

John 4:1-38 - Responding to Jesus

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[0 : 00] Good morning everyone. The reading today is going to be from John chapter 1 to 32.!

So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. When the Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, Will you give me a drink? His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.

The Samaritan woman said to him, You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink? For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.

Jesus answered her, If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water. Sir, the woman said, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep.

[1 : 30] Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock?

Jesus answered, Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again. But whoever drinks of the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water, welling up to eternal life.

The woman said to him, Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water. He told her, Go, call your husband and come back.

I have no husband, she replied. Jesus said to her, You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you have now is not your husband. What you have said is quite true. Sir, the woman said, I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshipped on the mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is Jerusalem.

[2 : 45] Woman, Jesus replied, Believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father, neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know.

We worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in the spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks.

God is spirit and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth. The woman said, I know that Messiah. Christ, called Christ, is coming.

When he comes, he will explain everything to us. Then Jesus declared, I, the one speaking to you, I am he. 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? Then leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, Come, see a man who told me everything I've ever done.

[3 : 59] Could this be the Messiah? They came out of the town and made their way towards him. Meanwhile, his disciples urged him, Rabbi, eat something.

But he said to them, I have food to eat that you know nothing about. Then his disciples said to each other, could someone have bought him food? My food, said Jesus, is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.

Don't you say, don't you have a saying, it is still four months until harvest? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields.

They are ripe for harvest. Even now, the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life. So that the sower and the reaper may be glad together.

Thus the saying, one sows and another reaps, is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work and you have reaped the benefits of their labor.

[5 : 05] May God bless his word. Good morning, Wes Kilburn. Good morning. So we're going to start our series.

Let me get a timer on here really quick. We're going to start and restart our series. It was called Encounters with Jesus. So we've been going through the Book of Romans. Don't worry, next week Steve will be back to look at the Book of Romans again.

But we're going to take a slight reprieve here. And we're going to talk about encounters with Jesus. Now, I don't know about you, but whenever I meet somebody, somebody new, I can't help but compare myself to them.

This happened actually just this week when I was playing basketball. There was a guy that normally doesn't come. He was new this week. So I normally play with a group. About 15 to 20 of us play basketball on a Thursday.

And there was this guy that came that was new this week. And so automatically you start making comparisons, right? I saw him and I saw him start to warm up. And I went, hey, you know, this guy, he's pretty good at basketball.

[6 : 08] But automatically my brain went to something very skeptical. And I was like, well, he's good right now, but we haven't started playing. So maybe, maybe we'll see how this translates into the game.

Very quickly, I went from skeptical to practical because he was put on the other team. And I was the one that was tasked with guarding him. So very practically, I thought, okay, I got to know, you know, how's he shoot?

Where is he going to go? How does he drive? So I was thinking very practically about this, these types of things. One time up and down the court, I went from practical to beneficial. I was thinking, hey, you know, actually this will be quite good for me.

You know, the level of skill or my basketball, my basketball excellence, I'm like right in the middle. I'm not very good. Okay, so you need to know that before we continue on with the rest of the story. But I'm also not like terrible. I'm just like right there in the middle. And so I was going, you know what, this will be good for me. You play against somebody that's better than you. You'll say, okay, you know, iron sharpens iron here.

[7 : 09] You know, I'll be better. And as I was thinking this, I went from beneficial, that thought process, to what I stayed in the rest of the night, which is what we'll call surrender.

Because as I was thinking, oh, this will be very beneficial for me, I just got down to guard him. And then all of a sudden, the next thing I knew, he was behind me scoring a goal.

So you don't need to know a lot about basketball to realize that's not very good. So quickly, I found out, and the rest of my teammates found out as well, that I should not be guarding that guy.

And so I guarded somebody else. So that quickly went from, this will be good for me, to, yeah, I'm going to guard somebody else. So that is the surrender response. Today, in our story, here in John 4, we're going to say that the woman at the well, she has these four responses as well when she meets Jesus.

