

CHURCH.

LESSON 12

1	PRAYER
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Group leader. Pray for God's guidance through his Spirit, for awareness of his presence and for listening to his voice. Commit your group and this lesson about church building to the Lord.

2	SHARING (20 minutes) [QUIET TIMES] 2 CORINTHIANS 7 - 10
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Take turns and share (or read from your notes) in short what you have learned from one of your quiet times out of the assigned Bible passages (2 Corinthians 7 - 10).

Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares. Take notes.

3	MEMORISATION (5 minutes) [KEY VERSES IN JOHN] REVIEW KEY VERSES IN JOHN
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Review two by two the last 5 memorised Bible verses from John.

1. John 1:14. The Word became flesh (that is, took on the human nature) and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only (that is, the Only begotten) who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

2. John 1:16. From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.

3. John 2:25. He did not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man.

4. 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.

5. John 4:24. God is Spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth.

4	BIBLE STUDY (85 minutes) [THE GOSPEL OF JOHN] JOHN 4:1-54
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Introduce. John 4:1-42 describes Jesus Christ, revealing himself to the Samaritans. John 4:43-54 describes Jesus Christ, revealing himself to the Galileans. There are some remarkable differences between John chapter 3 and John chapter 4. In John chapter 3, Jesus speaks to a man (Nicodemus), who was a Jew and who occupied a high moral position. But in John chapter 4, Jesus speaks to a woman, who was a Samaritan and who lived a low moral life.

STEP 1. READ.	GOD'S WORD
<i>Read.</i> LET US READ John 4:1-54 together. Let us take turns to read one verse each until we have completed the reading.	

STEP 2. DISCOVER.	OBSERVATIONS
<i>Consider.</i> WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU? Or WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE TOUCHES YOUR MIND OR HEART? <i>Record.</i> Discover one or two truths that you understand. Think about them and write your thoughts in your notebook. <i>Share.</i> (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, take turns to share). Let us take turns to share with one another what each of us has discovered. (Remember: In every small group, the group members will share different things)	

4:10

Discovery 1. The difference between ordinary water and the living water that Jesus gives.

In John 4:10, Jesus says, "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". When Jesus spoke of the living water, the Samaritan woman thought that Jesus was speaking of ordinary water, which she could draw out of the well. She thought that Jesus was referring to the spring-water that bubbles up at the very bottom of the well, below the standing water in the well. Therefore she remarked that Jesus had no bucket with a rope to bring up this water.

Apparently the patriarch Jacob dug this well and the woman questioned whether Jesus was greater than Jacob was. However, Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." Jesus

was speaking of the living water, namely salvation, which the Holy Spirit would work in her. He contrasted the ordinary physical water with the living spiritual water. When you drink of ordinary water, you will always become thirsty again, but when you drink the living water (salvation) that Jesus gives, you will have lasting satisfaction. The ordinary water remains outside your soul and can therefore never fulfil the needs of your soul. But the living water (salvation and all its blessings) will enter your soul and fulfil its deepest needs. The ordinary water will always disappear after you drink it. But like a never-ending fountain or spring, the living water of Jesus will never fail to refresh and satisfy you.

Discovery 2. How Jesus wins the woman to believe in him.

In Proverbs 11:30 is written, “He who wins souls is wise”. Jesus gives us an example of how he won the soul of the Samaritan woman. On his way from Judea to Galilee, Jesus had to pass through Samaria. There, one afternoon he sat, tired and thirsty at a well, while his disciples had gone to buy food in a nearby town. Here he talked to an immoral Samaritan woman in order to win her soul into his kingdom.

(1) Jesus appealed to her sympathy by asking her for a drink of water from her jar. A very effective way of gaining entrance into the heart of another person is by giving that person an opportunity to do you a favour or by doing a favour to him. Jesus combined both ways. He asked her for ordinary water and offered to give her living water.

