

## John 4

**The Living Water is within You**

By Jerry Truex; Feb 24, 2008

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**A. Introduction**

[Slide # 1 &amp; 2]

Today's theme concerns Living Water. In the story of the Samaritan woman, Jesus says that Living Water comes from within.

In the next 20 minutes, I hope you are able to taste the Living Water in an exercise called Voice Dialogue. But first, let us ponder the account of how the Samaritan woman discovered Living Water within herself.

**B. Readers' Theater: Jesus & the Samaritan Woman**

[Slide #3 - Map]

[Dramatic reading of John 4]

The story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman begins with Jesus and his disciples traveling from Jerusalem to Galilee, but instead of taking the road along the Transjordan, they decide to journey through the hostile territory of the Samaritans.

[Slide #4 - Jacob's Well]

Along the way, they stop at Jacob's Well, near Sychar, which is at the base of Mt. Gerizim where the Temple of the Samaritans once stood before certain Jews destroyed it in 128 BC.

**C. Experiencing the narrative at multiple levels**

This story can be understood at multiple levels.

**1. Literal level: Jesus knows**

At a literal level, Jesus is depicted as having prophetic knowledge. He knows what ordinary person could not know. In response to his extraordinary knowledge, the woman moves towards a deeper understanding of Jesus' identity.

[Slide # 5 - Steps of Faith]

| Steps of Faith for the Samaritan Woman |                        |   |
|--|------------------------|---|
| <u>Verse</u>                           | <u>Title for Jesus</u> | <u>Response</u>   |
| 4:9                                    | A Jew                  | "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" |
| 4:11                                   | "Sir"                  | "Sir, you have no bucket and the well is deep."                     |
| 4:15                                   | "Sir"                  | "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty."          |
| 4:19                                   | "Prophet"              | "Sir, I see that you are a prophet."                                |
| 4:25                                   | "Messiah"              | "I know that Messiah is coming."                                    |
| 4:29                                   | "Messiah"              | "He cannot be the Messiah, can he?"                                 |
| 4:42                                   | "Savior"               | "We know that this is truly the Savior of the world."               |

## 2. Misunderstanding the symbolic

Throughout John's Gospel, there is something called the "misunderstanding motif." In almost every episode in John's Gospel, Jesus is misunderstood by certain characters in the story. The writer of John's Gospel uses a number of literary devices—irony, metaphor, double-entendre, symbolism—to show that some get it and others don't.

For example, in the story about Nicodemus, Jesus says that one must be born *anōthen* in order to see the kingdom of God. The word *anōthen* has two meanings. It can mean "again" or it can mean "from above." Nicodemus misunderstands Jesus. He thinks that Jesus means one must be *born again* from one's mother's womb. But Jesus means one must be *born from above*.

The point of the misunderstanding motif in John is to show that the most profound spiritual insights or truths—if misunderstood—can lead people to the most absurd conclusions. To grasp and experience profound spiritual realities requires people to "see" or "understand" things from an entirely non-normal, paranormal, or transcendent perspective. That is to enter the Kingdom of God.

Because the story of Nicodemus comes just before the story about the Samaritan woman, we were meant to compare Nicodemus or the Samaritan woman.

One of the things the FG tries to do is to train the readers to see things from a non-ordinary perspective—to see things ironically, symbolically, from an unexpected angle. What ironies and symbolism do we see in the comparison?

[Slides # 6-13 – Comparison of Nicodemus & the Samaritan woman]

### 3. Symbolic level: Messianic Betrothal

Reading the narrative symbolically doesn't deny the literal level. But it opens up another level—a perspective from beyond. Now, in Jewish tradition, the village well is an important meeting place.

[Slides #14-27 – Well stories in Jewish Tradition]

In the Gospel of John, Jesus was revealed as a Bridegroom at the wedding at Cana (2:1-11). We're not told who the bride will be. Then, in chapter 3, John the Baptist confirms that Jesus is the Bridegroom (Jn 3:29). Again we are not told who the bride will be.

