did not have to be limited by her past, but could be shaped by the grace of God at work in her through Jesus Christ.

8. *How did Jesus give hope to the woman at the well?*
9. *Could the woman have kept her good news a secret? Why or why not?*
10. *How does Jesus give you hope?*

## **Prayer**

“Lord, make me an instrument of peace. Where there is despair, let me sow hope; where there is darkness, light.” Amen

## **Dig Deeper**

Romans 5:1-11

## *last word*

Pray each day this week: Lord, make me an instrument of peace.  
Where there is despair, let me sow hope; where there is darkness, light.



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