

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this Bible study series you may learn how to build up the Christian Church. Two teachers will do Bible study together from John 4:1-54. We will use “the five steps” method of Bible study. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. You may join our Bible study every week by preparing for the next Bible study. You may also gather a few people around you and use this method of studying the Bible together. Doing Bible study together with a few other Christians is one of the best ways to grow to maturity as a Christian.

(S) **STEP 1. READ**

Let us read John 4:1-54 together. When you are two or more people, take turns to read one verse each until you have completed the reading. Due to shortage of time, please read John 4:1-54 for yourself.

(T) **STEP 2. DISCOVER**

Let us discover and discuss some important truths in John 4:1-54. “Which truth in this passage is important for you?” or “Which truth in this passage touches your mind or heart?” Think and write your answer in your notebook. After a few minutes take turns to share your discoveries with one another.

(S) An important truth for me in John 4 is about the difference between ordinary water and the living water which 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 this well was dug by the patriarch Jacob and the woman questioned if Jesus was greater than Jacob. 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, which represented salvation* that the Holy Spirit would work in her. He contrasted the ordinary water with the living water. When you drink of ordinary water, you will always become thirsty again, but when you drink the living water which Jesus gives, then 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 will enter your soul and fulfil its deepest needs. The ordinary water will always disappear after you drank it, but the living water will never fail to refresh and satisfy you. It will be like a never ending spring.

(T) An important truth for me in John 4 is about 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.

First. Jesus made her feel important 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.

Second. Jesus aroused her curiosity by saying to her, “If you knew the gift of God and who I am that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water”. The woman assumed that the Jew, Jesus, is needy and helpless and she, the Samaritan woman, is self-sufficient and able to support his need. 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 that living water. This aroused her curiosity. The way to arouse people’s curiosity is to tell them who God is and what he wants to give.

Third. 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, it remains outside your soul and can therefore never fulfil the needs of your soul. It always disappears after you drank it. However, when you drink *the living water* that Jesus gives, you will have lasting satisfaction. It will enter your soul and fulfil its deepest needs. It will be like a never ending spring that never fails to refresh and satisfy you. A way to stimulate a person’s desire for the new life that God gives is to contrast it with ordinary life.

Fourth. Jesus awakened her conscience by asking her to bring her husband. Jesus knew that a thirst for the living water will not be truly awakened in her unless she first had a consciousness of sin. When Jesus mentioned her husband, she felt guilty, because she did not have a husband, but was living in sexual immorality. The way to awaken a true desire for salvation is to help people realise their sins.

Fifth. Jesus revealed little by little who he was. Just as his self-disclosure advances gradually, so the woman's confession advances gradually, so that she sees him first as *a Jew*, then as *a prophet* and finally as *the Messiah!*

(S) **STEP 3. QUESTION**

Let us try to understand all the truths in John 4:1-54 and ask our questions about the things we still do not understand. "Which question about anything in this passage would you like to ask to the group?" Think and write your question in your notebook. Then discuss the questions and try to find answers.

1st Question. (4:20-24). What is true worship?

(T) **One. The place where Christians worship.**

The Samaritans thought that people should worship God on a mountain in Samaria. The Jews thought it was very important to worship God in Jerusalem. 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* we worship God, but the *attitude* with which we worship God and the *truth* according to which we worship God that is very important for God. Therefore, true worship is not hampered by physical considerations, such as place and time. Christians may worship God the Father everywhere, in their houses, in churches, in prisons, and in the open air, and at all times of the day.

Two. The truth according to which Christians worship.

The attitude with which our mind worships is determined by our obedience to God's truth regarding *the object of worship*. The truth about God is not any truth. God is not what people say about God, but what God says about himself! The God of the Bible is not the same as the gods of the other religious books. The God of the Bible has revealed himself to us through the prophets in the Bible and finally through Jesus Christ. The God of the Bible is the spiritual Father of Jesus Christ. He has revealed who he is, what he is like, his characteristics, his words and his deeds.

One of the truths that God has revealed to us is that *God is Spirit*. The Bible emphasises this: God is in his essence completely spiritual. He is not a stone-deity, or a tree-deity, or a mountain-deity, or a shrine deity in any specific city in the world. He does not need to be worshipped through the means of idols cut out of stone, or under a certain tree, or on a certain mountain, or at a certain shrine in a specific city. No, the God of the Bible is completely spiritual in his nature. This means, that the God of the Bible has no body and cannot be seen by people. He is independent and does not have to be served by people. He is not an impersonal being into which people can dissolve themselves, but he is a personal Being with whom people can relate in a personal way. 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 the Bible and as he has displayed himself in the work of salvation.

Three. The spirit with which Christians worship.

The attitude with which our spirits worships is determined by our obedience to God's truth regarding *the method of worship*. Not any 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. The worship of Christians 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, not simply the outward forms of worship.

Four. The humility with which Christians worship.

John 4:23 says that the worshippers in spirit and truth are the kind of worshippers the God of the Bible *seeks*. It does not mean that God the Father searches for individuals who make themselves such kind of worshippers. Rather, it means that God the Father yearns and seeks to make the people he saved into such kind of worshippers! God the Father has taken the initiative to save people. He also takes the initiative to teach them how to worship. And he takes the initiative to complete their salvation.

2nd Question. (4:27). Why were the disciples surprised to find Jesus talking to a woman?

(S) In John 4:27, the disciples were amazed that Jesus was talking to a woman, because the Jewish religious teachers taught, “Let no one talk with a woman in the street, not even with his own wife”. Jesus changed the Jewish culture with respect to women. He gave a personal example how to treat women with respect and kindness. True emancipation of women does not mean that Christians ignore the differences God has created between men and women, nor that they 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. And her contributions in the home and in the Church are equally as valuable as that of a man. 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.

3rd Question. (4:35-38). What does Jesus teach about the relationship between sowers and reapers?

(T) One. *The sowers* 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” for yourselves. 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 chapter 18. And so many people of the town rushed out immediately and made their way to Jesus at the well.

Two. *The spiritual harvest* does not have a specific season.

While the Samaritan woman was telling the people about Jesus, 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 27 AD. 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! 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 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!”

Three. *The reapers* are the disciples.

In John 4:38, Jesus said to his disciples, “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 for eternal life.

Four. 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*. Each Christian worker reaps that which has been sown by others. And he sows that which will be gathered by others. Therefore, in God’s sovereign plan, there will always be a harvest to reap. God’s word will never return empty, but will always achieve the purpose for which he sent it (Isa 55:10-11)! 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.”

4th Question. (4: 44-45). Why does Jesus go to Galilee, his home country, when he knows that a prophet has no honour in his home country?

(S) In Matthew 13:53-58 Jesus came to his hometown Nazareth in Galilee. The people rejected him and there 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 Jewish religious leaders. 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 Jewish religious leaders and thus create a premature crisis. The Galileans *welcomed* him, because he was a miracle worker (45). But they did not thereby *honour* him (48). And unless they saw miracles, they would also

not believe in him. 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 (6:66).

(T) **STEP 4 and 5. APPLY and PRAY**

After brainstorming with one another and recording a list of *possible applications*, consider which possible application God wants you to turn into a *personal application*. Then take turns to pray about one truth that God has taught us in John 4:1-54.

(S) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Make a commitment to do Bible study every week. Prepare next week's Bible study. Use "the five steps" method to prepare John 5:1-47.

Second. Join a house fellowship that does Bible study. See the workbooks "Go and build Christ's Church" and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".