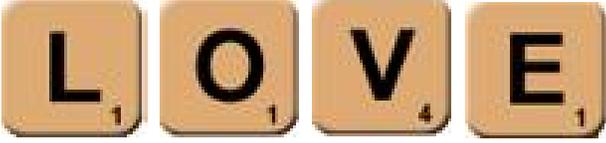


# Story 2: Woman at the Well

God's  Changes Everything

*(Remember to set up your space: Altar cloth in the center of your circle, unlit candle in the middle, letter tiles scattered, water bottle, flip flop, question mark, and scripture book around the candle. YOUR WATER BOTTLE SHOULD BE EMPTY FOR THIS LESSON.)*

*Additional Supplies Needed:*

*Copies of the strips for Gathering Activity*

*Copies of the cross for the Breath Prayer*

*Pitcher of water*

*Roll of wide masking/painters' tape*

*Markers*

OPENING RITUAL:

Leader: **We gather together as God's people, intentionally seeking a word from God, believing that God's word has the power to change us.**

LETTER TILES FOR THIS SESSION: Leaving the other letters scattered, pull out the letters L-O-V-E, spelling the word LOVE on your altar area.

STORY FOCUS: God's love changes everything.

GATHERING ACTIVITY: Give everyone a strip of paper from the sheet provided. Have them fill in the blank. "I would love to go to \_\_\_\_\_ and have this water bottle filled with \_\_\_\_\_." Tell them to be creative. Examples: "I would love to go to Disney and fill this water bottle with Dole Whip" or "I would love to go to Gustavus Adolphus College and have this water bottle filled with money". Pass the water bottle around and have them read their strip to the group. Then they should fold their strip and put it in the water bottle.

THE STORY:

Give a volunteer "The Word" Scripture Book and have them read the first section of scripture from today's text: John 4: 1-4

*Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard, "Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John" <sup>2</sup>—although it was not Jesus himself but his disciples who baptized— <sup>3</sup>he left Judea and started back to Galilee. <sup>4</sup>But he had to go through Samaria.*

Leader: **Jesus did not “have” to go through Samaria for geographical reasons. There was a more traveled route to Galilee. Jesus may have more accurately said “I would love to go to Samaria and fill someone else’s water bottle”. Jesus “has” to go to Samaria because Jesus desires to make clear that God goes with great love to all people. God calls us to do the same.**

RITUAL ACTION: Light the Candle

Leader: **We light the candle to remind us of God’s presence with us and with others.**

RETURN TO THE STORY: John 4: 5-7

*<sup>5</sup>So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup>Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon. <sup>7</sup>A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” <sup>8</sup>(His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.)*

RITUAL ACTION: Flip Flop – Holy Ground

Stop and recognize “holy ground” moments.

Leader: **In our first story, God tells Moses to take off his shoes for he is standing on “holy ground”. God’s presence and Moses’ awareness of that presence makes it “holy ground”. In today’s story, the Samaritan woman has come to the well to collect water as she would on any ordinary day. Jesus shows up in the middle of her ordinary day, while she is doing an ordinary task.**

One member of your group should pick up the flip flop and share a response:

Leader: **How have you experienced “holy ground” since our last gathering? Share a time in your ordinary days, during an ordinary task, that you became aware of God’s presence in your life.**

Continue around the circle until everyone has had a chance to share.

RETURN TO THE STORY: John 4: 9-27

*<sup>9</sup>The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?” (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) <sup>10</sup>Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.”*

*<sup>11</sup>The woman said to him, “Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? <sup>12</sup>Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?” <sup>13</sup>Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup>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.” <sup>15</sup>The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.” <sup>16</sup>Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come back.” <sup>17</sup>The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; <sup>18</sup>for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!” <sup>19</sup>The woman said to him, “Sir, I see that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup>Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.” <sup>21</sup>Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup>You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup>But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. <sup>24</sup>God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” <sup>25</sup>The woman said to him, “I know that the Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.” <sup>26</sup>Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you.”

<sup>27</sup>Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, “What do you want?” or, “Why are you speaking with her?”

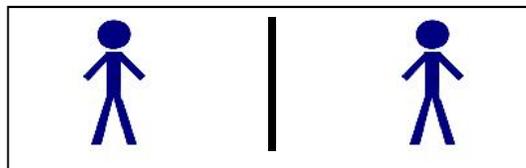
#### REFLECTING ON SCRIPTURE:

(Ask for two volunteers, one to be Jesus and one to be the woman. Stand the volunteers directly across from one another on opposite sides of your space.)



Leader: (point to your one volunteer) **The Samaritan woman asks Jesus** (point to your other volunteer) **“How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?”**

(Make a tape line across the center between your two volunteers, creating a boundary between them.)



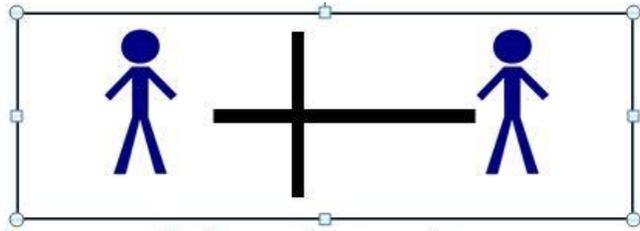
Leader: **Jews and Samaritans were cultural enemies. During the time of exile, Jews did not marry foreigners while Samaritans did. The Samaritans had relationships with those who believed in other gods. When the exile ended, Jews returned to rebuild the original temple in Jerusalem, while Samaritans were content to worship in a different location. This woman was a Samaritan. Jesus was a Jew.**

Gender roles were very different in the time of Jesus. Women were often considered property and were not allowed to speak to a man as the woman does in this text. A man would not have approached a woman as Jesus does in this text.