[Slides #14-27 – Well stories in Jewish Tradition]

Now—when we read this story symbolically—Jesus comes to the well and meets a woman, who represents the Samaritan people.

Jesus, as the Bridegroom, assumes the role of Yahweh, the Bridegroom of Ancient Israel. Now this Bridegroom comes to claim the Samaritans as part of the New Israel, namely, the Christian community.<sup>1</sup> Symbolically, the story is about the inclusion of a separated people.

### 4. Why irony, double-entendre, and symbolism?

[Slide # 28-31 – Why the symbolism?]

For the author of John's Gospel, detecting the irony, understanding the double-entendre, and interpreting the symbolism is spiritual training: to see what we do not ordinarily see!

- It trains us to see the hiddenness of God.
- It teaches us to encounter the sacred where we do not expect it.
- It summons us to see transcend our self-centered lives and look for higher meaning.

## D. True Worship

In verses 19-26, we come to the key issue: What is true worship?

### 1. Who is Jesus?

Part of the answer focuses on the identity of Jesus. The Samaritans expected a Messiah like figure, which they termed the "Restorer" or *Taheb*. The *Taheb* was a figure modeled after Moses (Deut 18:18).

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<sup>1</sup> Paraphrase of Schneiders, *Revelatory Text*, 1999:187.

In this story, Jesus acknowledges he is the *Taheb*, the Messiah. Jesus says, "I am he" (4:27)—this is the first time Jesus uses *ego eimi* ("I am") in John's Gospel.

## 2. Where is the "place" for true worship?

Part of the answer focuses on the place of worship. The Samaritan woman asks:

**Jn 4:20.** <sup>20</sup> Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain [Gerizim], but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." (NRSV)

Jesus responds by saying:

**Jn 4:21-24.** <sup>21</sup> ... the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.... <sup>23</sup> ... the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth ... " (NRSV)

In other words, true worship is not a certain place.

[Slide # 32]

I believe that true worship means a certain orientation toward God where God is a Reality we experience as a force or power that pulls us toward self-transcendence.

God moves us from one developmental stage to the next, from self-formation to self-transcendence, from the desire to be a self (impt for younger people) to a desire to move beyond the self to union with God (impt maturing people).<sup>2</sup>

The drive for self-transcendence comes from God—the Living Water—within the human person. Self-transcendence liberates people from neurotic self-defense mechanisms and other distortions that drag people down.

Self-transcendence means moving beyond your *false self*—the self that wants to live outside of God's will and love—and loving your *true self* and others from a higher, divine perspective.

## E. Living Water is within you (Jn 7:38-39)

The Samaritan woman discovered that the true place of worship was not on this mountain or on that one—not a geographical place. Rather, true worship is within. Jesus said:

[Slide # 33]

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<sup>2</sup> The "self" is the "I" or the "me" that I'm consciously aware of existing. The ego is the unconscious correlative of the self's "I". See Walter E. Conn, *The Desiring Self: Rooting Pastoral Counseling and Spiritual Direction in Self-Transcendence* (Mahwah: Paulist, 1998) 6.

**John 7:38b-39a.** <sup>39b</sup> "Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water."<sup>3</sup> <sup>39</sup> Now he said this about the Spirit (NRSV).<sup>3</sup>

Why is "water" a symbol of spirituality? Is this water outside of me or inside? [Drink a sip of water.] Water is both inside and outside. Likewise, God is both inside of you and way beyond you. How can we seek the Voice of God within us?

## **F. Voices within us**

### **1. Many voices within**

First, we have to recognize there are many voices within us. Two psychologists, Hal and Sidra Stone, recognized there are many sub-personalities or voices within each of us.

Think of yourself as large corporation with many employees.<sup>4</sup> How many? No one knows. Over many years, we hired these employees. We didn't train them. We didn't tell them who they worked for. We just said go to work. What kind of company is that? It's dysfunctional. In Voice Dialogue we're going to interview each employee one at a time.

