## The Word

one to one

A guided read through John's Gospel Chapter 4 Unless otherwise stated, Scripture quotations taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version® NIV® Copyright © 1973 1978 1984 2011 by Biblica, Inc. ™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

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### Episode 8

### An amazing offer

JOHN 4:1-26

In the previous episode: Who Jesus is and how we get into His kingdom.

In this episode:
The last person you would expect to enter God's kingdom.

JOHN 4:1–26 EPISODE 8

¹ Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptising more disciples than John − ² although in fact it was not Jesus who baptised, but his disciples.

<sup>3</sup> So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

<sup>4</sup> Now he had to go through Samaria.

### **Crossing boundaries**

Notice that we've changed location. Samaria was once part of Northern Israel, but the Assyrians invaded it in 732 BC and deliberately moved in other nations and religions.

The result was that Samaritans were despised by the Jews as not being 'pure' Jewish and they weren't allowed to worship in the temple in Jerusalem.

JOHN 4:1-26

<sup>5</sup> So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph.

<sup>6</sup> Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

Let's turn back to Ezekiel

Ezekiel 37:22

<sup>22</sup> I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. There will be one king over all of them and they will never again be two nations or be divided into two kingdoms.

#### Who was Jacob?

- Jacob was an important man in Jewish history: the twelve tribes of Israel are named after his family.
- Joseph (of Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat fame) was one of his sons.

Jacob's well is still visited in Israel to this day.

You may remember we've mentioned Ezekiel, God's prophet in around 600 BC.

He prophesied that when the Messiah, God's long-promised King, arrived He would bring Samaria back into God's kingdom:

- One king.
- One nation.
- One way to worship.

In other words, if Jesus really is the Messiah, what He does in Samaria is a big deal.

JOHN 4:1-26 EPISODE 8

Now back to John

<sup>7</sup> When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Will you give me a drink?' <sup>8</sup> (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

<sup>9</sup> 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.)

<sup>10</sup> 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.'

#### Living water

Tired and thirsty, Jesus sits down for a drink.

According to the culture of the time, Jesus shouldn't be talking to a woman and certainly not to a Samaritan.

What is the gift Jesus offers?

- 'Living water' (v. 10)

What is 'living water'?

 Jesus is using water (H<sub>2</sub>O) and the life that it brings as a picture for the spiritual life that He offers.

Jesus says that if the Samaritan woman asks Him, He will give her this life.

But will she see who Jesus is? And will she ask?

JOHN 4:1-26 EPISODE 8

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?'

<sup>13</sup> Jesus answered, 'Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup> 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.'

What did they get from Jacob's well?

- Just a drink... satisfying for a short while. (v. 13)

What do we get from Jesus?

 Eternal life. Never-ending, fulfilling, completely satisfying.
 What a contrast! (v. 14)

Living water is a picture of the Holy Spirit, God's gift to us.

You may remember John the Baptist saying that Jesus would 'baptise with the Holy Spirit'. (John 1:33)

Water is a necessity for life. Jesus has come to satisfy our most basic spiritual need – a living relationship with God, as His Holy Spirit comes to live within us.

What Jesus gives will satisfy our spiritual thirst forever.

<sup>15</sup> 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.'

<sup>16</sup> He told her, 'Go, call your husband and come back.'

<sup>17</sup> 'I have no husband,' she replied.

Jesus said to her, 'You are right when you say you have no husband. <sup>18</sup> 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.'

Who can receive this gift of living water?
Think of the last two very different
characters that Jesus has talked to.

The woman is seen as an outsider:

- Despised, because she is a Samaritan and a woman.
- A social outcast, seen as a sinner (married five times and now living with another man). (v. 18)

On the other hand, Nicodemus is seen as:

- A respectable important man; the teacher of all Israel.

But both need to have living water, both need to be born again.

How does this help a person who says:

- 'I've tried everything I can't find any satisfaction.'
- 'There's no hope for me. I've done too much wrong.'
- 'I try my best. Surely that will be good enough for God?'

The answer is in John 3:16: 'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.'

