

## The Woman of Samaria: The Woman Whose Address Was More Important Than Her Name

*The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming; when that One comes, He will declare all things to us."*

*Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He."  
John 4:25-26*

<b>Her name</b>	It appears her location was more important than her name!!
<b>Key Scriptures</b>	John 4:1-42
<b>Promises In Scripture</b>	Psalms 90:14, Matthew 5:6, Luke 6:21, John 4:13

<b>JESUS AND WOMEN</b> <i>Follow the Fascinating Trail!!</i>	
❖ <b>First Person To Know That He Was Coming:</b>	Mary (Luke 1:30-32)
❖ <b>First Person To Profess Faith In Him:</b>	Elizabeth (Luke 1:42-43)
❖ <b>First Person To Proclaim Him to the World:</b>	Anna (Luke 2:36-38)
❖ <b>The Longest Recorded Conversation Between Jesus and a Person:</b>	The Woman of Samaria (John 4:1-42)
❖ <b>The First Person That Jesus Reveals His True Identity As The Messiah To:</b>	The Woman of Samaria (John 4:1-42)

<b>Her Background, Life and Times</b>
<b>This Particular Story:</b> This is one of the greatest scenes in the Bible. So clearly and fully is it related by John – who must have been greatly impressed by it, since he gives so much space to it – that it is easy to follow and envisage after the lapse of all these centuries. It came early in the ministry of our Lord; and yet here are some of the sublimest profundities of his teachings. (5)
<b>How to Get to Galilee:</b> The orthodox Jew, rather than go through Samaria, would cross the Jordan twice – into Perea and then back again – and reach Galilee by that roundabout journey. (5)
<b>Samaritans:</b> The Samaritans, both in <i>blood</i> and <i>religion</i> , were <i>mongrel Jews</i> , the posterity of those colonies which the king of Assyria planted there after the captivity of the ten tribes, with whom the poor of the land that were left behind, and many other Jews afterwards, incorporated themselves. They worshipped the God of Israel only, to whom they erected a temple on mount Gerizim, in competition with that at Jerusalem. There was great enmity between them and the Jews; the Samaritans would not admit Christ, when they saw he was going to Jerusalem (Lu. 9:53); the Jews thought they could not give him a worse name than to say, <i>He is a Samaritan</i> . When the Jews were in prosperity, the Samaritans claimed kindred to them (Ezra 4:2), but, when the Jews were in distress, they were Medes and Persians (31)
<b>Samaritans:</b> Until the rise of Assyrian power in the ancient Near East, Samaria was occupied by the tribes of Ephraim and the western portion of the tribe of Manasseh. Many of the sites in Samaria held important places in Israelite history. Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal were the scene of the covenant renewal ceremony in Joshua's time (Joshua 8:30-35). Shechem, situated near Mount Gerizim, was an ancient Canaanite town that regained its earlier prosperity during the monarchy. The construction of the city of Samaria was begun by Omri about 880 B.C. and completed by his son Ahab (about 874-853

B.C.) Samaria became the new capital of Israel, and successive kings added to it and rebuilt sections to make it a well-fortified capital. But the city fell to the Assyrians in 722-721 B.C. Most of the leading citizens of the Northern Kingdom were deported to places in Syria, Assyria, and Babylonia. Sargon replaced the deported Israelites with foreign colonists (2 Kings 17:24). These newcomers intermarried among the Israelites who remained in Samaria. Later their numbers were increased when more Assyrian colonists were sent to the district of Samaria (Ezra 4:10). These people took the name Samaritans from the territory and attempted to settle the land. However, “they did not fear the Lord, and the Lord sent lions among them, which killed some of them” (2 Kings 17:25). In despair they sent to Assyria for “one of the priests” who would “teach them the rituals of the God of the land” (2 Kings 17:27). Thereafter the Samaritans worshipped the God of Israel. But they also continued their idolatry, worshipping the pagan gods imported from foreign lands (2 Kings 17:29). So the Samaritans were a “mixed race” contaminated by foreign blood and false worship. The final break between the Samaritans and the Jews occurred when the Samaritans built a rival temple on Mount Gerizim, claiming Shechem rather than Zion (Jerusalem) as the true “Beth-el” (house of God), the site traditionally chosen and blessed by the Lord. The Samaritans trace their beginnings to the time of Eli, who established the sanctuary for worship of God in Shiloh. They also believe their religion is distinctive because they base their beliefs and practices on the Torah, or the Law – the first five books of the Old Testament. They recognize no other Hebrew Scriptures as authoritative. (2)