Some of these voices are very clear. But there are other aspects of ourselves that we leave unacknowledged. At times in our life there are certain aspects of ourselves that we disown, denied, and disassociated from. We disown them for a reason: We didn't like them.

Let's say, I don't believe its right to be angry, or my parent taught me it's not good to be angry, then what I do is I disown my anger. I disassociate from it. And my anger goes underground and, unconsciously, it undermines me.

And what the Stones found out was that all you had to do it reveal the disowned voices, was to ask to speak to them. Voice Dialogue enables us to give voice to these disowned aspects of ourselves and begin to re-integrate them into our lives.

Similarly, the divine within is often a disowned Voice or a Voice that has never been awakened. There are certain aspects of our selves that have never been awakened or have never been owned. For many of us, the divine Voice needs to be awakened within—the Living Water within. Now, let us try some Voice Dialogue.

### **2. Controller**

May I speak to the Voice of the Controller (i.e., the ego)?

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<sup>3</sup> Following the NIV and NRSV, if the period is placed after "drink," then the believer is the subject of the scripture citation; hence, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Streams of living water will flow from within him'." However, following Maloney and some early church fathers, if the period is placed after "to me" and then Christ (me) is the subject of the scripture citation; hence, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Streams of living water will flow from within him [Christ]'." See Francis Moloney, *Gospel of John*, 1998.

<sup>4</sup> This is from Dennis Genpo Merzel, *Big Mind, Big Heart: Finding Your Way* (Salt Lake City: Big Mind, 2007)39.

Ask them to make a subtle bodily shift when they have made the mental shift to the Voice of the Controller. The person will respond: "I am the Controller."  
[When you identify with the Controller you speak as that voice in the 1<sup>st</sup> person and about the self in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person as he or she.]

Who am I speaking to?

What is your function?

Controller, may I speak to other Voices? Controller, can I ask you to keep the Skeptic and the Doubter out of the conversation for now?

#### **4. Protector**

Controller, may I speak to the Voice of the Protector, please?

Could you describe to me your function and your purposes?

Protect the self from what?

[e.g., From others, dangers, life-threatening things, his/her body and health, his/her well-being. I have to protect his/her ideas, ideologies. It's a big job.]

How big a job is it?

How do you protect?

Thanks for sharing?

#### **5. Skeptic**

Controller, may I speak to the Skeptic, please?

Who am I speaking to?

I just want to know what your job is? What do you do?

What are you skeptical about right now?

I appreciate your honesty.

#### **6. Fear**

Controller, may I speak to the Voice of Fear?

Who am I speaking to?

What's your function?

#### **7. Other Voices**

Controller, I recognize there are many voices that you try to control—Anger, Victim, the Innocent Child, Desire, the Seeker, the Follower of the Way...

### **8. The Damaged Self**

Controller, may I speak to the Damaged Self, please?

Who am I speaking to?

Without getting into specifics, what's your function?

As the Damaged Self, tell me, will you ever be fixed?

### **9. God**

Controller, may I speak to the Voice of the God? Can you open door and let God come into the conversation?

Who am I speaking to?

What is your relationship to the self within whom you dwell?

The Voice within that goes beyond the boundary of the self.

Can the self within whom you dwell fully comprehend you?

Does your care and compassion go beyond the self within whom you dwell?

Are you afraid of anything? Are you damaged in any way? Are you angry?

Thank you for sharing.

### **10. Return**

Controller, thank you for opening the door for God's Voice. Would you allow all the Voices that we have called out to reintegrate the whole person. Once that have made that mental shift, make a bodily shift.

Who am I speaking to now? [Say your name.]

### **G. Reflection**

In the narrative about the Samaritan woman, Jesus offered Living water. The story invites us to become the Samaritan woman for our time and our generation. The Samaritan woman found the Living Water within herself. The question for us is: Did we?