JOHN 4:1-26 EPISODE 8

<sup>19</sup> 'Sir,' the woman said, 'I can see that you are a prophet.

<sup>20</sup> Our ancestors ← worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.'

**Worship:** in Greek the word used here means 'to kiss towards'. This is from the days when people got on their knees and kissed the ground towards their ruler. In other words, total surrender.

#### **Worship that God wants**

The temple in Jerusalem had been the place where the Jews came to seek God's forgiveness and worship Him.

Because the Samaritans weren't allowed into the temple, they had set up their own worship centre on Mount Gerazin.

<sup>21</sup> 'Woman,' Jesus replied, 'believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.

<sup>22</sup> You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.

The Samaritan woman wants to know the response that God is looking for.

- Now Jesus has come, true worship is no longer about 'holy places'.
- Mount Gerazin (where her ancestors worshipped) is not the answer. (v. 21)
- Even the temple in Jerusalem is no longer the place to meet God. (v. 21)

How can Jesus say that the temple is no longer needed?

Jesus will claim that His death and the forgiveness He brings replace the need for the temple.

- Our sins can be forgiven.
- We can have a relationship with God living within us, through His Spirit.
   He is with us all the time, everywhere.

There is no longer any need for pilgrimages to find God. No need to visit the Vatican. No need for a trip to Mecca, or the Holy Land.

Through Jesus, we can experience God's forgiveness.

We can meet with God anywhere and at any time.

JOHN 4:1–26 EPISODE 8

<sup>23</sup> Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks.

<sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.'

With Jesus now on the scene, worship has changed forever.

God is not confined to a building. He is spirit.

This is big news. To get right with God, we don't need:

- Special buildings.
- Fancy clothes.
- Religious rituals.

In Jesus we have both His Spirit and His truth (His Word). (v. 24)

We just need to respond to Jesus. It's totally liberating!

God wants true worshippers who put Him first in their lives, through Jesus.

JOHN 4:1–26 EPISODE 8

<sup>25</sup> The woman said, 'I know that Messiah' (called Christ) 'is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.'

<sup>26</sup> Then Jesus declared, 'I, the one speaking to you – I am he.'

### Who makes it happen?

With their Jewish background, Samaritans were waiting for the Messiah.

What does Jesus tell us?

- He is the Messiah! (v. 26)

This is an amazing revelation from Jesus, spoken to the Samaritan woman. Jesus tells her plainly that He really is the Messiah that Ezekiel prophesied.

It's not about 'getting right with God on Sunday', because Jesus has made us right with God all the time.

It's not about how we look, where we are, or what religious rituals we go through.

It's all about how we respond to God's Messiah, Jesus. JOHN 4:1-26 EPISODE 8

#### Summary

Jesus has come to offer membership of God's kingdom to the whole world, across race, sex, religion and morality.

- Jesus is in Samaria, a place the coming Messiah would bring back into God's kingdom. (v. 4)
- He starts an unlikely conversation with a Samaritan woman... and offers her living water. (v. 10)
- The woman is thinking about H<sub>2</sub>O but
   Jesus is talking about spiritual life. (v. 14)
- Jesus redefines worship. It is no longer about special places but about responding to Him. (v. 21)
- God wants worshippers who come to Jesus and listen to Him. (v. 24)
- After all, if He is the Messiah, He's worth listening to. (v. 26)

As we meet Jesus (not physically in Samaria but in God's Word) and respond to Him, we too by His Spirit can become true worshippers.

<sup>4</sup>...he had to go through Samaria.

<sup>10</sup> '...he would have given you living water.'

14 '...will never thirst.'

<sup>21</sup> '...you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.'

<sup>24</sup> '...worship in the Spirit and in truth.'

25

<sup>26</sup> '...I am he.'

Why not find a moment to re-read what we've looked at in this episode?

<sup>1</sup> Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptising more disciples than John − <sup>2</sup> although in fact it was not Jesus who baptised, but his disciples.

<sup>3</sup> So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

<sup>4</sup>Now he had to go through Samaria. <sup>5</sup>So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup>Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

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- Jesus said to her, 'You are right when you say you have no husband. <sup>18</sup> 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.'
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- <sup>22</sup> You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup> Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. <sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.'
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- <sup>26</sup> Then Jesus declared, 'I, the one speaking to you I am he.'