(2) Jesus aroused her curiosity by saying to her, “If you only knew the gift of God and the One who asks you for a drink”. The woman assumed that Jesus was a (self-satisfied) Jew and in need of help and that she (in his eyes a despised) Samaritan woman was self-sufficient and able to help him. However, Jesus turned the tables and said that she is really the needy person, who needs the living water and that he is the Fountain that can supply it. This aroused her curiosity. The way to arouse people’s curiosity is to tell them who God is and what he wants to give.

(3) Jesus stimulated her desire for satisfaction by saying to her, “Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. The water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life”. Jesus contrasted the ordinary water with the living water. When you drink of ordinary water, you will always become thirsty again. The water remains outside your soul and can therefore never fulfil the needs of your soul. It always disappears after you drink it. However, when you drink the living water, which Jesus gives, then you will have lasting satisfaction. It will enter your soul and fulfil its deepest needs. It will be like a never-ending spring, which never fails to refresh and satisfy you. A way to stimulate a person’s desire for eternal life is to contrast it with ordinary life.

(4) Jesus awakened her conscience by asking her to bring her husband. Jesus knew that a thirst for the living water would not be truly awakened in her unless she had a personal awareness of sin. When Jesus mentioned her husband, she felt guilty, because she did not have a husband. She was living an immoral life. The way to awaken a true desire for salvation is to help people realise their sins.

(5) Jesus revealed little by little who he was. Just as his self-disclosure advances gradually, so the woman’s confession (concerning her failures, idols and slavery) advances gradually. She first sees him as a Jew, then as a prophet and finally as the Messiah!

STEP 3. QUESTION.

EXPLANATIONS

Consider. WHICH QUESTION ABOUT ANYTHING IN THIS PASSAGE WOULD YOU LIKE TO ASK TO THIS GROUP?

Let us try to understand all the truths in John 4:1-54 and ask questions about the things we still do not understand.

Record. Formulate your question as clearly as possible. Then write your question in your notebook.

Share. (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, let each person first share his question.)

Discuss. (Then, choose a few of these questions and try to answer them by discussing them together in your group.)

(The following are examples of questions the students might ask and some notes about the discussion of the questions.)

4:20-24

Question 1. What is true spiritual worship?

Notes.

(1) The place where Christians worship God.

The Samaritans and the Jews thought that it was very important *where* you worshipped God. They believed that they needed a building and it had to stand in their own country. The Jews believed that God had to be worshipped in the temple in Jerusalem. The Samaritans believed that God had to be worshipped in the temple on Mount Gerezim. Think of all the temples in India, the mosque in Turkey and the church buildings in Europe. But Jesus answered, “The time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. A time is coming and has now come, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks”. Jesus teaches that it is not the *place*, where we worship, but the *attitude*, with which we worship, and the *truth*, according to which we worship, that is important! Therefore, true worship is not hampered by physical considerations, but rather by the wrong attitude in the heart and the lies in the head through which they worship. Christians may worship God the Father everywhere, in their houses, in church buildings, in prisons, and in the open air.

(2) The truth according to which Christians worship.

The attitude with which our mind worships is determined by the truth concerning the Object of our worship. We worship God. But what is the truth about God? The truth about God is not anything that people (even religious people) say or believe about God, but it is everything that God reveals about himself in the creation and in the Bible (Psalm 19). God has revealed to us who he is and what he is like. God has revealed to us his characteristics, his words and his deeds (Hebrews 1:1-2).

One of the truths that God has revealed to us is that God is *Spirit*. God is in his essence completely spiritual. He is not a stone-, tree-, mountain- or a temple deity, so that he needs to be worshipped in idols cut out of stone, or under a certain tree, or on a certain mountain, or at a certain temple.

God is not a deity to be understood (defined) in terms of a mathematical number or physical laws of matter, energy, space and time of this universe, because God is perfectly Spirit and transcends the mathematical and physical realities which he created. God is not the Deity of a specific religion or the Deity according to the view of one prophet or founder or leader. The only God that exists has revealed himself within his own creation and within human history through all the Old Testament prophets and finally by taking on the human nature and revealing himself in Jesus Christ.

