

"Fishers of Men" Series

Watch Me: Learning Evangelism from Jesus

"Sir, Give Me This Water"

John 4:1-42

Before Jesus told the Apostles to "go," He led them to "watch."

He didn't just teach the gospel - He lived it in front of them. Before He sent them two-by-two (Luke 10), before He gave them the Great Commission (Matt. 28), they learned from Him, in large part by watching and listening to what He did and said.

In the text before us, Jesus doesn't teach a seminar on evangelism. He sits down at a well and talks to a woman no one else would have talked to - and it changes everything.

In our last study in this series on "Fishers of Men," we found Jesus calling us to become just that - fishers of men. In this study, we will find how He fished - and how we can learn by watching and listening to Him.

NOTE: Let me make a point here - Much of what we read in the Gospels is Jesus doing the work of ministry and His disciples learning by following, watching, and listening. But that doesn't mean Jesus didn't also teach them directly. Scripture makes it clear that He gave both personal instruction and public demonstration. He didn't just tell them to become fishers of men - He showed them what it looked like, and then He trained them to do the same.

I. SEE THE NEED - VS. 1-6

A. Jesus saw the spiritual need of others and left us

an illustration to follow - vs. 4-5.

Why Was It Important That Jesus Went Through Samaria?

- Most Jews in Jesus' day avoided Samaria, even if it meant taking the longer route around it.
- Why? Because of a centuries-old rift between Jews and Samaritans.
- Samaritans were seen as ethnically mixed and religiously compromised.
 - The city of Samaria was the capital of the northern ten tribes known as Israel in the Old Testament, made that by Omri, King of Israel.
 - It was populated by Assyrians after the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722 BC, and the Assyrians and Jews intermarried, for which they were hated by the "pure" Jews (2 Kings 17:24-41).
- They only accepted the first five books of the Bible and worshiped at Mount Gerizim, not Jerusalem.
- Tensions ran so deep that Jews would often refuse to even speak to Samaritans (John 4:9 confirms this).

So when Jesus **intentionally walks through Samaria**, He's not just taking a path – He's making a point:

The gospel doesn't avoid people. It goes directly to them – even the ones others would rather ignore.

What's Significant About Sychar?

Sychar was likely near the ancient city of Shechem, which carried deep spiritual history:

- It was where God first promised the land to Abraham (Genesis 12:6-7).
- It's near where Jacob gave land to Joseph and dug a well (John 4:5-6).
- It's a place of covenant, inheritance, and spiritual significance.

Jesus chooses this spot – a place tied to old promises – to show that a new promise is being offered: not land or lineage, but living water for all who believe.

The place that symbolized division became the stage for restoration. Jesus sat on Jacob's well to offer living water to someone no one else would have chosen. That's the gospel.

B. No matter how weary we are from the journey, no matter how tired we are from the battle, we must see the need - vs. 6.

This is one of the few verses in the Gospels where we're told directly that Jesus was physically tired. The word κοπιάω (*kopiaō*) translated "wearied" means exhausted from hard labor—the kind of fatigue you feel deep in your bones. Jesus was fully God, but also fully human – and in this moment, His humanity is on full display.

What makes this significant?

Even in exhaustion, Jesus saw the need. He sat down not only to rest but also because a divine appointment was coming – a broken, spiritually thirsty woman on her way to the well.

He didn't let fatigue become an excuse to ignore the opportunity. He didn't push her away or

pretend not to see her. He engaged her, despite His own weariness.

How often do we miss divine appointments because we're tired, distracted, or just "done for the day"?

Jesus shows us that sometimes the greatest ministry moments happen when we feel least ready – but God is still working through us.

II. START THE CONVERSATION – VS. 7-10

But Jesus didn't just see the need – He moved toward it. He didn't stay silent at the well. He spoke. And what He said opened the door to everything that followed.

A. Jesus begins with a simple request – vs. 7

Jesus initiates the conversation. This doesn't seem like that big of a deal but in the culture of the day, this was highly unusual.

