

GROWTH GROUPS WEEK 7 WEEK OF FEBRUARY 26TH

EXPRESSING HOPE

THE SPIRIT OF
THE CHURCH

GROWTH GROUP WINTER 2017 – EXPRESSING HOPE WEEK 7 – FEBRUARY 26, 2017 - JOHN 4:1-26

GETTING TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER

- 1) Can you think of a time when you had a really great worship experience? If so, what made it so great?

SETTING THE CONTEXT

As Jesus makes his way through Samaria we are given the opportunity to listen in on a conversation between him and a Samaritan woman who comes to draw water from a well. We hear about presuppositions and prejudices. We learn about mission and evangelistic efforts. And, we also learn something about the nature of worship.

Jesus makes his way through Samaria in what is more than likely a strategic move to help move the gospel message into a new and surprising region. Samaritans and Jews did not get along. The Samaritans were despised by Jews because they had not maintained their distinctive Jewish heritage and had married people who were not Jewish. Samaritans were viewed as unclean and observant Jews wanted nothing to do with the Samaritans.

Jesus' journey had left him tired and thirsty and so he sat down by the well. Wells or springs were often places of "divine encounters" in the Old Testament. While Jesus was resting, a Samaritan woman came to draw water. Jesus spoke to her. This would not have been expected and so she questions him about his curious behavior.

As their conversation continues, the gospel of John makes it clear that Jesus is the one whom Israel, as well as others, had been waiting for. Yet the woman at the well is still not convinced. Though, the woman tries to distract Jesus with more tangential conversations, Jesus is not distracted. Rather, he keeps pushing the idea of "living water." Isaiah 55:1-5 had made promises about the thirsty and the hungry being satisfied and outsiders being brought into the fold.

The woman finally tries to distract Jesus by talking about worship and where a person ought to worship. The Samaritans said the proper place to worship was Mt. Gerizim and the Jewish people said it was Jerusalem. Jesus takes this opportunity to not only address the "where" of worship, but more importantly the true "nature" of worship.



Jesus says that we are to worship in spirit and in truth. True worship is not regulated by the temporary provisions of the law. The ceremonial and sacrificial aspects of the Old Testament law were not false, but they were temporary. God was doing something new and when the Holy Spirit arrived after Jesus' resurrection, things would never be the same. Cultural and ethnic barriers would be broken down and the role of the temple would come to an end. Jesus brought about a new age where worship was in "spirit and truth."

EXPLORING THE TEXT

Read John 4:1-26

¹Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John — ² although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. ³ So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee. ⁴ Now he had to go through Samaria. ⁵ So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. ⁷ When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" ⁸ (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) ⁹ 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.) ¹⁰ 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." ¹¹ "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?" ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?" ¹³ Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks 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." ¹⁵ 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." ¹⁶ He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." ¹⁷ "I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. ¹⁸ The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true." ¹⁹ "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem." ²¹ "Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²² You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. ²⁴ God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth." ²⁵ The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." ²⁶ Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you — I am he."

- 2) What do you think the "living water" is that Jesus is talking about? Does this conversation relate to the conversation about worship?
- 3) How important is "location" or "place" when it comes to worshipping God?
- 4) Is there a part of a worship service that is most meaningful to you? Perhaps music, sermon, prayers, and/or being in community with others?

- 5) In the Old Testament one of the words that are often used for worship has to do with bowing down in reverence, or falling down in the presence of God. In the New Testament one of the words used for worship has to do with the idea of kissing towards or a sense of intimacy or closeness to God. Does one of these ideas resonate more with you when it comes to worshipping God?
- 6) Hebrews 10:25 says, "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching." How does this verse connect to the idea of worship?
- 7) Have you ever watched a worship service online or on television? Is it a different experience to worship online rather than in a "church" setting? What were the advantages or disadvantages to worshipping online?

BRINGING IT HOME

- 8) Jesus tells the woman that a time is coming when people will worship in "spirit and in truth." What does that mean to you?