



LC STUDY GUIDE

“Neighbor”

The Passage: John 4:1-30

June 11 – June 24

How to use the LC Study Guide

Hello Leaders! Thank you for your ongoing commitment to pursue Christian community and the study of Scripture that leads to life transformation in Christ and strives to serve “the other.”

These studies have been designed with the following aspects in mind:

1. To facilitate a discussion on the passage of Scripture that was preached that particular Sunday using the Inductive Bible Study Method (not necessarily on the themes of that particular sermon). In summary, this method stresses “Observation” (what the reader can see from the text), “Interpretation” (what we can learn when we study the text with various tools, commentaries, and resources), and “Application” (how we can apply the Scripture to our lives).
2. Groups using this study range from the new leader to the highly experienced. Groups themselves have their own context. This study attempts to hit the middle. The stronger studies require about an hour or two of leader preparation to contextualize this resource to the needs and personalities of your group.
3. In addition to prep time, please spend time in prayer during preparation and before and after the study. It’s the power of the Holy Spirit that illuminates the Word of Scripture and we are humbled that He uses our combined efforts as part of this work. (For more tips on using this study, please see the endnotes.)

As always, we are so grateful for you, your gifting, your servant leadership and all that you do for the cause of Christ. Please let us know if we can help you in any way.

Grace and peace,
Pastor Tim, on behalf of the LC Team

Introduction

We have reached the end of our ministry year and almost to the conclusion of our “Neighbor” series. Perhaps a meaningful moment not to be missed is to ask each other what the Lord has shown each of us in a year that focused on identity, mission, calling, and “finding our go.” Here in this rich and well-read passage, we see Jesus modeling these themes. May we receive what the Lord invites us to as we look again at the words in John 4.

John 4:1-30

¹ Now 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.”

²⁷ 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?”

²⁸ Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, ²⁹ “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?” ³⁰ They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

O – What are some details you notice in the first nine verses?

I – Why is there such tension between Jews and Samaritans?

(The Samaritans are considered a “half-breed”—half Jewish and half Assyrian. Tension can be traced back to the Assyrian occupation in 721 BC—see 2 Kings 17. But the rivalry really heats up around 200 BC because they are disputing the correct location of the worship center of the God of Abraham. Samaritans had built a shrine on Mt. Gerizim and of course the Jews believed the Temple in Jerusalem was the proper center of worship. Samaritans in Jesus’ day could never forget that their shrine on Mt. Gerizim was destroyed by Jewish troops in 128 BC.)

A – Who do you think can relate to being treated like a Samaritan? How have you felt like the Samaritan?

O – What do you notice about the woman from vv. 10–20?

(Getting water alone at noon, she knows her Samaritan/Jewish history, she’s reluctant to help Jesus, she has five husbands and the one she’s with is not a husband.)

I – Does Jesus meeting this woman remind you of any Old Testament stories?

(Reminds us of the story of Elijah and the widow of Sidon—1 Kings 17:10-11. Also reminds us of the betrothal stories of Isaac, (Gen. 24:10) Jacob (Gen. 29:1-20), and Moses (Exod. 2) where they met their wives or their wife was found at the well. The bridegroom/bride imagery is a reoccurring theme in the first 4 chapters of John but Jesus is not looking for a bride but for a witness. This wedding imagery is part of the “eschatological joy and fulfillment” Jesus brings, which is a fancy way of saying, Jesus is fulfilling the promise of God’s salvation to humanity.)

I – What are we to think of the woman having 5 husbands? How can she have so many in the ancient world? How does Jesus respond?

(Perhaps the woman, like Tamar in Gen. 38, is trapped in the custom of levirate marriage [See Deut. 25:5-10], and the last male in the family has refused to marry her. Perhaps there was a divorce or two, perhaps some of it was due to tragedy, perhaps lack of morality but perhaps she was unable to bear sons. In the Jewish/Samaritan world, a woman could not initiate a divorce. In any case, the reasons for the woman’s marital history intrigue us but do not concern Jesus.)

A – What can we learn from Jesus in our judgment towards others?

O – What details in the text do you see in verses 21–30?

I – How do the Samaritans/Jews worship differently?

(Again, Samaritans built a shrine on Mt. Gerizim during the Persian period and of course the Jews believed the Temple in Jerusalem was the center of worship. Furthermore, the Samaritans were looking for the Messiah, too. They called their expectant savior “Ta’heb”—“the one who returns.” They thought of him as a teacher, which helps us understand the statement “he will explain all things to us.”)

I – Jesus allows the woman to see one meaning of the living water while the reader sees another. What is the point that Jesus is trying to show the woman (as well as the one that John is trying to show the reader)?

(In essence, they are the same but Jesus wants the woman to realize that there is something in this life greater than physical water—and that is the person and truth of the Messiah. John wants the reader to see similarly.)

I – How does the woman respond?

(She believes in Jesus! It’s necessary to note that she is not actually responding to the water, nor the data/information, but ultimately she is responding to Jesus being the Messiah.)

A – In verse 28, the woman leaves behind the water jug, demonstrating that she has discovered something even greater and is on her way to share that truth with those who have pushed her to the fringes. What would we leave behind and whom would we tell about the truth of who Jesus is?

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- a. Please note that not all these questions are to be asked in a single meeting. Take some time to prayerfully discern what will serve your LC the best. Select and reword the questions that best fit your voice and your Life Community group.
 - b. Complement these questions with “process questions” (what else? what more? what do others think?)
 - c. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don’t rush people but encourage participation. Avoid answering your own questions!
 - d. Application: Pace the study to conclude with difference-making application.
 - e. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into “teaching” rather than facilitating, causing people to feel distracted or de-powered.