



## Session 5: Jesus Compassion



**Our reading today demonstrates that Jesus was good at being both confrontational and compassionate.**

It also shows the cultural barriers he was prepared to cross in order to bring freedom and a new life.

### Previous session review

- Recap on your experience of the previous challenge. How did it go? Was it helpful?
- If you weren't able to try the challenge, explore the question: Where and how did you experience God last week?

## Read

*Read the passage several times through, slowly and prayerfully. It might help to use your imagination to picture the scene. At the end of the text you will find helpful background information in our 'Setting the Scene' section.*

*As you read, look out for shockers and blockers.*

**Shockers** – a phrase, word, image or something from the text that resonates, stands out or connects with you.

**Blockers** – something from the text that raises questions for you.

### John 4.4–26

This time he had to go through Samaria, and on his way he came to the town of Sychar. It was near the field that Jacob had long ago given to his son Joseph. The well that Jacob had dug was still there, and Jesus sat down beside it because he was tired from travelling. It was noon, and after Jesus' disciples had gone into town to buy some food, a Samaritan woman came to draw water from the well. Jesus asked her, "Would you please give me a drink of water?" "You are a Jew," she replied, "and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink of water when Jews and Samaritans won't have anything to do with each other?" Jesus answered, "You don't know what God wants to give you, and you don't know who is asking you for a drink. If you did, you would ask me for the water that gives life."

"Sir," the woman said, "you don't even have a bucket, and the well is deep. Where are you going to get this life-giving water? Our ancestor Jacob dug this well for us, and his family and animals got water from it. Are you greater than Jacob?" Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will get thirsty again. But no one who drinks the water I give will ever be thirsty again. The water I give is like a flowing fountain that gives eternal life."

The woman replied, "Sir, please give me a drink of that water! Then I won't get thirsty and have to come to this well again." Jesus told her, "Go and bring your husband." The woman answered, "I don't have a husband."

"That's right," Jesus replied, "you're telling the truth. You don't have a husband. You have already been married five times, and the man you are now living with isn't your husband." The woman said, "Sir, I can see that you are a prophet. My ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews say Jerusalem is the only place to worship."

### Setting the scene:

- Women usually carried out daily chores in a group for mutual protection as well as making the journey more tolerable and interesting, going to the well early in the morning to avoid the heat. This woman is alone, and at the well at noon. The implication is that this woman was ostracized by the rest because of her immorality.
- 'You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan': there had been long-standing and bitter antipathy between Jews and Samaritans. Pious Jews would travel around Samaria to avoid defilement, but for Jesus defilement comes from within, not from the outside. Jesus sets aside 500yrs of hostility to speak to her.
- On seeing this woman at the well, Jesus was expected to courteously withdraw to a distance of at least twenty feet to indicate it was safe for her to approach the well. Jesus breaks a huge social taboo by talking to a woman in a public place without witnesses.
- Jews wouldn't share vessels with Samaritans because they considered that to do so would make them unclean. So Jesus affirms her dignity and worth in asking her to serve him a drink of water.

Jesus said to her: Believe me, the time is coming when you won't worship the Father either on this mountain or in Jerusalem. You Samaritans don't really know the one you worship. But we Jews do know the God we worship, and by using us, God will save the world. But a time is coming, and it is already here! Even now the true worshipers are being led by the Spirit to worship the Father according to the truth. These are the ones the Father is seeking to worship him. God is Spirit, and those who worship God must be led by the Spirit to worship him according to the truth.

The woman said, "I know that the Messiah will come. He is the one we call Christ. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." "I am that one," Jesus told her, "and I am speaking to you now."

Contemporary English Version (CEV)

## Reflect

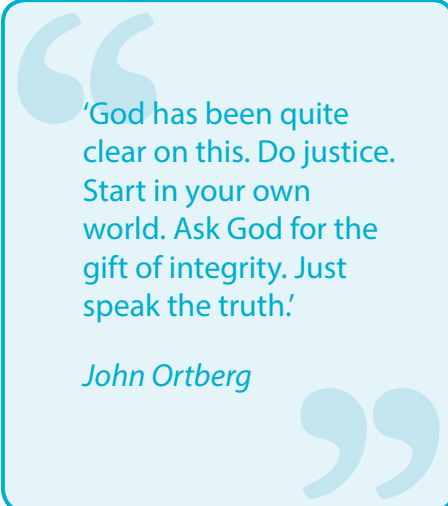
*After you have all had time to read the text, pause and be still to listen to God through the Scriptures.*

*Begin your reflection time by each naming your shockers and blockers. Listen carefully to each other, share your thoughts and reflect on this passage together.*

### You might also like to explore these questions:

**Q1.** Have you ever had a conversation which crossed cultural barriers? What was the experience like?

**Q2.** How well do you handle confrontation? How do you integrate confrontation with compassion?



## Respond

*Jesus Compassion challenge: As a group, create a challenge to help you broaden the diversity of people that you know and break cultural barriers, or choose from the following.*

### Challenge ideas:

#### 1. Breakout

This week, as often as you can, spend time with people outside your usual social circle. Mix with people at work, get to know new people and learn about them. Invest time and energy into making new (and genuine) friendships. Try to see something of God in each person you meet. If you go to a party or some other social gathering, lookout for the person on their own, spend some time with them rather than gravitate towards the people you already know.

#### 2. Public Transport

If you are someone who usually travels alone in a car a lot, then make an effort to use public transport. Use the bus or train to place yourself amongst different people. This goes against the grain of much of our private/personal/individual living. If appropriate, make eye contact, say hello, smile. Be open to conversation with people you don't know.

#### 3. Available

Practice the discipline of availability and be open to allowing God to use interruptions or hold ups in your schedule this week. If you find yourself 'wasting time', like Jesus, perhaps in a queue, at the hospital, waiting for a train, or waiting for someone who is running late, seek to be alert and responsive to the person whom God 'just sends along'. Be open to God's timing and strike up conversation.

## Group Prayer

You might like to commit to praying for each person in the group this week as you explore ways to break out of your current social contexts and cross barriers.

# Bringing the Bible to Life