God has revealed himself visibly to:

- Abraham in a vision (Genesis 15:1)
- Hagar and Ishmael in the Angel of the LORD (Genesis 16:7-13)
- Moses in a burning bush (Exodus 3:2-6)
- Abraham in three men (Genesis 18:1-14)
- The man Jesus Christ (John 1:1,14; John 14:9-10).

Without letting go of his divine nature, God took on also the human nature and entered his own creation and human history in the Lord Jesus Christ.

God needs to be worshipped according to how he has revealed himself in the Bible. God is completely spiritual in his nature. This means, that he has no physical body and normally cannot be seen by people. He is unique. He alone is God (Deuteronomy 6:4). Another “god” or “saviour” does not exist (Isaiah 43:10-11)! He is independent and does not have to be served by people (Acts 17:24-25). He is a personal Being and people need to relate to God in a personal way. People cannot dissolve in or become one with God in a pantheistic way. God must be worshipped sincerely as he has revealed himself in the creation, in the Bible and in Jesus Christ.

In John 4:24 Jesus says, “God is Spirit and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth”. Therefore, true worship is directed to the true God as he has revealed himself in his creation, in the Bible and as he has displayed himself in the work of salvation.

(3) The spirit with which Christians worship.

The attitude with which our spirits worship is determined by our obedience to God’s truth regarding the method of worship. Many religious people believe that the method of worship consists of prescribed prayer positions, fixed prayers or mantras, prescribed places of worship, special religious festivals, and religious laws about clothing, eating, drinking and fasting, pilgrimages to holy places and giving money. For example, the Jews prayed standing with uplifted hands or kneeled while facing Jerusalem, made three pilgrimages to Jerusalem every year, ate no unclean food, fasted twice every week, and had to give three different kinds of tithes of their income!

However, not every kind of worship is pleasing to God! Not any and every method of worship may be employed in the Church. For example, in Isaiah 1:13-15, God says, “Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me,... I cannot bear your evil assemblies, ... your festivals my soul hates, ... even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen.” Therefore, Christians should not make an outward display of their worship, but their worship should be inward. Christians should worship God with a forgiving spirit, by confessing their sins, by surrendering their lives, by dedicating themselves and by praising and thanking God for who he is and what he has done. Therefore, true worship involves the whole inward man as well as his daily life-style.

(4) The humility with which Christians worship.

John 4:23 says that the worshippers in spirit and truth are the kind of worshippers God the Father *seeks*. It does not mean that the Father searches for individuals who make themselves such worshippers. Rather, it means that the Father yearns to make the people that he saved into such worshippers! God the Father has taken the initiative in seeking and saving people (Luke 19:10). He is also taking the initiative to complete that salvation (Philippians 1:6) by making the saved people into people that worship in truth and in spirit.

4:27

Question 2. Why were the disciples surprised to find Jesus talking to a woman?

Notes.

In John 4:27, the disciples were amazed that Jesus was talking to a woman. They were amazed, because the Jewish rabbis taught, “Let no one talk with a woman in the street, not even with his own wife”.

Many religious teachers today lay very heavy burdens on their women. They teach that women exist only to please men; that women must dress in a particular prescribed way; that women should always stay at home; that men may not talk to other women; that a man may marry several women; that a man may divorce his wives for any reason; that a man may beat his wife and even kill his wife!

Jesus Christ changed the culture in the world with respect to women! He illustrated to his disciples what true emancipation of women meant. True emancipation of women does not mean that Christians ignore the differences God has created between men and women. It also does not mean that Christians disobey the different responsibilities God has given to men and women in marriage and in the Church. In the eyes of God, the soul of a woman is equally as precious as the soul of a man (Galatians 3:28). And her contributions in the home and in the Church are equally as valuable. And her dignity in society is equally as important. The motives of Jesus with respect to women were always pure and noble. Although the disciples were surprised to find Jesus talking to a woman, nobody asked, "What do you desire of her?" The answer would have been, "To *receive* from her a drink of ordinary water". And nobody asked, "Why are you talking with her?" The answer would have been, "To *give* to her the living water!" Jesus always treated women with respect and kindness.