**Sychar:** Sychar was the ancient Shechem where Abraham had dwelt, and Jacob also. (5)

**Sychar:** It was called *Sychar*; probably the same with *Sichem*, or *Shechem*, a place which we read much of in the Old Testament. Thus are the names of places commonly corrupted by tract of time. Shechem yielded the first proselyte that ever came into the church of Israel (Gen. 34:24), and now it is the first place where the gospel is preached out of the commonwealth of Israel; so Dr. Lightfoot observes; as also that the *valley of Achor*, which was given for a *door of hope*, hope to the poor Gentiles, ran along by this city, Hosea. 2:15. Abimelech was made king here; it was Jeroboam's royal seat; but the evangelist, when he would give us the antiquities of the place, takes notice of Jacob's interest there, which was more its honor than its crowned heads. [1.] Here lay Jacob's ground, the *parcel of ground which Jacob gave to his son Joseph*, whose bones were buried in it, Gen. 48:22; Jos. 24:32. Probably this is mentioned to intimate that Christ, when he reposed himself hard by here, took occasion from the ground which Jacob gave Joseph to meditate on the good report which the elders by faith obtained. Jerome chose to live in the land of Canaan, that the sight of the places might affect him the more with scripture stories. [2.] Here was Jacob's well which he digged, or at least used, for himself and his family. We find no mention of this well in the Old Testament; but the tradition was that it was Jacob's well. (31)

**Jacob's Well:** It still is there, as a matter of fact. Visit the Holy Land and see the ancient well of Jacob for yourself, once a welcome source of water in a parched parcel of ground that Jacob bequeathed to his son Joseph. (6)

**The Hate between the Jews and the Samaritans:** When the wicked ten tribes of Israel were deported by the Assyrians, the inhabitants of Israel were replaced by foreigners (II Kings 17:24) who inter-married with those left of Israel. They copied the worship of God, adding their own idolatry. (3)

**The hate between the Jews and the Samaritans:** Because of the ancient feud between the Jews and the Samaritans, no orthodox Jew would pass through Samaria if he could help it. The Samaritans were not real Jews, but descendants of Assyrians who had been colonized in Samaria after the conquest of that kingdom by the Assyrians. These colonists had been instructed by a priest of Israel sent to them from the captives in Assyria. The result was a dual worship, which combined the heathen idolatries with the worship of the true God. Their sacred mountain was Gerizim, where they built a temple. This was why the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. (5)

**Water:** The long mostly rainless summers cause most of the rivers in Palestine to dry up completely. Even the Jordan River becomes shallow, narrow, and muddy in the summer months. The early peoples of Palestine depended on rain during the spring and fall months for their water supply. Though scarce at other times during the year, the rain during these seasons kept the spring and wells flowing and cisterns full. The Jews became adept at gathering every bit of rainwater, storing it up for future use during the dry seasons. Cisterns, covered pools dug out of rock specifically for storing rainwater, were numerous. In Jerusalem, the temple area alone had thirty-seven cisterns, one of them large enough to hold over two million gallons of water. Gutters, pipes, and waterways directed the rainwater from the surface to the underground cistern, which would provide a constant supply of water, even during dry spells. Heavy dew provided a good share of the moisture required by crops growing in the summer months. The warm, cloudless nights of Palestinian summers provide prime conditions for dew to form. Where ample water was readily available, farmers irrigated crops and vineyards to maximize the produce received from a field. Drinking water was stored and carried in goatskins. Many towns and cities had drinking water for sale in their markets and on the streets. Only a minimal amount of water was used for washing, simply because it was so scarce. However, good hospitality required that a guest in someone's home receive a basin of water to wash at least his or her feet and hands after walking on the dusty roads (Genesis 18:4, John 13:5). Getting daily water from the neighborhood well or cistern was the duty of the younger women of a household. They would usually go to the well in the evening, when the air was cooler. It's interesting to note that the Samaritan woman went to the well at noon ("the sixth hour"), probably in order to avoid the other women, who may have looked down on her. (1)

