May Mission Month

Key text: John 4: 4-42 (NIV)

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

When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

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.)

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."

"Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? 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?"

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 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."

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."

He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."

"I have no husband," she replied.

Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. 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."

"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

"Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. 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. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he."

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?"

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

Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something."

But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about."

Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?"

"My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. 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. 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. Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. 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 labor."

Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers.

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 Savior of the world."

Using this Bible study resource

- **Small groups**
  Read the passage and discuss the questions together. As a group, choose to support a Global Interaction cross-cultural worker or project as part of your giving to mission.
- **Personal reflection time**
  Meditate on the Bible verses, journal your responses to the discussion questions and challenge yourself to learn more about the people around you and overseas who need to hear the message of Jesus.
- **Church leaders**
  Visit the May Mission Month page www.globalinteraction.org.au/mmm to find sermon ideas, children's activities, ministry video clips plus extra resources that will help you involve your congregation.

Session 1

On a hot summer's day Jesus arrived at the famous well. Here Jacob, revered in all of Israel, had made this well with his hands. Over the centuries this well had quenched the thirst of generations of people and their animals, tired and thirsty from their work and travels. Jesus comes to this well ready to speak with a foreigner who was all alone.

Just as Jesus entered the area beyond which His fellow Jews were willing to go, so too God entered the world as a babe - crossing from the divine to the human in order to make a way for us to know God. Known as the incarnation, Jesus enters our world and understands fully what it is to be human. As His humanness interacts with our humanity, Jesus knows what we go through, the highs and lows, enabling us to encounter Him where we're at.

Think about it

- Is the reality of Jesus entering our world something you find hard to grasp? In what ways?
- In the past year, what has helped you encounter Jesus as you go about following Him?
- What strikes you when contemplating Jesus entering foreign places in order to encounter others?

Live it

- Have coffee or a meal with a friend in a suburb you'd rarely, if ever, go to. Observe what's happening around you. What rises within as you go to this place and see what's happening? How might God be reaching this area of your city or town? Take a friend and chat about it.
- Call your Global Interaction State team to tee up a date and time for an Xpose Day for a small group of people from your church. Xpose days enable cross-cultural interactions in your city and allow people to open up their eyes to what is around them.
- Learn about people groups from the Global Interaction Guide or website. Think about what it would take to enter into their world.
- Pray about the openness of your heart to connecting with others in different regions and cultural areas of your city.
- Download the Ekteino App – for the next four weeks take the challenge to discover more about God, His plans and how we can partner with Him in our world through intentional action and reflection.

May Mission Month

Session 2

As Jesus and the Samaritan woman came together we see a collision of cultures. Perhaps it draws a parallel to how Christ's coming into the world brought heavenly and earthly realms together. Here, Jesus breaks barriers of racial tension, gender norms, ritual cleanliness and religious difference. These cultural distinctions would normally create a distance between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. With ease Jesus breaks this down through conversation - the building of a relationship. This relationship is of such a level that Jesus is even willing to share and drink from her water container.

Think about it

- Isn't it interesting that even asking for the simplest of things, a cup of water in this instance, can be difficult to overcome with cultural barriers? In what ways do you find yourself at odds with the culture around you?
- Notice how Jesus takes the initiative in asking for water, yet the end result is for the Samaritan woman's benefit. With relationships you're involved in, what initiative do you need to take in order for people to become more aware of Jesus?
- In what area is Jesus asking you to take initiative in order to follow Him?

Live it

- In the next week, approach a situation where there may be barriers from the perspective of the other person. In what ways can you initiate change through understanding the other perspective?
- Spend a couple of hours in a shopping centre, train station or public space watching how people from different cultures interact. What can you learn?
- Reflect on a relationship that might have broken down due to a communication misunderstanding. Were differing cultures at play? What can you learn from this experience?
- Go and meet someone from a different culture to you. Talk to them about where they grew up and the expectations upon them. Learn from them!

May Mission Month

Session 3

Jesus hints that there is a life-nourishing gift that can only come from God and it comes through Jesus. It is living water. In the Middle East the expression 'living water' was a description of water that was not stagnant from the likes of a cistern, pool, pond or well. Living water had a replenishing source like a river, spring or stream. It was moving, refreshing – it was living and life-giving. God has water like this on offer and it comes through Jesus.

The Samaritan wants this water. Jesus has given her hope in even the suggestion of it. Considering her life situation as one who is outcast from her society, it is not surprising that with this glimmer of hope she begins to hope that her life can be refreshed and renewed. What great news for this woman as that living water, that refreshing hope, is standing right in front of her!

Think about it

- Do you know this living water yourself? Do you experience this refreshment regularly or are you still searching for it?
- In what ways are you refreshed by your knowledge and relationship with Jesus?
- We see that the Samaritan woman is seeking satisfaction in life but finding it in all the wrong places. How do you see Jesus satisfy your life and the life of others?
- This gift of water is for all people, not just this woman. How do you go about sharing this gift of living water with others?

