



grace
in place of *grace*

Walking Through the Book of John DEVOTIONAL | WEEK 3 | FEBRUARY 9

RECEIVE

Take a few moments to read **John 4:1–42**. Imagine yourself in the heat of the day sitting at a well in the Ancient Near East. The setting is dry, rocky and arid. This story takes place as Jesus is traveling from Judea to Galilee, a roughly seventy-mile journey. It is a bright, hot and tiresome day to be traveling. As best you can, place yourself in this setting and make note of how you think it could have felt to be there as this narrative unfolds.

REFLECT

1. What stands out to you in this passage? What elements of this story make sense to you and what seems confusing or vague?
2. Verse 4:4 reads, “Now He **had** to go through Samaria.” In fact, Jesus could have opted for a different path around Samaria (this was common practice). Geography did not demand a trip through Samaria so what do you think this verse means?
3. The tension between the Samaritans and the Jewish community was well-documented in Scripture and historical record. The disdain both communities felt for the other was palpable (4:9). Given this reality, why do you think Jesus (a Jewish rabbi) chose Samaria for this encounter?

4. Think about a person or group of people who feel distant and unknown to you. In our increasingly divided and polarized world, what lessons does this passage reveal on how we engage with those with whom we disagree?
5. The Woman at the Well is one of the better-known stories from Scripture. If this narrative is already familiar to you, what were you taught about who she is? If this is a new story for you, what do you think her life might have been like?
6. Understanding context and culture is important. For our modern ears, a note about a woman who had five husbands leaves us with an unsettled picture of who she was. However, in her historical context, there were understandable (and non-scandalous) reasons for multiple marriages. What do you think some of those reasons might be?
7. Many Bible commentators and biblical scholars suggest that rather than a social outcast, the Woman at the Well was more likely a leader in her community. What do you see in this passage that supports this idea?
8. In 4:22–24, Jesus and the woman engage in a brief dialogue about worship. Jesus tells her that true worshippers worship God in spirit and in truth. What does it mean to worship in spirit and truth?
9. After their conversation, the woman returns to her community and shares her story with them. Why did they respond so favorably? What was it about Jesus that made them want to come and hear more? Could your own encounters with Jesus be a reason that others want to come and hear more? Explain.

RESPOND

Jesus intentionally spent time with people who disagreed with one another and with Him on a variety of issues. Just like our modern era, at the time of Jesus people argued about politics, religion and other competing ideologies. Every week we interact with people who hold a different position than us on any number of issues. Often, our impulse, understandably, is to avoid those spaces. This week, when you encounter a moment of discomfort, consider how Jesus might engage that place differently. Start to take quiet notes on your own reactions versus how Jesus reacted to those who are different. Pray and ask God to help you engage with difference the way Jesus might.

BLESSING

This week may you meet people with wonder and curiosity. May you listen well and work to discover the image of God in those who are different. When you find yourself tired from the dry wells you draw from, may you find God's water filling your life. And as you learn how to worship in spirit and truth, may God's spring of abundance overflow and saturate your life forevermore. Amen.

READ FOR NEXT WEEK



Reading Plan | Grace in Place of Grace

Week 1 | January 26 | John 1

Week 2 | February 2 | John 2 & 3

Week 3 | February 9 | John 4 & 5

Week 4 | February 16 | John 6 & 7:13

Week 5 | February 23 | John 7:14–8

Week 6 | March 2 | John 9 & 10