**"Marveled That Jesus Talked With The Woman":** Why? First, they wondered that He, as a Rabbi or Teacher sent from God, talked with her because she was only a woman. Second, because she was a Samaritan woman with whom no Jew should have dealings. Third, because she was a sinner. Some versions speak of her as "*the* woman of Samaria," and she was likely well known because of her association with men. (2)

**"Call Thy Husband":** When Jesus said, "Call thy husband," He was not changing the subject but was compelling her to face her sin. (3)

**"Go, call they husband":** The purpose of Christ was to appeal to the woman's sense of sin, and show her that she could not drink – as no one can – of the Living Water until she had repented. (5)

**"Go, call your husband and come back." John 4:16:** Jesus wasn't being rude, just bowing to the custom of the day. Women – Good Girls, that is – didn't speak alone with a man in a public place. By asking her to call her husband to join them, the Lord was honoring her, saying in essence, "I know you're not a harlot." By inviting her to come back, he was assuring her of his interest in her welfare, rather than in something more carnal. (6)

**"Call your husband":** The challenge immediately shifted the woman's focus to the moral realm and to her true need. Yet the request was not improper. In that culture a married woman was not to talk with a strange man without her husband present. (8)

**Jesus Alone:** Jesus dismissed the disciples to go to the village of Sychar and buy bread. The fact that he sent all the disciples away arouses our interest. Was there something in Christ's mind that John did not tell us here – the conviction, the premonition that he was to meet this woman? There Christ sits alone by the well. It is one of the few times that we see Christ by himself. He was alone at the beginning of his ministry, when he was tempted of the devil in the ministry, when he was tempted of the devil in the wilderness; and alone when he prayed on the mountain top; and alone in the Garden of Gethsemane. (5)

**The Request for a drink:** Jesus said, "Give me to drink." There is nothing in John's story to indicate that the woman was in any way discourteous to Christ, or that she intended to refuse him a drink. But she knew at once, by his appearance, that he was a Jew; and she expressed her surprise that he should

deign to talk with a Samaritan woman – and still more, to make a request of her. There was perhaps more in that request of Christ’s than the woman understood. In his agony on the cross Christ cried, “I thirst!” And it was more than a thirst for water. It was a thirst for souls. So when he asked this woman for a drink, it was drink divine, too, that he wanted. He was athirst for a soul. (5)

**The Sixth Hour:** By Roman time, it was six o’clock in the evening; by Jewish time, twelve noon. Since most women went to the well at eventide and there wasn’t a water pot in sight yet, we’ll stick with the conventional reading and assume it was noon, the heat of the day. She chose the one time other women from Sychar wouldn’t be likely to show up. (6)

**Conversing with Jesus:** The longest conversation recorded between Jesus and anyone else in the Bible is between He and the Woman of Samaria. (6)

### Her Character

**So Many Strikes Against Her:** She was Samaritan, she was a woman, she was a non-Jew, (6)

**Samaritan and “Loose”:** Looked down upon by the Jews because she was a Samaritan, and disdained because of her many romantic liaisons, she would not have been most people’s first choice to advance the gospel in a region where it had not yet been heard. (1)