See, she's going to move from being skeptical of Jesus, to thinking very practically about Jesus, to thinking how he can be beneficial before she finally surrenders to him.

[8 : 20] And when she surrenders to him, just like me at basketball, she will get a new assignment as well. But this one is going to be greater than anything she could imagine.

So let's dive into the passage. Let's start here in verses 1 through 6. Verses 1 through 6 basically give us a snapshot of what had been happening before. As I said, it's been a little while since we have been in our encounters with Jesus series.

But if you remember, the last time that I preached, we were talking about Nicodemus, right? And Nicodemus was a Jewish Pharisee who wanted to figure out what does it mean to be born again? Well, Jesus had been spreading this good news and this gospel of what it means to be born again all throughout Jerusalem. And, well, it kind of became a problem. It was not very safe for him to stay in Jerusalem anymore.

So him and his disciples, they packed up their tents, and they decided to move north. And as they're moving north, they have to go through Samaria. Now, if you know anything about the New Testament, you know that the Samaritans and Jews might as well have been cats and dogs.

[9 : 25] They did not get along. And see, so this is where we are as Jesus, with the sun high in the sky, goes through the town of Sychar, and he stops to get a drink from a well.

He sends his disciples into town, and here comes a Samaritan woman. And he asked this woman for a drink. Let's pick the story up in verse 9.

Go ahead and look at your Bibles there if you have them. It says, Sir, the woman said, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep.

Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this well and drunk from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?

You see that this woman's response when she first encounters Jesus is skepticism. She says, Wait a minute. Aren't you a Jew?

[10:46] Like, we don't get along. Why are you asking me for water? I mean, they don't get along so much that the gospel writer John puts in here an explanation that they are water and oil.

They don't get along. So that's why it's so strange when she questions him. It's very abnormal. It would be like if you're walking down the street in London, and somebody comes out and hands you a hundred pound note.

It says, Here you go. Take this. That's not, you're not going to respond and go, Oh yeah, just a normal Tuesday. If you do, let's be friends. But, instead, you're going to go, Wait.

Why? Am I being filmed? Is there something happening here? And so that's how weird this interaction was for Jesus and this woman at the well. But yet, Jesus, ever the evangelist, continues pressing on.

And he says, Actually, if you knew who was asking you for a drink, you would ask about this living water. And again, the woman, she responds with skepticism.

[11:52] She doesn't quite understand. She says, Wait a minute. Who did you say you are again? This well is deep. And let me double check. Yeah, you don't have a bucket. What are you doing?

She says, Are you actually going to be greater than our father Jacob? who, who through his persistence and altruism, dug a well that has watered our cattle and our families for centuries. Are you better than him? See, you can tell this woman is not bought in, right? She has a ton of questions. And if we think about it, this can be like us when we engage Jesus today, isn't it? Maybe you walked in here today because a friend invited you. Or maybe you came because you just were walking by the street and felt like the Lord was calling you in today.

Whatever it is, maybe you are here and you are surprised that you have made it this far in the sermon without lightning striking your seat. You're thinking, Man, if these people knew what I did last night, they would have double locked the doors and not let me in.

[12:59] Or maybe you're thinking, Based on some of the things that I have said in my past, I cannot believe that I am sitting here today. Just like the woman at the well, you have questions for Christians.

You've heard the name of Jesus be used not for the betterment of society, but to its detriment. Maybe you have friends, loved ones, people you care about, or maybe even yourself that has been hurt by people that call themselves Christians.

Or maybe, again, you're the other person that has done their research and you're going, Hey, this doesn't add up. There are millions of books that have been written. Why is this one, the Bible, quote unquote, inspired?

This Bible, these stories, they're not real. This is just a fairy tale. God's not real. This doesn't belong in the world. And if God really loved me, why would I be single?

