

–Chapter 7–
Thirsty for More Than Water
Jesus and the Samaritan Woman

The Big Picture

Jesus approaches a Samaritan woman for a divinely appointed meeting at Jacob's Well. Their ensuing conversation reveals what can only be divine knowledge of a complete stranger and a redefining of her relationship with God. God extends the same to us: an intimate knowledge of who we are, along with an invitation to know him outside the limits of church culture or others' experience.

Discuss

“An hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth,” he informed her. For the Father seeks such people to be his worshippers.” No longer would the place matter where worship was offered. For Jews, Gentiles, or Samaritans, a day was coming when a person would not be identified by his or her external place of worship. The mark would be internal: one’s relationship with the Son of God.”

How was worship about to change? Do you see that change reflected in today's practice of Christianity? How does knowing God's definition for a true worshiper color your understanding of what it means to be a part of the world-wide Church? How should the implications in that relationship be reflected in our interactions with Christians outside our denomination or doctrinal beliefs?

“God stood outside the culture that had been the framework of the woman’s understanding of him. He was beckoning her to join him, calling her to believe in his Son. He was inviting her to give him her heart.”

How does the culture of your church affect your concept of God? Your spiritual practices? What about your relationship with him stands outside of that culture?

“God wanted her knowledge of him to transcend the culture, for what she knew in her head hadn’t quite made it into her heart... God doesn’t want a vicarious relationship with us, established through the experiences and theology of others.”

Do you see a danger in letting your Christian culture or the experience of others dictate your knowledge or understanding of God? What problems might result? What steps can be made to insure your relationship with God is personal and based on truth?

“So he pursues us, just as determinedly as he did the Samaritan woman and Hagar. He reveals just how well he knows us, and he invites us to know and love him with the same passion he has invested in us.”

How does the idea of God intensely pursuing you add to your concept of him?

Moving Forward

1. Jesus depicted God the Father as a relentless pursuer. Read the three parables he told to illustrate this idea in Luke 15:1-7 (The Lost Sheep), v. 8-10 (The Lost Coin), and v. 11-32 (The Prodigal Son). What character traits of God are displayed? What things do all three stories have in common? How does this enrich your understanding of God?
2. Several chapters after John records this conversation, the subject of living water again makes an appearance in John's epistle. In John 7:37-38, Jesus again offers living water, this time to all who are thirsty. Read John 7:39, where John explains Jesus' meaning. How does this explanation add to your understanding of living water? Now read Hebrews 10:22 and Titus 3:3-7. What exactly was Jesus offering the woman at the well?
3. Jesus exposed the Samaritan woman's past and sinful present to allow her an intimate relationship with God. God already knew her sin, so the exposure did not reveal anything new to him. Rather, it served to allow her to "come clean" and acknowledge her flaws. Only when those dark secrets were brought into the light would they cease to be an issue in that relationship. The same kind of acknowledgment is needed for us to be intimate with God.

Read Psalm 139:23. Earlier in that psalm, in verses 1-6, David already describes God's complete knowledge of him. Why do you think he is now asking in verse 23 for God to search him?

Now read 1 John 1:9. According to other Scripture, our sin is already forgiven, past, present and future through the payment Jesus made on the cross on our behalf. Why do you think we are now told to confess our sin? How important is honesty about ourselves when we are in a relationship with God? How can unconfessed sin stand in the way of intimacy?