



LC STUDY GUIDE
“Life Beyond”

The Passage: John 4:1-26
May 13 – May 27

How to use the LC Study Guide

Hello Leaders! Thank you for your ongoing commitment to pursue Christian community and the study of Scripture—study 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. 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

We are nearly halfway through our spring series “Life Beyond,” where we are exploring some of the bigger questions about life that the Scriptures raise. Questions like, “What is this life really about?” and “What can we know about the next one?” and most importantly, “What did Jesus say about it?”

The passage that we will discuss today is a familiar one to some of us but was such a rare scene in the ancient world – a highly respected rabbi seen speaking in public one-on-one with a Samaritan woman with a personal history that others gossiped about.

We can see so many important features in this text – Jesus’ compassion, the damage that shame brings, and how the words and the person of the Lord can free us. So may we approach this text with fresh eyes, with humility, and with a sense of expectation as we allow Jesus to meet us today.

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.”

John 4:1-26

O – As we like to do, re-read the passage in your own Bible or on a device and allow yourself to be attentive to what words and details resonate with you today. And then spend a few minutes sharing what jumped out for you.

Bridging the Passage:

We know from the text that “Jews did not associate with Samaritans” (verse 9) but here’s more context as to why. After the Babylonian exile ended about 500 years before this moment, Cyrus the Great allowed the Jewish people to return to Israel. When they arrived, they discovered that a large population of Samaritans had occupied certain parts of the region and claimed to be the original descendants of Abraham. A cultural battle of tribal birthright began, with each claiming to be the original and more pure lineage to the patriarch Abraham.

Returning back to the text, a highly respected Jewish rabbi like Jesus was never to be alone with a woman, let alone a Samaritan woman, and we’ll discover that it gets even more complicated from there. Which brings up the next question...

I – Speculate on why you think Jesus is there.

(Of course, this is only speculation, but the gospel writer John seems to be making a big point here that is Jesus is inviting everyone to his Kingdom and to experience the life he is teaching about – including the Samaritans, including this woman.)

A – Think back to a time where you had an unusual conversation with a stranger. Did the conversation lean towards the superficial or did it ever get personal? And have you ever had a deeply personal conversation with a total stranger? If so, briefly describe what that was like.

I – There is a recurring theme with Jesus where he takes an ancient Israelite symbol and projects himself on it to say, this is what it meant, this is how it will now be ultimately fulfilled. Examples include – Jesus saying to Nicodemus in John 3:14 that those who look upon the stand with the serpent will be saved so the Son of Man must be lifted up (alluding to himself on the cross). Another example is how Jesus described that the temple will be destroyed and stand again in 3 days (John 2:19-20). These symbols and

more describe salvation. And we have another example here as Jesus has this conversation at “Jacob’s Well” – the well that sustained life for the children of Israel. There are a multitude of reasons of why Jesus does this; what are some that come to mind?

(One reason is that Jesus is teaching through dramatic symbol, another is to fulfill some of the prophecies concerning him. But ultimately it’s to demonstrate that the final fulfillment of these hopes are about to be fulfilled in the Messiah Jesus.)

I /A - As with a few conversations John describes, people initially misunderstand what Jesus means at first. Think of Nicodemus’s confusion with being “born again” in John 3 and the crowd’s confusion with “eat this bread and drink this blood” in John 6. Here the woman is confused by Jesus’ description of “living water.”

Jesus is always talking about the life beyond. This not necessarily the after-life but again, the deeper life found in living in God’s Kingdom now. How would you describe what the living water of Jesus is about? What difference does it make in your life as you pursue a deeper one? (You can use the hint in verses 13-14.)

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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.