What comes next?

A lesson for the disciples and a town transformed.

### Episode 9

## Responding to Jesus

JOHN 4:27-42

In the previous episode: Eternal life offered to the most unlikely person.

In this episode: A whole town transformed.

JOHN 4:27–42 EPISODE 9

<sup>27</sup> 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?'

<sup>28</sup> Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people,

<sup>29</sup> 'Come, see a man who told me everything I've ever done. Could this be the Messiah?'

<sup>30</sup> They came out of the town and made their way towards him.

### A surprising harvest

The disciples are surprised to see Jesus talking to a Samaritan woman.

The woman leaves for town and starts to boldly tell people about Jesus. Her invitation is to come and see.

- Remember that this woman is seen as a social outcast, not someone people would immediately follow out into the countryside.
- Yet the people take up her invite and come towards Jesus.
- Imagine a whole town walking across fields to find Jesus. The key question? Is He really the Messiah?

- <sup>31</sup> Meanwhile his disciples urged him, 'Rabbi, eat something.'
- <sup>32</sup> But he said to them, 'I have food to eat that you know nothing about.'
- <sup>33</sup> Then his disciples said to each other, 'Could someone have brought him food?'
- <sup>34</sup> 'My food,' said Jesus, 'is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.

Meanwhile, what are the disciples thinking about?

- Lunch! Jesus should eat something. (v. 31)
- But He doesn't seem to be hungry.
   (v. 32)
- The disciples don't understand. Who popped out to get Him a sandwich?! (v. 33)

Jesus is talking about spiritual food.

Jesus' 'food' is to do God's will and God's work.

What is God's will and God's work? Jesus explains...

35 Don't you have a saying,
"It's still four months until
harvest"? I tell you, open your
eyes and look at the fields!
They are ripe for harvest.

<sup>36</sup> Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together.

<sup>37</sup> Thus the saying "One sows and another reaps" is true.

<sup>38</sup> I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labour.'

With four months until harvest, the crops were still a lush green.

As the people stream over the fields, Jesus tells His disciples that these people are the harvest.

What is Jesus saying to His disciples?

- Stop thinking about lunch! (v. 35)
- Open your eyes, seize the moment, it's harvest time. (v. 35)
- After all, some people (like the Samaritan woman) are already at work bringing others into the kingdom. (v. 36)

The inclusion of the Samaritans would have been a real shock for the 'pure' Jews.

Jesus calls the disciples to get involved in His eternal, life-giving work.

God's will is to gather a harvest of people for eternity, regardless of race, religion and background.

> But what does the harvest actually look like?

<sup>39</sup> Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, 'He told me everything I've ever done.' <sup>40</sup> So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them,

and he stayed two days.

<sup>41</sup> And because of his words many more became believers. <sup>42</sup> They said to the woman, 'We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Saviour of the world.'

How do the Samaritans respond?

- They believe. (v. 39)
- Because of what the woman said about Jesus (her testimony). (v. 39)
- Because of Jesus' own words. (v. 41)

Here is true faith, unlike the Jerusalem crowds, who loved the miracles but didn't accept what Jesus said about Himself.

As far as Jesus is concerned, it seems signs and wonders do not in themselves produce genuine faith.

What do they realise about Jesus?

- This man they're listening to is the Saviour of the world. (v. 42)
- It wasn't the miracles that did it, it was Jesus' words. (v. 42)

True faith is based on Jesus' words.
The belief of the Samaritans came
through hearing God's Word as
Jesus spoke to them.

#### Summary

The Samaritan woman can't keep the news about Jesus to herself.

- She leaves for town and begs the people to come and see. (v. 29)
- And they do. The whole town drops what they're doing and heads out across the fields to see Him. (v. 30)
- The disciples are thinking about lunch.
   (v. 31)
- But Jesus is thinking about spiritual food – the work of bringing people into God's kingdom. (v. 34)
- This is a harvest like no other, gathering people for eternal life. (v. 36)
- As the Samaritans believe in Jesus' words they show that the harvest is underway. (v. 41)
- They've realised that Jesus really is the Saviour of the whole world. (v. 42)

<sup>29</sup> 'Could this be the Messiah?'