**Five Husbands:** How could any woman survive five husbands? Between warfare, famine, disease, pestilence, and fatal injury, men in those days didn’t have lengthy life spans. Since a woman in that society was doomed to poverty or worse as a widow, it behooved her to keep remarrying. Clearly she wasn’t a young woman, nor had life been kind to her. We can imagine the premature lines on her face, her skin leathered by the sun, her hands dotted with age spots. And calluses. We can fathom the hope that was born in her heart five times, only to be crushed again and again, sending her on yet another search for someone to love her, support her, comfort her, and protect her. (6)

**Living With A Man:** Five husbands was one thing. Excessive but not illegal. But living with a sixth man who was not her husband, well, that was fornication. No getting around that. (6)

**Poor:** Women of affluence did not draw water in those times. (2)

**Witness in Samaria:** When Philip the Evangelist returned some four years later, who to preach “in many villages of the Samaritans,” he doubtless met “the woman of Samaria” and realized how wonderfully the Holy Spirit had used her life and witness as well as the testimony of the Samaritans she had been the means of leading to Christ, to prepare the way for his miraculous ministry in Samaria. (2)

**Witness:** Forgetting she was thirsty, the woman hurried home. In her ardor she even forgot her precious water pot!! Like every one with true faith she walked in newness of life and made haste to tell others about Jesus! (3)

**Dissatisfied and Bitter:** When the fatigued young man said, “Give me a drink,” she sharply retorted, “How is it that *you* ask *me* for a drink? I know as well as you what you Jews think of us, the Samaritans. You think that you are far above us – not that I agree. Is it not beneath your dignity to ask a favor of me?” (3)

**Mocking:** “You surely are an arrogant Jew if you think you are greater than our father Jacob who digged this well and used it himself.” The pride and the confidence of the Jew as in Abraham (John 8:33,39), but the Samaritans boasted with as much gusto about father Jacob who had lived in the valley between the mountains of Gerizim (Deut. 11:29 and Joshua 8:32-35) and Ebal. Jacob had raised his large family and built his altars in the long shadows of the great Gerizim until Dinah had occasioned the shameful act against the Shechemites (Genesis 34 and 35:1). Jacob’s well remained a hollowed spot. (3)

**Skeptical, intelligent, irrepressible, gutsy, observant:** Jesus didn’t have a bucket, barrel, or bowl, and they both knew it. Still, he seemed confident enough. She pressed her point, and tossed in a bit of history, perhaps to impress him. (6)

**Feisty:** Did she confess her sin? Rend her garments? Reach for sackcloth and ashes? Beg for forgiveness. No way. She looked Jesus straight in the eye and, denying nothing, offered an astute observation: “Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet.” (John 4:19) Notice that the Samaritan woman neither denied nor affirmed the Lord’s prophetic word about the six men with whom she’d been intimate. Instead, she cleverly shifted their conversation in a completely different direction. “Our Fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.” John 4:20 (6)

**Believer:** Did she challenge this stranger who’d called himself – gasp! – the Messiah? Did she shake her water pot at his followers and label them fools? N, she did not. She believed. *Believed!* (6)

**Changed:** Why did the men of her city listen to her, a woman with a shady lifestyle? Simple: She had seen the Christ. Now the people of Sychar saw the Christ in her. A changed life gets people’s attention every time. (6)

### Her Sorrow

**Spurned by Society:** To have lived in a way that probably relegated her to the margins of her society. (1)

### Her Joy

**Jesus Revealed Himself To Her:** That Jesus broke through barriers of culture, race, and religion in order to reveal himself to her. (1)

### Her Promises, Her Lessons, Her Legacy

**The Ultimate Thirst Quencher:** Are you thirsty? Is there a longing in you that you just can’t seem to meet? Do you hunger for something to fill some void, some emptiness you can’t even explain? Look everywhere, try everything – you’ll find nothing in this world that will satisfy. Only Jesus can provide the living water that will fill you to overflowing, that will satisfy your every longing, that will soothe your thirst so completely you’ll never be thirsty again. (1)