Why would I not have a mom anymore? Why am I unwell? but despite all of these questions, you find yourself sitting at West Kilburn Baptist Church today.

[14:15] You can't get rid of this nagging feeling that there is something bigger than you out there. You think life has got to be more than just a chance accident, and you think there's got to be more to life than work on Monday and drinks on Friday.

I think you can identify a lot with the woman at the well here, can't you? Did you notice what time the woman was at the well? Verse 6 shows us noon.

Women did not go to the well at noon. They either went early in the morning or late at night. So why is this woman going to fetch water at the hottest part of the day?

It's because she's an outcast. She's not a part of the religious elite. She's actually quite the opposite, which we'll find out in just a minute. And I am sure she was asking similar questions to you.

She's thinking, why has my life turned out this way, God? Why can't I keep a relationship? Why, God, do you even care that I exist?

[15:24] And here, in one of her lowest moments of the day, where she is reminded every single day that she is alone, that she is a social outcast, Jesus meets her.

And he doesn't shy away from her, but instead he presses deeper. So that's the first response. You can be skeptical to Jesus. You're going to see the woman at the well then moves into another response. And this one is practical. Let's look at verse 13. The woman at the well here is much like Nicodemus just one chapter earlier.

She hears what Jesus is saying, and she's thinking very practically. She's thinking Jesus must mean practically here. Never be thirsty again. Somebody's offering you, you don't ever have to drink again.

You don't have to come and draw this water. You don't have to lug a water jug out here in this hottest part of the day. Sign me up. And again, I think this is a common response when we encounter Jesus.

[16:50] See, the pragmatist hears the gospel and hears somebody say, hey, the gospel has changed my life. And they say, sign me up. Who doesn't want a changed life?

But very practically, they come to church. They sit through the service. They sing a song. They hear the sermon. And they pray a prayer. And they say, okay, great.

Now my life will be perfect. But do their problems disappear? Not at all. So instead, they come back.

Maybe they say, maybe God just didn't hear me. I didn't have, you know, the words in the right order. Maybe God has Vodafone and the coverage was out that day. Whatever it is, maybe I'll just try again. And they keep treating Jesus like a genie.

Let me speak directly to you if you are the pragmatist in the room today. Jesus is not a genie. You cannot rub the lamp and get your three wishes just because you prayed a prayer and how you want your life to turn out.

[17:55] Jesus is not a genie. He is a savior. And when he comes back, it will not be beside a well. He will come back on a white horse with fire in his eyes, a robe dipped in blood, a crown rightfully put on his head, and tattooed across his body.

It will say, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Does this sound like somebody that's coming to grant your wishes? No. This is a savior.

So pragmatists in the room today, do not be fooled. God is not a spirit in the sky waiting to meet every one of your needs. He is Lord. If you want to have a relationship with him, you either follow him as Lord or you prepare to meet his wrath.

There is no in between. See, let's look at Jesus' response here.

He knows that the woman at the well is just not getting it. So he presses her even deeper and brings up her sexual past. So we don't know any more specifics about this woman at the well than what is listed right here.

[19:11] We don't know if she had five husbands because all five of her husbands have died, and now the guy that she is with now is looking around and going, I know what happens when people say, I do to you.

I'm good. Or maybe all of her husbands divorced her. Maybe she divorced her husbands. Maybe she was unfaithful. We don't know. But either way, we do know that she is dealing with an immense amount of shame.

And Jesus knows that just saying a little prayer or repeating a little mantra to herself is not going to help. He needs to go deeper. He has to go to her heart.

So this brings us now to the third response when we encounter Jesus, which is looking at him and trying to get something beneficial out of the relationship. See, the beneficial person is very much like the practical person.

They're looking what they can get out of this relationship with Jesus. They're looking for the benefits of a relationship with Jesus. But unlike the pragmatist, it's not just practical.