- Men didn't speak publicly to women in this culture.
- Most women drew water in groups during cooler hours. She comes alone – this hints at shame or rejection.
- Jews certainly didn't engage Samaritans – especially not with kindness. But Jesus isn't interested in what's culturally accepted – He's interested in souls.

He doesn't begin with a sermon; He begins with a question. He meets her where she is, not where she should be.

Sometimes evangelism begins by receiving, not giving—by engaging someone where *they* are capable, not where we want to take them.

B. The setup (narrator's note, so to speak) - vs. 8

This isn't a mistake—Jesus is **alone** for a reason. The disciples are out of the way. The moment is intentionally private and completely undistracted.

He isn't modeling crowd evangelism here – He's showing us how to reach someone one-on-one.

Don't underestimate the value of a quiet, personal conversation. Some of the most powerful gospel encounters happen with no one else watching (the conversion of D. L. Moody is a great illustration of this).

D. L. Moody, the famous Evangelist, when eighteen years of age, was a boot salesman in his uncle's store in Boston. His Sunday School teacher was a Mr. Kimball, and he had set his heart on winning the young man for Christ. After praying about the matter, he arranged to visit him at the boot store. "I was determined," to use his own words, "to speak to him about Christ and about his soul, and started down to Holton's boot store. When I was nearly there I began to wonder whether I ought to go in just then during business hours. I thought my call might embarrass the boy, and that when I went away the other clerks would ask who I was, and taunt him with my efforts in trying to make him a good boy. In the meantime I had passed the store, and, discovering this, I determined to make a dash for it, and have it over at once. I found him in the back part of the building wrapping up shoes. I went up to him at once, and putting my hand on his shoulder, I made what I felt afterwards was a very weak plea for Christ. I don't know just what words I used, nor could Mr. Moody tell. I simply told him of Christ's love for him, and the love Christ wanted in return. That was all there was. It seemed the

young man was just ready for the light that then broke upon him, and there in the back of that store in Boston, D. L. Moody gave himself and his life to Christ."

C. The woman's shocked response - vs. 9

This isn't just idle conversation Jesus had with her – it's shocking so she immediately throws up walls:

- I'm a Samaritan not an Israelite
- I'm a woman (you shouldn't even be talking to me in public).
- I'm not a Jew – I don't believe what you believe.

But Jesus doesn't back away. He listens. He lets her speak. And then, He lovingly redirects the conversation.

Sometimes the people you talk to will respond with confusion, skepticism, or even defensiveness. That's okay. Let them talk – then point them to what matters.

D. The shift to spiritual conversation - vs. 10

- Jesus gently moves from physical thirst to spiritual need.
- He introduces two things previously unknown to the woman:
 - a) The gift of God (eternal life / Himself) – the Greek phrase for "gift" (τὴν δωρεάν τοῦ Θεοῦ), means the generous, unearned gift of God. It points both to what He gives (eternal life) and to who He is – the One sent by the Father.
 - The gift is Jesus Himself (the incarnate Word – John 3:16)
 - The gift is what He offers: eternal life, symbolized by "living water."

Revelation 22:1-2

¹ And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. ² In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, *was there* the tree of life, which bare twelve *manner of* fruits, *and* yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations.

Revelation 22:17

¹⁷ And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

b) The identity of the one speaking (the Messiah)

1 John 5:20

²⁰ And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

Don't underestimate the power of planting the seed of curiosity. Evangelism doesn't always start by explaining everything – it often starts by inviting someone to think: *"What if there's more to life than what you've known?"*

III. STIR THE THIRST – VS. 11-15

Jesus has planted the seed: *"If you knew the gift of God..."* Now He begins to gently draw her in, using something familiar – water – to introduce something eternal. He didn't just engage her mind – He stirred her heart.

A. She was confused with the spiritual offer – vs. 11-12

She's still thinking literally: no bucket, no rope, deep well.

She doesn't yet understand that He's speaking of a different kind of water – spiritual life.