Live it

- Talk to someone in your church about how they came to know Jesus.
- Spend some time with Jesus, seeking and praying for refreshment.
- If you don't believe you are satisfied, if you believe you are still seeking this living water, why not talk to a trusted Christian friend or pastor about it?
- Is it time to share this living water with someone else? Consider your friends who don't have the satisfying knowledge and relationship with Jesus and think about an appropriate way to introduce them to it.
- Would you consider praying about sharing this living water in a cross-cultural context? Talk with your Global Interaction State Team to take the next step.

May Mission Month

Session 4

It seems that relationship after relationship has broken down in the Samaritan woman's life and her social status has been diminished. We don't know the precise details of why these things happen but considering the honour and shame-focused culture she lived in, it is likely that her opportunity for stability, income, housing, security and social standing was obliterated after each divorce. She was socially ostracised. She resorts to collecting water, alone, in the heat of the day.

Jesus knows all this about her and begins to reveal His true nature to her. He tells her that He is indeed the living water, the hope and satisfaction in life that she is seeking. In revealing His knowledge of her life, He shows Himself to be at least a prophet but more than that, He openly admits His divinity as the expected Christ.

Despite his knowledge of who she is Jesus still offers her living water. He still seeks her and wants her to know that she is not too-far gone for God. God in Christ has not given up. He loves her still and calls her to a transformed life in Him.

May Mission Month

Think about it

- Do you consider yourself to be too-far gone for God? If you do, this is not true. Jesus is seeking you and calling you to Himself. Can you imagine Jesus sitting there with you as you drink a cup of water, calling you to His all-satisfying living water?
- As a believer, do you ever feel ostracised? How do you deal with situations where you are not being respected or understood because of your beliefs?
- When you've been struggling with your faith and relationship with Jesus what do you do? Are you aware that Christ is actually right beside you, not giving up on you?

Live it

- No one is too-far gone from God. Are there people you can think of who have lost hope? Is it time to talk with them and encourage them in their life with Jesus?
- Pray to God, laying down your own struggles, needs and wants, and taste and see that the Lord is good! Drink from His living water. Pray for others who seem to be struggling too.
- Watch episode two of Global Interaction's MOVED series, seeing the way in which God has transformed the lives of people through his calling into mission. www.globalinteraction.org.au/MOVED
- The transformation of people's lives is for all cultures. Select one of Global Interaction's nine people groups and find out more about what makes their culture unique. Consider how the Gospel of living water might transform their lives.

Session 5

When the disciples return they are stunned to see Jesus in conversation with the woman. Think about the cultural situation they are in - the barriers between the Jews and the Samaritans were already complicated enough by their long history, let alone the barrier between Jesus, a man, and this Samaritan, a woman, conversing so openly.

The conversation was so life-giving for this woman that she went back to her village and told the people about it, forgetting all about the reason she had gone to the well in the first place. With this interaction the Samaritan woman now becomes a missionary herself. She goes and tells the village of the Good News that comes through knowing God. This is a stark transformation from when she first met Jesus.

The disciples are so shocked that their teacher is happily talking with this woman that they quickly focus on the food they've just bought. Yet Jesus turns their attention away from the food to the mission that they are on. The food may well be physically sustaining for a short period but it is the long-term food, the mission of God, that is of greater importance.

Jesus, the Living Water, is all-satisfying to all peoples, including those who may seem of least importance or of complete difference to us. Jesus turns the understanding of the disciples to the conversation with the Samaritan woman, showing them that this is the way of Jesus. In following Him the mission of God is for all, it is a new way of seeing the world and crosses cultural barriers, with transformation open to all individuals and ethnicities.

May Mission Month

Think about it

- Do you find the reaction of the disciples surprising considering they've been following Jesus for a little while already? What about the reaction of the Samaritan woman post-conversation with Jesus? How or why?
- With such urgency the woman goes back to her village and tells them about this person Jesus. Was there a time you had similar urgency in your faith? What do you think you could do to foster that now?
- The mission of God becomes surprising and unexpected to the disciples. Jesus explains that things are different on His watch. What baggage would they need to let go of to approach this mission in a new way?
- How are you invited into this story? How are you invited into God's mission through the principles of this passage?

Live it

- What do you sense God calling you to in terms of His mission to the world? Is it time to take a first step at talk to someone about it?
- Spend time with God this week, reading his Word and praying, asking Him to increase your urgency in letting others know about this all-satisfying living water.
- Consider a short-term Global Xposure team, would this be something you would like to be part of? Contact your State Office for more information and how to make this a reality.
- Is there a particular mission endeavour you can get involved in with your church? Take the next step in joining in with your church family in pursuing God's mission in your local community.

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