[20:20] They want to go deeper. See, the beneficial person wants to be friends with benefits with Jesus. See, their purpose in following Jesus, they want to have purpose in following Jesus.

They want a unified mission. They want the freedom. They want the worldview. But they do not want to surrender. They want the benefits of that relationship with Jesus, but without the

commitment.

Let's look at verse 19. This is right after Jesus has exposed this woman's sexual past. She says, Sir, I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.

Jesus has just said to her, Hey, you've had five husbands. This is not something that she proclaims widely across the town. And so she's starting to wake up to this conversation. She's saying, Hey, this is not just some normal Jew that has come to the well here.

No, this guy, he's really something. She sees this meeting as an opportunity to use for her theological benefit. She says, Hey, Jesus, here you can help me with my worldview.

[21 : 33] See, the Jews and Samaritans had beef because after Solomon died, the kingdom of Israel split into a northern kingdom and a southern kingdom. And in the northern kingdom, there was a kingdom outside of Israel called Assyria that came in and took over the northern kingdom.

The Assyrians took a lot of people that were beneficial to them out of Israel, and they put a lot of Assyrians into the northern kingdom of Israel. And so it was through this that intermarrying started to happen.

And the Jews that were in the south and the southern kingdom of Judah, they looked at those that were in Samaria in that northern kingdom, and they looked at them as unclean. They were unwelcome in their worship because they had intermarried.

And this beef had been going on for centuries. On top of this beef, they also established different places of worship. For those in the southern kingdom, that would have been Jerusalem, right, at the temple.

For those in the northern kingdom, that's Mount Gerizim, which is almost exactly where Jesus is as he talks to this woman at the well here. So this woman is looking around, and she says, Hey, I know that Jesus is powerful.

[22 : 46] Let me use this. She wants him to give her an answer to this theological question of where to worship so that she can have a purpose. She's thinking to herself, Hey, if I figure out where we are supposed to worship, then I can set up a TikTok account about this.

I can start posting around, and people will say, Hey, this girl knows what she's talking about. And I'll start to get some followers, and I'll gain some money and some momentum, and I'll be able to make a lot of money and make a name for myself.

She can even say, Hey, wait, I'll start out a website of this, www.rightplacetoworship.com. And I'll have people come in, and they'll see me as an authority on this.

I'll be able to write a few books. I'll get my name out. I'll go on a nice big tour, and my life will be set. What does Jesus answer her with? Well, he blows her entire framework up.

He says the hour is coming. In fact, it is here, where temples, they're just not going to matter. What matters is that you worship the God of the universe in spirit and in truth.

[23 : 59] Now, these words, in spirit and truth, there's a lot to unpack with that. So I'm going to give a very brief SparkNotes version. Does anybody still use SparkNotes? No?

No? A chat GPT version of what is happening here. To worship in spirit means that worship comes from your heart.

It engages the whole heart. And to worship in truth means that your worship is informed by who God is and what he is like.

This is not an either or, but a both and. John Piper says it like this, truth without emotion produces dead orthodoxy and a church full or half full of artificial admirers.

On the other hand, emotion without truth produces empty frenzy and cultivates shallow people who refuse the discipline of rigorous thought.

[25 : 06] But true worship, so this is what he's saying, true worship comes from people who are deeply emotional and who love deep and sound doctrine.

Both and, not either or. I think we can see ourselves in this woman's story again. I've seen this as I've looked around our society.

As we're being confronted, as this woman's being confronted with the power of Jesus, she's not choosing to submit. Instead, she's looking to Jesus from pointers that will be beneficial for her life.

As I was saying, I've looked around our society, I think I've seen this, what is called the quiet revival.

See, there's been an increase in people, in young people specifically, that have been going to church in the UK.

This is something that we need to celebrate. 16% according to a recent study of 18 to 24 year olds attend church once a month in the UK. 16%.

[26 : 08] In 2018, do you know what that number was? 4%. Now my masks are not great, but I believe, chat GPT told me, that this is a 300% increase.