4:35-38

Question 3. What does Jesus teach about the relationship between sowers and reapers?

Notes.

(1) The ones who sow in this Bible passage are Jesus and the Samaritan woman.

Jesus had won the soul of the Samaritan woman. She in turn went to win the souls of the people living in her town. When the Samaritan woman arrived in the town, about ten minutes walking from the well, she did not say that Jesus is the Messiah, but challenged the people to investigate for themselves. She said, "Come and see ...", just as Jesus did to his first two disciples. She said, "This man told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" Just like the Jews, the Samaritans expected the Messiah to be the Prophet of Deuteronomy 18:18-19. And so a crowd of people rushed out immediately and made their way to Jesus.

(2) The spiritual harvest does not have a specific season.

In the mean time, Jesus spoke to his disciples and said, "Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest?' " The ordinary harvest in this region took place in April. Therefore, the time Jesus met the Samaritan woman was December. This must have been December A.D. 27. In December the physical harvest of grain was not yet ripe for harvest.

But the spiritual harvest of people does not have a specific season for the harvest! It is always ripe for the harvest! In this case, there was hardly any time between the sowing of the seed of the gospel and the reaping of the crop for eternal life! Jesus saw the procession of Samaritans coming from the town and across the fields towards the well and said, "I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest." Jesus clearly implied that he was sending his disciples to harvest these people into his kingdom. Right here the prophecy in Amos 9:13 was being fulfilled. The prophet Amos had prophesied, "The days are coming, declares the Lord, when the reaper will be overtaken by the ploughman and the planter by the one treading grapes!" There will be no time left between sowing and reaping!

(3) The reapers in this Bible passage are the disciples.

In John 4:38, Jesus says, "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". Both Jesus and the Samaritan woman had been working among the Samaritans - Jesus indirectly, via the Samaritan woman, and she, in turn, directly, among her townspeople. Now the Lord Jesus Christ sent his disciples to reap the crop of people for eternal life.

(4) In the spiritual realm the usual pattern is that one person reaps where another person has sown.

In John 4:37, Jesus says, "The saying, 'One sows and another reaps' is true." Each worker in the kingdom of God is at the same time a reaper and a sower. He reaps that which has been sown by others. And he sows the seed, which brings forth a harvest that will be gathered by others. Therefore, in God's sovereign plan, there will always be a harvest to reap! Either you yourself may have the joy of reaping a harvest, or you may have the joy of knowing that another worker will harvest where you have sown! In this way, the sower and the reaper will be glad together. Christian workers may always rejoice in their work of sowing or reaping. The apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:58, "Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain." This is a fulfilment of Isaiah 55:10-11, "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my Word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it." Be convinced of the truth: "There will always be a harvest!"

4:44-45

Question 4. Why does Jesus go to Galilee, his home country, when he knows that a prophet has no honour in his home country?

Notes. In Matthew 13:53-58 Jesus came to his hometown Nazareth in Galilee. The people rejected him and Jesus also said, “Only in his hometown and in his own house is a prophet without honour”. Galilee was the home country of Jesus. When he was in Jerusalem, many people believed in him, because of the miracles they saw. After he had cleansed the temple, he had his first clash with the Pharisees. Jesus went to Galilee on purpose, because in Galilee he need not fear that people would honour him in a way that would bring him into immediate collision with the Pharisees and thus create a premature crisis. The Galileans *welcomed* him, because he was a miracle worker (verse 45). But they did not thereby *honour* him (verse 48). And unless they saw miracles, they would also *not believe*. When Jesus taught them that unless they receive him into their hearts and lives by abiding faith, they would not receive eternal life, many of the Galileans also *left* him (John 6:66).

STEP 4. APPLY.

APPLICATIONS

Consider. WHICH TRUTHS IN THIS PASSAGE ARE POSSIBLE APPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIANS?