This woman has been married five times and is now living with another man. Religious piety would have kept the righteous from engaging with her.

(Starting at the feet of the “Jesus” volunteer, make a second tape line all the way to your second volunteer representing the woman.)

Leader: Jesus had to go through Samaria.



(Have your “Jesus” volunteer walk down the tape line to your other volunteer.)

Leader: **God’s love, shown to us through the gift of Jesus Christ, changes everything.**

(Leave the tape cross on the floor and have your volunteers return to your circle)

RETURN TO SCRIPTURE: John 4: 28-29

*<sup>28</sup>Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, <sup>29</sup>“Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?”*

Leader: **The woman comes to the well empty. She believes she will fill her water jar and return to her life as it is. Instead she finds that Christ has come to fill her with the love of God, a love that crosses boundaries, forgives sin, knows us deeply, and holds us into eternal life.**

*REFLECTION ACTIVITY:*

*(Take the water bottle and very intentionally empty it of all the papers you used for the gathering activity.)*

Leader: **We often think we know what we need. We fill our selves and our lives with people, places, programs, and things that make us feel over-filled but still thirsty, still needing to feel loved by our Creator. After encountering Jesus, the woman leaves behind her bucket. She runs back to her community with news of Christ who has filled her and longs to fill others.**

Pass around the empty water bottle and a pitcher of water. Give each person a chance to share: **What is over-filling your life but not really filling you as a child of God?** (Examples: My life is super full of soccer practices and tournament games right now and I don't have time for anything else. OR My life is super full of homework and it is making me feel stressed out. OR My life is super full of friends that I am always trying to keep happy.)

**What might you need to leave behind to make room for Christ to fill and use you?** (I need to leave behind my trying to be perfect and take time to remember God loves me as I am. OR I need to leave behind some of my crazy schedule to make room to be still with God. OR I need to spend less time filling my time with tech and more time letting God use me to reach out to others.) After each person shares, they should add a little water to the water bottle.

After everyone has shared, fill the remaining space in the bottle and read:

***“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.”***

SCRIPTURE CONTINUES: John 4: 30-42

*<sup>30</sup>They left the city and were on their way to him. <sup>31</sup>Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, “Rabbi, eat something.” <sup>32</sup>But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” <sup>33</sup>So the disciples said to one another, “Surely no one has brought him something to eat?” <sup>34</sup>Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. <sup>35</sup>Do you not say, ‘Four months more, then comes the harvest’? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. <sup>36</sup>The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. <sup>37</sup>For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ <sup>38</sup>I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.” <sup>39</sup>Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I have ever done.” <sup>40</sup>So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. <sup>41</sup>And many more believed because of his word. <sup>42</sup>They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world.”*

RITUAL ACTION: QUESTIONS

Leader: **The word of God does not only come to us with answers but rather to stir up within in us deep questions. The woman encounters Jesus and asks “He cannot be the Messiah can he?” What is one question you have after encountering this scripture text? (A question about the text itself or a question about God or a question about your faith or your call?)**

Pass around the question mark giving everyone a chance to share a question. Then place the question mark on the altar saying:

Leader: **We bring our questions to you God. Amen.**

PRAYER:

Leader: **The woman is filled with the love of Christ and she goes out and tells others. The other Samaritans come to Jesus and he stays with them and they are filled with the love of Christ and proclaim, “Truly he is the Savior of the world.”**

Give each person a copy of the “Fill me, use me” cross at the end of this lesson. Everyone will need a marker and a quiet place to pray. Share instructions for this breath prayer.

Leader: **We are going to spend a few minutes praying that God will fill us and use us. Find a space where you can still hear me but can be quietly in prayer by yourself.**

**Start by slowly drawing lines down the arrow of the cross that says “Fill me”. As you draw each line, breathe in and imagine Jesus coming to you as he did the woman at the well.**

(pause)

**Draw lines down this same arrow with each breath in and imagine Jesus saying “I have to go to (your name)”. Jesus crosses boundaries, forgives your sin, knows you deeply, and holds you into life eternal. Jesus desires to fill you.**

(pause)

**Now move over to the horizontal line. Draw a line following the horizontal arrow of the cross. This time focus on your breathing out. Filled with the love of God, we are sent out into the world to tell others “Come and see this man, the Messiah”.**

(pause)

**Draw another line, as you breathe out, remembering we are sent to carry this love out into the world. We are sent to cross boundaries, forgive sins, and know others deeply.**

**Take time to breathe in with the words “Fill me” and out with the words “use me”. If it helps you focus, continue drawing lines down the vertical arrow and across the horizontal. Repeat the lines with each breath.**

We pray.... (pause)

**SENDING RITUAL ACTION:** Call everyone back to the circle and take the water bottle and pass it around the circle. The person holding the water bottle should bless the person on their left. For today’s blessing, dip your hand in the water and place your finger on their forehead saying the word “Loved”. Then trace the sign of the cross on their forehead saying the word “Filled” for the vertical line and “Sent” for the horizontal line.

**I would love to go to \_\_\_\_\_**  
**and have this water bottle filled with \_\_\_\_\_.**

**I would love to go to \_\_\_\_\_**  
**and have this water bottle filled with \_\_\_\_\_.**

**I would love to go to \_\_\_\_\_**  
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**and have this water bottle filled with \_\_\_\_\_.**