**Water I Meant To Be Shared, Not Hoarded:** The Samaritan woman could have tried to keep the good news about the Messiah to herself, conjuring up convincing arguments about how unkind and judgmental the townspeople all were. But the reality was, she *couldn’t* keep it a secret even if she’d wanted to. Her joy was too full. Her face was too radiant. Her heart was too changed. Sharing her faith with others wasn’t a Monday night missions requirement; it was the unavoidable outpouring of a woman whose spiritual cup suddenly raneth over. Acts 20:24 I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace. (6)

**No Excuses:** The woman of Samaria did not have a Christian home environment and her meager knowledge of the Truth was fused with pagan practices. She had wasted her life in immorality. She was despised even by her own confused countrymen. She found Jesus late in her wasted life, but she joyously stepped through heaven’s portals into eternity with her arms full of sheaves. Shall we who walk in the glow of the gospel light “come rejoicing, bringing in the sheaves?” (3)

**Don’t Judge a Book:** Before her hard veneer dissolved in Jesus’ grace, the Samaritan woman attempted one of the classic dodges you’ll meet in trying to share your faith with others – the doctrinal hot button. Her volley in verse 20 over orthodox worship sites has been replaced today by topics such as fallen preachers, denominational differences, and general hypocrisy. But most of these maneuvers are just smokescreens that help lost people hide their needs and fears behind their clever opinions. Stick to your testimony. No one can argue with that. (4)

**He Already Knows:** What a gift Christ gave her in letting her know that he was aware of this and of all the rest as well. If he had offered her living water without ever revealing that he knew all the truth about her, perhaps she would have let his words of life bypass her, thinking, *If you only knew*. But he loved her enough to let her know, “I know it all, and I still love you.” That unfamiliar and glorious gift changed her life so that, even as she was gulping it down, she was running to tell others the Good News. (Sheila Walsh) (4)

**Sharing Testimony:** Two things happen when we meet the Christ and see him for who he really is: 1. We confess our sins openly, and 2. We share the good news of forgiveness freely. That confession – testimony, if you will – comes effortlessly. It’s the fragrant aroma of a heart set free. The woman herself, then, becomes a teacher. The Samaritan woman taught not with books but with her life. Her faith couldn’t be contained. It flowed through every crack and crevice of her being. (6)

**Never Be Afraid To Ask Questions:** The Samaritan woman wasn’t shy about pressing for answers and didn’t hesitate to ask for clarification. Sometimes we’re afraid to wade into theological waters with someone more knowledgeable than we are for fear we’ll ask the wrong questions or appear foolish. Take the risk. Find out what you need to know. If the Lord has provided a teacher, be a willing student. James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. (6)

**Not Lying Isn’t The Same As Telling The Truth:** The Lord knows us intimately, just as Jesus knew everything about this woman. She didn’t confess her sexual sins; instead, he had to gently point it out to her. God used her subterfuge to reveal his true identity as prophet and Messiah. For those of us who already know the Lord – and are known by him – such word games are no longer appropriate. Wise is the woman who, when her sins are revealed, confesses, repents, and rejoices in the knowledge that even though Jesus sees through our smoke screen, he loves us completely. Psalm 32:5 Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord” – and you forgave the guilt of my sin. (6)

**Thirst is a Gift From God:** The woman was eager to find a way around her daily trips to the well, perhaps to avoid the labor and nuisance of it and most certainly to escape the raised eyebrows of her neighbors. Yet it was her thirst that put her in the path of the Messiah. It was her bodily thirst that led to a spiritual quenching. Just as in the physical realm, thirst is a God-given safety measure that sends us reaching for the nearest glass of water, in the spiritual realm, thirst is a sign we need a time of refreshment with our only source of living water. Psalm 42:2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? (6)

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*Please note that NO information contained in this study is original work of Susan McGeown, unless otherwise noted.*

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