And then she asks, almost sarcastically, *"Are thou greater than our father Jacob?"*

The irony is powerful: she's talking to the One who created Jacob.

Don't be discouraged when people don't "get it" right away. Stay patient. Confusion often precedes conviction.

B. Jesus clarifies the contrast - vs. 13

"Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again..."

Jesus doesn't dismiss her question—He builds on it.

He contrasts the well she knows with the well she needs. Jacob's water satisfies the body—for a while. But people keep coming back because the thirst returns.

The point: Earthly solutions never fully satisfy.

Whether it's relationships, success, religion, or even tradition – we always come up empty again.

What "wells" do people in your life keep returning to that never satisfy?

What "bucket" are they using that's coming up dry?

C. The Gospel invitation - vs. 14

Now Jesus reveals the heart of His offer:

- It's for anyone ("whosoever")
- It's deeply satisfying ("shall never thirst")

- It becomes a well inside – “a well of water springing up into everlasting life”

This is not just about getting eternal life later – it’s about having a source of life now.

The living water is:

- Eternal life (John 3:16)
- The Spirit of God (John 7:37-39)

John 7:37-39

³⁷ In the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, *If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.* ³⁸ *He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.* ³⁹ (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet *given*; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

- Fellowship with Christ Himself (John 17:3)

John 17:3

³ *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*

Only Jesus offers water that satisfies both now and forever. When we speak to people about the gospel, we’re not offering religion – we’re offering rest for the soul.

D. Her longing surfaces - vs. 15

“Sir, give me this water...”

She still doesn’t fully understand – but she wants what He’s offering.

That’s the beginning of faith: not full comprehension, but honest desire.

Before you can secure a soul, you must stir a thirst.

And Jesus did exactly that.

Conclusion to this point: Do we see the need to be “fishers of men”? Do we see people around us, in our everyday life, that need the Savior, that need the “living water”?

If we do, then we need to start a conversation. We don't need to have all the answers, we don't need to explain everything to them - we just need to start. And as we start and give them the truth of the gospel, the Holy Spirit of God will stir the thirst for more within them.

We just need to plant the seed and see what God will do.

Sophie Lichtenfell was but a humble, German washerwoman, yet, any minister would envy her record of souls won for the Lord. Dr. R A Forrest, president of Toccoa Falls Institute, who was supposed to have preached her funeral sermon, revived the well-known story of “Sophie the Washerwoman.” He related the following incidents relative to her zeal for souls and relative to her funeral:

“Rainin’!” “Yes, it is raining very hard.” “It’s nice to be under a shelter.” “Yes.” “Are you sheltered from the wrath of Gott?” “I don’t know.” “Have you a mudder?” “She has been dead for a long time.” “Didn’t your mudder pray for you?”

These words of a barrel-shaped, German washerwoman in New York, uttered while standing under an awning during a shower, resulted in the conversion of the man to whom the words were spoken. Years afterward, when the washerwoman lay dead, the man came to her funeral, and just before the sermon was to be preached, arose and told the above incident to a large audience.

That started a testimony meeting; the sermon was never preached. One after another, men and women in all walks in life arose spontaneously to tell how Sophie Lichtenfell led them to Christ. There was one solid row of streetcar conductors. Everyone loved

Sophie the Washerwoman because she spoke to high and low alike about her Savior and their need of Him.

Sophie's pastor, the famous Dr. AB Simpson, had preceded her in death by one day. Someone thoughtfully suggested retaining a bouquet of flowers from his funeral for Sophie's, so that the contrast would not be too painful. But such fears were needless. Dr. RA Forrest, the minister who was to have preached her funeral sermon, states that the entire front of the church was a solid bank of flowers—tangible evidence of the love and affection the big city had for a humble washerwoman who spoke much, though brokenly, of her Savior.

IV. SPEAK THE TRUTH - VS. 16-26

V. SPARK THE WITNESS - VS. 27-30

VI. SHARE THE HARVEST - VS. 31-42