That's amazing. Praise God for that. But before we start to ring in the bells of revival, I think we do need to think about one thing and be cautious about one thing.

I've seen in some of the media that I have ingested and podcasts and other things of that nature, that there are guys, and I do intentionally say, guys, I think this can affect both genders, but I say guys intentionally because I think a lot of the media is framed towards them.

I see a lot of guys that are intentionally co-opting Christianity to use to their own personal benefit. They strip Christianity of its spiritual meaning and just are trying to figure out what it will do to benefit their lives.

They adhere to Christianity because it brings them discipline. It brings purpose to their lives. It helps them explain some feelings that they might have. Like, why are they depressed?

[27 : 24] Why do they feel hopeless? And it gives them a foundation for dealing with some of the craziness of the world, right? Think about some of the hot topics that we have today.

Immigration, gender identity, on and on we could go. Christianity gives you a worldview, a foundation for looking at these things. But if you have this worldview and you do not submit to God, it will not work.

It cannot work. See, Christianity requires full surrender. That's what it means to call Jesus Lord.

These people want to use Christ for what will be beneficial to them, but they do not give themselves to him. Jesus sees it today.

And he saw it 2,000 years ago with the woman at the well. This worldview will not lead to prospering.

[28 : 34] Jesus knows it and so he draws the woman deeper. Let's look at the last response. Last response of people that encounter Jesus is surrender. We had skeptical.

We went from skeptical to practical, practical to beneficial, and now we go to surrender. Let's look at verse 25. The woman said, I know that Messiah called Christ is coming.

When he comes, he will explain everything to us. This woman has tried to push Jesus away with her skepticism. She's tried to add Jesus to her life with very practical and beneficial ways and now here she is at the end of herself.

She says, listen, all right, fine. You seem to have outsmarted me at every turn in this conversation. There's one coming who will explain this to this, trying to end the conversation. And in this moment, when she cannot see a way forward, what happens?

In one of the most clear ways in the entire Gospels, Jesus sees this woman who has been spit up and chewed out by the world, who is broken down, who is looked at as worthless.

[29 : 47] If you're thinking about Nicodemus, the chapter earlier, complete opposites, right? And he looks at this woman who the world would say has nothing to offer in the clearest way in the entire Gospels.

He looks at her and he says, the Savior you are looking for, I am he. So when we encounter Jesus, we can have a few responses, right?

We can reject him, we can try and add him as a bonus to our life, but there is genuinely only one right answer. That is full and complete surrender to God.

The woman at the well got to the end of herself and when she got to the end of herself, she found Jesus right there, ready to accept her surrender. If you do not have a relationship with Jesus, this is all you have to do.

If you feel a tug on your heart right now, do not put it off. This is not the product of really great teaching. This is not just because we put some emotion in the air here at West Kilburn.

[31 : 00] That's the Holy Spirit working on your life. Do not leave this room without giving your life to Christ. But maybe you're in the room today and you have said yes to that question.

You've answered that question. You've said, I have indeed completely surrendered. Of those four responses, I have submitted to Christ. What does this message mean for me?

Let's move into our final part of the sermon today called Share. When we encounter Jesus, we are forced to compare our old life to what Jesus is offering.

But when we accept what Jesus is offering, then we go from comparing to sharing. This is what happens to the woman. Look at verse 28. She says, Then leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, Come, see a man who told me everything I've ever done. Could this be the Messiah? This is a complete shift in this woman's demeanor. Remember, originally, why did she go to the well at noon?

[32 : 06] Well, because she wanted absolutely nothing to do with the town, right? And now, after surrendering her life to Christ and leaving her baggage with Christ, she goes back to the very people she was trying to avoid.

But, she can't help but to say this good news to the town. Let's think about this for just a minute longer and then we'll be done.

