

I. Jesus encounters a Samaritan woman

A. John 4:7-26 . . . There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." [8] For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. [9] Therefore the Samaritan woman said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) [10] Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." [11] She said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water? [12] You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?" [13] Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; [14] but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." [15] The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw." [16] He said to her, "Go, call your husband and come here." [17] The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have correctly said, 'I have no husband'; [18] for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly." [19] The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. [20] Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." [21] Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. [22] You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. [23] But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. [24] God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." [25] The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us." [26] Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He."

B. There is much that can be learned from this story, but today we will focus on five hindrances to spiritual growth and godly living.

1. First, there is the hindrance of using earth-bound eyes to look at what is going on and earth-bound ears to hear what is being said.
2. Second, there is the hindrance of treating God as if His role is to make our life easier – easier, that is, according to our earthly, selfish, prideful, and even lazy approach to life.
3. Third, there is the hindrance of seeking fulfillment, satisfaction, security, and a sense of well-being in the things of this world.
4. Fourth, there is the hindrance of changing the subject or redirecting the conversation when truth gets close enough to expose our sinfulness and selfishness, or our irrational fears and thinking.
5. Fifth, there is the hindrance of believing we can be a true worshiper of God while in our day-to-day life there are recurring times and situations where we distrust God, act selfish, and do what we know is wrong.

C. Pray

II. The continuation of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman

A. John 4:10 . . . Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."

1. Jesus uses the words, "If you knew," to point out that if the Samaritan woman KNEW both the gift and the One who is the gift, she would have asked Jesus for the water He gives rather than being the one asked by Jesus for the water she could give.
2. Jesus goes on to identify the water He gives as "living water," which is a reference to water that constantly bubbles up from under the ground, and therefore the supply never runs dry no matter what the weather or conditions are like above the ground.
3. Jesus spoke of this kind of water that bubbles up in John 7:37-38, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. [38] He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'"
4. Now I suspect we all understand that Jesus is using a figure of speech (i.e., living water) to tell the Samaritan woman about a spiritual reality that He could give her if she asked for it.

B. And this brings us to the first hindrance to spiritual growth and godly living – which is the hindrance of using earth-bound eyes to look at what is going on and earth-bound ears to hear what is being said.

1. Though Jesus was speaking of spiritual things, the Samaritan woman heard only what was earthly. We know this because she responded by saying, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water? [12] You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?" (John 4:11-12).
 2. Sometimes we cannot discern God's activity or the spiritual realities and truths in a given situation. Sometimes, even though we can see the spiritual, we do not understand what God is doing or how to apply in practical ways the truth that is being conveyed. And sometimes we see the spiritual and understand it.
 - a. However, we will totally miss the fact that something spiritual is happening or being stated if we only look or listen with an earth-bound mindset. In other words, if we are not looking or listening for the spiritual, we will only use earth-bound reasoning to make sense of what is happening or being said.
 - b. To see the spiritual, we must want to see it, which requires looking beyond the earthly to the spiritual. In other words, we must intentionally look through eyes that believe God is at work and listen with ears that believe God is speaking.
 3. Therefore, the mindset through which we look at life and listen to what is being said significantly affects how fast we grow spiritually and how far we go in living a godly life.
- C. John 4:13-14 . . . Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; [14] but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."
1. As with Nicodemus, so with the Samaritan woman – Jesus does not directly answer her questions, and we see this here. Instead of answering her questions about His being greater than Jacob (whose greatness was confirmed by his being named Israel by God), Jesus continues on by comparing earthly water to spiritual water.
 2. And the point Jesus made is that everyone who drinks earthly water will thirst again. In other words, everyone who seeks fulfillment, satisfaction, contentment, pleasure, happiness, security, and even the feelings of love, in that which is earthly, must repeatedly seek them because the things of earth only satisfy temporarily.
 - a. We can easily see the truth of this in seeking pleasure through food, dulling our senses and easing our emotional pain by taking

drugs – legal or otherwise, or seeking acceptance and popularity from the people around us.

- b. Now I want to be clear that this does not mean all earthly things are bad. However, whether good or bad, earthly things only satisfy temporarily, which means they must be pursued, obtained, or experienced, again and again, in order to gain whatever it is you are getting from them.
 3. In contrast to that, Jesus says that whoever drinks of the water that He gives shall never thirst. In other words, the life that God gives to us, when pursued and lived as God intends it to be lived, fulfills and satisfies in ways which never need replenishing. We do not have to keep going back for more. Why? Because, as Jesus says, the life He gives becomes – in us – a well of water springing up to eternal life. In other words, the life that satisfies so fully that we never thirst again, dwells within us – so that it is always with us!
 4. Without question, to experience the fulness of this life, we must intentionally and progressively die to self, put off our old nature, and put on Christ-likeness. But if we do, we will discover that the living water which God gives, satisfies completely – regardless of what life brings or God allows to happen to us.
- D. The second hindrance to spiritual growth and godly living is treating God as if His role is to make our life easier – easier that is, according to our worldly, selfish, prideful, and lazy approach to life.
1. John 4:15 . . . The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor [have to] come all the way here to draw."
 2. When God pleasing us takes priority over us pleasing God, we will live as if we know more than God (which is pride), and as if our needs and wants take priority over God's will and purposes (which is selfishness). And as you know, pride and selfishness are self-pleasing qualities, not God-pleasing qualities.
 3. The truth is, submitting to God and living according to His will makes our lives easier – but not at first. And the "at first – part" is likely to take a number of years, which means life will seem harder for awhile. But like most educational processes, it is a harder that leads to a life that is easier and far better.
 4. Therefore, expecting God to make your life easier – according to your selfish, earthly desires – is a sure way to hinder spiritual growth and godly living.