<sup>30</sup> They came out of the town...

<sup>31</sup> '...Rabbi, eat something.'

<sup>34</sup> 'My food... is to do the will of him who sent me...'

<sup>36</sup> '...harvests a crop for eternal life...'

41 ...many more became believers.

<sup>42</sup> '...this man really is the Saviour of the world.'

The question for us is: are we willing to put our trust in the words of Jesus?

JOHN 4:27-42 EPISODE 9

Why not find a moment to re-read what we've looked at in this episode?

#### John 4:27-42

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What comes next?

Jesus is back on home soil, but will He get a similar response? 43



### Episode 10

# Jesus: all He was promised to be

JOHN 4:43-54

In the previous episode: A huge harvest in Samaria.

In this episode:
Jesus versus death...
turns out to be
no contest.

We're going to start this episode by flashing back to the prophet Isaiah again

Isaiah 25:6, 8a, 9

<sup>6</sup> On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine – the best of meats and the finest of wines.

8 he will swallow up death for ever.The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces...

<sup>9</sup>In that day they will say,

'Surely this is our God;

we trusted in him,

and he saved us.

This is the LORD, we

trusted in him;

let us rejoice and be

glad in his salvation.'

### Messiah prophecies fulfilled

We're coming to the end of this section of John's Gospel. John's content has been carefully arranged to show us who Jesus is.

- It started in chapter 2 with Jesus' first sign as He supplied the wedding at Cana.
- Now we see Jesus back in Cana, acting again as Isaiah had prophesied, 'swallowing up' death.
- Jesus is proving to be the longpromised Messiah and some (for example the Samaritans) are already responding to Him as the Saviour of the world.

Back in John

<sup>43</sup> After the two days he left for Galilee. <sup>44</sup> (Now Jesus himself had pointed out that a prophet has no honour in his own country.)

<sup>45</sup> When he arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him. They had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, for they also had been there.

<sup>46</sup> Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine.

#### A desperate situation

Jesus is now back on Jewish soil, though He's not expecting a warm welcome.

Notice the deliberate link back to the first sign:

- Jesus is back in Cana where He turned water into wine. (v. 46a)
- This is a deliberate link. We're meant to connect these two signs.
- The wedding feast and the 'swallowing up' of death (Isaiah 25:8) tell us who Jesus is and what He has come to do.

And there was a certain royal official whose son lay ill at Capernaum.

<sup>47</sup> When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death.

<sup>48</sup> 'Unless you people see signs and wonders,' Jesus told him, 'you will never believe.'

<sup>49</sup> The royal official said, 'Sir, come down before my child dies.'

In walks a man in a desperate situation. His son is about to die. He has travelled more than 20 miles to see Jesus.

This man is important, connected to royalty, but he is not too proud to beg Jesus to heal his son.

What is surprising about Jesus' response?

- Jesus challenges the crowd for their unbelief. They want to see the signs but they don't really believe. (v. 48)

This links back to John 2:23–25: 'many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name. But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all people.'

What will
Jesus do next?

50 'Go,' Jesus replied,
'your son will live.'
The man took Jesus at
his word and departed.

<sup>51</sup> While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living.

<sup>52</sup> When he enquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, 'Yesterday, at one in the afternoon, the fever left him.'

#### I came... I heard... I believed!

What does Jesus do?

- With just five words, Jesus declares that the boy is healed. (v. 50)
- The official puts his trust in Jesus' word. (v. 50)
- Immediately his son is made well. (v. 52)

What extraordinary power! Jesus only has to speak and disease and death are stopped, even though Jesus is nowhere near the boy.

The official was right to take Jesus at His word.

Jesus' power over death proves

He is all that Isaiah prophesied

the Messiah would be.

realised that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, 'Your son will live.' So he and his whole household believed.

<sup>54</sup> This was the second sign Jesus performed after coming from Judea to Galilee. Who else believes?