Why is there a 180 degree shift in this woman's life? Where moments earlier she was thought of as an outcast and lived her life as an outcast and now she is an on-fire evangelist for Jesus.

Because she realized how much she had been forgiven. If you think that you are a generally good person that hasn't done that much that bad and haven't done that much wrong, you know, you pay your bills on time, you don't steal, you give a portion of your salary to those that are less fortunate than you.

If you don't think that you're that bad when forgiveness is offered to you, you don't think it's that big of a deal. But when you truly understand how much we've been forgiven as Christians, then you realize that this forgiveness is sweeter than honey on the tip of your tongue.

[33 : 38] See, the Bible calls our good works filthy rags. So the good things that we think are earning us a spot in heaven, very, very bluntly, God calls them minstrel rags.

Isaiah, look it up. And it's in this moment when you think that your good works are helping you that Jesus comes along and says, no, no, no, this is not.

And it's when you realize this, that your good works are just dirty rags, that you realize how much you've been forgiven. When you realized you've been saved from death to life, you can't help but share that, right?

Verse 14 says this living water, Jesus says, this living water that I am offering you will burst forth from you, will be like a spring bursting forth from you. Eugene Peterson is a guy that translated the Old and New Testament into the original Greek into English.

And he says in verse 14, here, I love his translation. It says, the water I will give will be an artesian spring within, gushing fountains of endless life.

[34 : 47] An artesian spring, for those of you that didn't get your architecture degree, is the complete opposite of a well. A well you dip your bucket into, you have to draw water out.

An artesian spring is bursting forth with water. It's basically like an ancient water fountain, right? You don't have to do any work, you just lean over and drink. This is what happens when we grasp the forgiveness that Jesus has given us, right?

This truth wells up inside of us and bursts forth to anyone around us. And we need this to happen. You cannot just rely on the quote unquote professional Christians like Steve and myself to spread the gospel. Because there are people in your life that only you can reach.

I was recently talking to a guy that works in one of those big corporate buildings in central London. And as we were chatting over lunch, I just casually brought up the question.

[35 : 52] I said, how are we going to reach people like you? There are thousands of people within a small radius in central London that come there every day.

How do we reach them with the gospel? And after a pause, kind of looked back at me and he said, you don't.

I do. See, it wouldn't make sense for me to go in there and try and run a Christianity Explored, right? No offense to Christianity Explored. It's not going to work.

I don't have a relationship built up with these people. They don't know me from Adam. But this guy, who spends day in and day out with these people, he goes to get drinks after work with them. He spends his lunch break with them. He has that 10-minute break that every one of us always has that we're not really doing work but we're just chatting with a co-worker. He has that moment as well to share the reason for the hope that is in him.

[36 : 58] Who has God put in your life that only you can reach? Is it a co-worker? A neighbor?

A classmate? A teammate? Who around you can have their life changed because they have encountered Jesus through you?

Let's pray. Father in heaven, we thank you just for the opportunity. Lord, that it wasn't us that went to you at the well and said, God, here's my good works.

Give me some water. But it was you who saw us in the midst of our filth, in the midst of our nastiness, and what we thought was good but is actually perverse.

God, you reached down and said, I love you. And God, I pray that there would be people in this room today that would realize the immense love that you have given and would give over their life to you.

[38 : 07] Say, I have been Lord of my life for too long and it's not going well. I need someone to rule. Lord, I pray that there would be people that would come to the end of themselves today.

Lord, I pray for West Kilburn that we would be a place that when people look, they see us worshiping in spirit and in truth. God, that the gospel, the good news, that you have come and saved us from sins, we couldn't help but have it overflow out of this building.

The light shining in a dark place would be so bright that people would be attracted to it. God, we pray that you would use us. God, what a gift that we get to be used in your kingdom to help bring people to Christ.

Lord, it is only you that can bring people but you use us. God, and we're thankful to be the hands and feet of you as we go out. Lord, we pray all of these things in your name.

Amen.