- E. The third hindrance to spiritual growth and godly living is seeking such things as fulfillment, satisfaction, happiness, security, and a sense of well-being in the things of this world, instead of in the life God gives.
1. John 4:16-18 . . . [Jesus] said to her, "Go, call your husband and come here." [17] The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have correctly said, 'I have no husband'; [18] for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly."
 2. Assuming that the Samaritan woman was married and divorced five times, and that she was currently living with a man to whom she was not married, it seems reasonable to conclude that she was looking for something – such as fulfillment, satisfaction, happiness, or security, in a marriage type relationship.
 3. Now there is no denying that most earth-bound things hold the promise of immediate reward, and I am sure that at first she got enough of what she wanted to commit to each relationship. However, what she thought was so satisfying at first failed to keep her satisfied long-term. And in her pursuit of ongoing satisfaction, she went through five marriages, and was currently trying out a sixth man before committing to marriage with him.
 4. The truth conveyed here is that the ability of earth-bound things to fulfill and satisfy us, to make us happy, or to give us a sense of security and well-being, is at best, temporary – which is why we have to keep going back to those things for more.
 - a. It is only the life that God gives, that is, the living water from God, which satisfies perpetually and eternally.
 - b. Therefore, we hinder spiritual growth and godly living when we seek fulfillment and satisfaction, first and foremost, in earthly things instead of in God and in the life that God gives.
- F. The fourth hindrance to spiritual growth and godly living happens when we change the subject or redirect the conversation when truth gets close enough to expose our sinfulness and selfishness, or our irrational fears and thinking.
1. John 4:19-20 . . . The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. [20] Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."
 2. Though the Samaritan woman acknowledged that Jesus might be a prophet, she changed the subject by turning the direction of the

conversation away from herself and her life-style to the subject of worship.

3. Sadly, this kind of response to truth is all too common. For example:
 - a. Some of us think we are more righteous than we are, and we perpetuate this belief by comparing ourselves to those who are worse than us. And so, when confronted with the truth, we often change the subject by pointing out the flaws and sinful ways in the one confronting us, or by explaining how we are not as bad as someone else.
 - b. Some of us do not want to admit we are doing anything wrong, and so we live in denial. When someone starts to chisel away at our denial of reality, we often work at changing the subject by acting as if we have no idea what the other person is talking about, or as if our intentions are only good.
 - c. Some of us prefer to deceive ourselves into believing that knowing and affirming truth from God's word is equal to living according to that truth. James shows how delusional this kind of thinking is, when he says, "Prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves" (James 1:22).
 4. The point here is simply this, we get in the way of spiritual growth and godly living when we avoid facing and doing the right thing when confronted with the truth about ourselves.
- G. And this brings us to our fifth and final hindrance to spiritual growth and godly living. This fifth hindrance is believing we can be a true worshiper of God while in our day-to-day life there are recurring times and situations where we distrust God, feel disappointed or even angry at God, act selfish, and do what we know is wrong.
1. John 4:21-24 . . . Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. [22] You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. [23] But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. [24] God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."
 2. These words from Jesus are in response to the Samaritan woman's question about the right place to worship. And the essence of Jesus' response has nothing to do with the right place to worship. Instead, He addresses the condition of the worshiper's heart and life.

- a. The Samaritan woman's question shows she believed she could treasure things that God and His word forbid, while worshiping God as if she treasured and adored Him above all else.
 - b. In other words, to her it seemed reasonable to disconnect how she lived, day in and day out, from her worship of God. And we see how far her disconnect went in that she made the right place to worship the important issue rather than the right life and heart condition for worship.
 - c. In response, Jesus said the place is not the issue. What matters to God is worship that is in spirit and in truth. In other words, what matters to God is how you think of Him and how you relate to Him, on a daily basis, for that is what proves the sincerity of your worship.
3. What about you? Do you join our Sunday worship or participate in other times of worship with a heart and life that is content with what God is doing or allowing? Do you see Him as perfectly good, all the time?
- a. Do you worship with a heart and life that confirms that you trust God implicitly, or at least are working at trusting Him implicitly?
 - b. Do you worship with a heart and life that confirms you are committed to being holy in all your behavior just as God is holy?
 - c. This is what it means to worship in spirit and in truth!
 - d. And this is why the place is unimportant, because wherever you are, if you trust God absolutely, and if you are committed to living a life pleasing to God, then you are worshiping God all the time – in your heart, in your mind, with your words, and with your deeds.
4. Therefore, when we believe we are a true worshiper of God while treasuring and participating in things that work against God's purposes and truth, we are participating in a life-style that hinders spiritual growth and godly living.

III. Conclusion

- A. John 4:25-26 . . . The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us." [26] Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He."
- B. John closes this story with an affirmation by Jesus, himself, that He is the Messiah, the Christ of God, the Savior of the world.