Share and record. Let us brainstorm with one another and record a list of possible applications from John 4:1-54.

Consider: WHICH POSSIBLE APPLICATION DOES GOD WANT YOU TO TURN INTO A PERSONAL APPLICATION?

Record. Write this personal application down in your notebook. Feel free to share your personal application.

(Remember that people in every group will apply different truths or even make different applications of the same truth. The following is a list of possible applications.)

1. Examples of possible applications from John 4:1-54.

- 4:1. Go and make disciples, like Jesus himself did (Matthew 28:19).
- 4:7. Take the initiative to make contact with people by asking them a favour or by doing them a favour.
- 4:10. Arouse the curiosity of people by telling them about God and what God can give.
- 4:13-14. Stimulate the desire of people for spiritual realities by contrasting it with the physical realities.
- 4:16-18. Awaken a true desire for salvation by helping people to realise their sins.
- 4:19. Reveal little by little to people who Jesus Christ is, so that you do not overwhelm them with too much truth.
- 4:21-24. Worship God with the right attitude of mind. Worship the God, who has revealed himself in the Bible.
- 4:21-24. Worship God with the right attitude of spirit. Worship God, not in outward ceremonies, but in sincerity.
- 4:27. Treat women as you treat men, with respect and without oppressive discrimination.
- 4:32,34. Eat ordinary food, but never neglect to eat spiritual food: to do God’s will and to finish the work, which God has assigned.
- 4:37-38. Sow the gospel wherever you can and reap people into God’s kingdom whenever you can.
- 4:42. Make sure that your faith in Jesus Christ is not only built on what other people say, but on your personal faith and experience with Jesus Christ.
- 4:44. When you are not honoured as a preacher in your own town, go to another town (Matthew 10:11-15).
- 4:48-53. Accept that you are more blessed when you have not seen Jesus or his miracles and nevertheless believe (John 20:29).

2. Example of personal applications from John 4:1-54.

I want to be a *finisher* just like Jesus. I have started to believe in Jesus Christ and I want to continue to trust him, no matter the difficulties I face. Jesus said, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and *to finish* his work”. I too want to dedicate myself to the will of God and *to finish* the work God has given me to do.

I want to rejoice even if I only sow in some people’s lives, but not reap. I also want to rejoice even if I only reap what other people have sown. I want to be content with the task God has given me. Sometimes I sow and other times I reap. I know that in God’s sovereign plan, there will always be a harvest to reap! Either I myself will have the joy of reaping a harvest, or I may have the joy of knowing that another worker will harvest where I have sown! In this way, the sower and the reaper will be glad together.

STEP 5. PRAY.

RESPONSE

LET US TAKE TURNS TO PRAY ABOUT ONE TRUTH THAT GOD HAS TAUGHT US in John 4:1-54.

(Respond in your prayer to what you have learned during this Bible study. Practise to pray only in one or two sentences. Remember that people in every group will pray about different issues.)

5	PRAYER (8 minutes)	<i>[INTERCESSION]</i> PRAY FOR OTHERS
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Continue to pray in groups of two's or three's. Pray with one another for one another and for the people in the world (Romans 15:30; Colossians 4:12).

6	PREPARATION (2 minutes)	<i>[ASSIGNMENT]</i> FOR NEXT LESSON
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(Group leader. Give the group members this preparation for at home in writing or let them copy it down).

1. Commitment. Be committed to make disciples and build Christ's Church.
2. Preach, teach or study the Bible study of John 4 together with another person or group of people.
3. Personal time with God. Have a quiet time from half a chapter of **2 Corinthians 11 - 13** each day.
Make use of the favourite truth method. Make notes.
4. Memorisation. Meditate and memorise the new Bible verse (series F). (1) Both believers: **2 Corinthians 6:14**. Daily review the last 5 memorised Bible verses.
5. Prayer. Pray for someone or something specific this week and see what God is doing (Psalm 5:3).
6. Update your notebook on building Christ's Church. Include your notes on quiet time, your memorisation notes, your Bible study notes and this preparation.