- The whole household puts their trust in Jesus. (v. 53)
- ...just as the Samaritans had done.

'...now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Saviour of the world.' (John 4:42)

The way that any of us believe is to listen to Jesus' words and learn to trust Him.

The story of this man (and that of the Samaritan woman) show that our own response to Jesus can have a positive impact on others.

#### **Summary**

Death held back by the power of Jesus' words, even from 20 miles away.

- Jesus is back in Israel, but He is not expecting a warm welcome. (v. 43)
- In walks a rich, powerful man whose son is dying, begging for Jesus' help. (v. 46)
- Jesus challenges the crowds who want to see miracles but don't really believe. (v. 48)
- The man is clear he believes Jesus can heal his son. (v. 49)
- In just five words Jesus announces that the man's son is healed. (v. 50)
- Despite the distance, the man takes Jesus at His word and finds out that what Jesus has said is true. (v. 50)
- And he and his whole household believed that Jesus is who He says
   He is, the promised Messiah. (v. 53)

It may be that in reading through John you are beginning to realise that Jesus could be who He says He is. As you consider, perhaps say to God this simple prayer: 'If you are there and this is true, please help me with my unbelief.'

- <sup>43</sup>...he left for Galilee.
- 46 ...a certain royal official whose son lay ill...
- <sup>48</sup> 'Unless you people see signs and wonders... you will never believe.'
- <sup>49</sup> 'Sir, come down before my child dies.'
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#### John 4:43–54

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<sup>54</sup> This was the second sign Jesus performed after coming from Judea to Galilee.

What comes next? A whole new section, as we start to look in more detail at what Jesus has come to do, despite rising opposition. 59 JOHN 2 – 4 BOOK 3

#### Chapters 2 – 4: recap

Let's step back and think about what we've seen in this section of John.

#### Who Jesus is:

- The beginning and end of this section give us two signs. Both point to Jesus as the long-promised Messiah, God's chosen king, as He turns water into wine and heals the royal official's son. Isaiah's 700-year-old prophecy is being fulfilled.

#### What Jesus offers:

- Between these signs Jesus makes the kind of offer that only the Messiah could: new birth, living water... eternal life. All possible because He will be 'lifted up' at the cross (3:14), taking the punishment that all our sins deserve.

There are two surprises.

- First, everyone needs this. Even superreligious Nicodemus needs to be born again.
- Second, anyone can have this. Even the despised Samaritan woman is included. Six times in chapter 3 we hear Jesus say 'whoever'. This really is for anyone.

#### How to respond:

There are two different responses to Jesus in these chapters.

The first is rejection:
 many people like
 Jesus' miracles but
 nothing more. They
 don't accept what He
 says (His testimony)
 about Himself.

- However, the second response is faith: like that of the Samaritans, who are able to say: 'now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Saviour of the world.' (4:42) This is what it looks like to accept Jesus' testimony.

#### The basis for this faith?

Jesus' powerful words: 'And because of his words many more became believers.' (4:41)

So too, the royal official 'took Jesus at his word'. (4:50) And he and his whole household believed.

> So how can someone get to the point of belief? Keep listening to God's Word...

People sometimes ask what it would look like to give their life to Jesus.

You might find it useful to read through this simple prayer; you may even feel ready to pray it: Lord Jesus Christ, I present myself to you now. I know I have sinned in my thoughts, words and actions. I know I need your forgiveness and I am truly sorry. Thank you that you came from heaven to save me by dying on the cross for me. Thank you that you rose from the dead for eternity.

I know that I cannot do anything to earn your forgiveness – you have done it all at the cross. As best as I understand, I gratefully give my life back to you, asking for your forgiveness and your acceptance. I turn from my sin. Now I ask you to please come into my life as I trust you alone to save me.

Come in as my Saviour to cleanse me.

Come in as my Lord and be in charge of my life.

Come in as my Friend to be with me.

Please send the Holy Spirit to live inside me and make me a child in your family.

I pray this in your name,

Amen.

If you have prayed this prayer, do tell the friend who is sharing John with you.





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