

## *John 4: Sharing the Gospel Across Cultures, Part 2*

### *Leader's Guide* by Ken Behnken

*From the Missional Bible Studies series of the Center for U.S. Missions*

Use this verse by verse study of John 4 to lead the discussion questions on the participant handout.

*<sup>16</sup>He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."*

Now Jesus has gained the privilege to talk about her personal life.. We will not be able to know the person with whom we are speaking as thoroughly as did Jesus; yet, once the person begins to trust us and to ask us for help, we have earned the privilege to ask about their family, employment, and so on.

*<sup>17</sup>"I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband." <sup>18</sup>"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." <sup>19</sup>"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that You are a prophet."*

In these verses, Jesus touched her at the heart and center of her life. He knew her problems. He knew her hurts and guilt. He could then open the door for private confession. He could assure her that there was an answer to her problem. Then He needed only to share with her the Good News of Jesus Christ.

*<sup>20</sup>"Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."*

She began to feel a little uncomfortable. She was not sure she if wanted to really trust this person yet. She did what most people do— changed the topic. The safest thing to do is "argue" religion. She would rather talk "theology" than deal with her family problems. Then she did what so many of us do when we are faced with another ethnic group. We begin to point out the differences rather than accentuate the positive. The Samaritans temple was on Mt. Gerizim and they claimed it to be the place for the "true temple." The Jews, of course, claimed the temple in Jerusalem as the true temple."

*<sup>21</sup>Jesus declared, "Believe Me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem."*

Jesus was telling the woman that this old argument about Mt. Zion as opposed to Mt. Gerizim being the correct place to worship was on its way out. He who truly sought God would find Him anywhere. He was opening the possibility that she would find Him there in the person of Jesus Christ. Do we feel that we have to invite people to our "temple" in order to share Christ with them, or are we open to the possibility that they can meet Jesus in our front yard?

*<sup>22</sup>"You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews."*

Jesus alone is salvation for all nations. Most people from other cultures know about Jesus but they don't "know Jesus."

*<sup>23</sup>"Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks."*

True worship starts with knowing Jesus. John places much emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit. (See chapters 14 and 15.) It is the Spirit who gives us the words to say when we witness to a person of another ethnic group, and it is the Spirit who gives all of us the words of praise to say in our worship.

*<sup>24</sup>"God is spirit, and His worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." <sup>25</sup> The woman said, "I know that Messiah*

*(called Christ) is coming. When He comes, He will explain everything to us."*

The woman was thirsty for the Gospel. She had a lot of questions that needed to be answered. She had knowledge of the Messiah, but she did not "know" Him as her Lord and Savior.

*<sup>26</sup>Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am He."*

The time was right. Jesus shared the Gospel with her. He introduced her to the Water of Life, the Savior of the world, the Son of God. "I AM," He says. The great I AM passages of John rush through our minds, ". . . the Light of the World," ". . . the Bread of Life," ". . . the Good Shepherd," ". . . the Resurrection and the Life." Jesus is still the "I AM" that nations are seeking today.

*<sup>27</sup>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?"*

Isn't this a normal response even today: What are you doing talking to a Korean, a Hispanic, a Vietnamese, a Black, a Jew, a...? It is not always a popular thing to associate with people from other cultures.

*<sup>28</sup>Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people....*

The woman had found something that was more important than the water she needed for her home. Her find was more important than any personal thing she was trying to hide before. She was overflowing with living water. She felt clean inside-out. Jesus had found her. He had accepted her. Isn't it interesting how the newly converted are so anxious and ready to witness? Perhaps our congregation evangelism programs would explode if we would reach out more effectively to the unchurched and the people from other cultures who don't know Jesus.

*<sup>29</sup>"Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" <sup>30</sup>They came out of the town and made their way toward Him.*

The witness of one who had not known Christ before became a glowing witness. The change in her life was something everyone could see. By this, curiosity was raised in the lives of other unbelievers, and the process could begin all over.

*<sup>39</sup>Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in Him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." <sup>40</sup>So when the Samaritans came to Him, they urged Him to stay with them, and He stayed two days.*

*<sup>41</sup>And because of His words many more became believers.*

Jesus' witness to one woman opened the door of the whole town for Him. He was able to stay with them two days and reach many more people. Could our witness to one person of a different ethnic group open the door for us to be a witness to a whole community?

December 2000. Ken Behnken, after retiring as Director of the Center for U.S. Missions, is working part-time with the Pacific Southwest District in cross-cultural ministries. Accompanying Participant's Guide is also available from the Center for U.S. Missions.