



# Believe

JOHN

MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

## Examining the text & our hearts:

*Bible Reading: John 4:13-26*

**13?** Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, **14?** but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” **15?** The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.”

**16?** Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.” **17?** The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; **18?** for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.” **19?** The woman said to him, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. **20?** Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.” **21?** Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. **22?** You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. **23?** But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. **24?** God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” **25?** The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.” **26?** Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.”

### I. The Issue of Worship

A. In Jesus’ encounter with the woman at the well, he offers her the “living water” which will spring up into eternal life. She desires and asks for this water.

B. The woman raises the issue of worship once she considers Jesus a prophet

C. Jesus does not focus on her past or her morality but engages with her in this discussion.

- “Verses 16-19 have been consistently misinterpreted, resulting in the popular portrait of this woman as a sinner. The text is not, as interpreters almost unanimously assume, evidence of the woman’s immorality. Jesus does not judge her; any moral judgements are imported into the text by interpreters....**the reasons for the woman’s marital history intrigue commentators but do not concern Jesus.**” Gail O’Day, *NIB, John*, p. 482

D. The woman is knowledgeable regarding the divisions of Jews and Samaritans and their different understanding of the place of worship.

- “In light of her recognition of Jesus as a prophet, the woman puts before him the most pressing theological problem that stands between Jews and Samaritans: What is the right worship site, this mountain (Gerizim) or Jerusalem (v.20)?” Gail O’Day, *NIB, John*, p. 482

E. Jesus engages with her in a deeper conversation

- “By asking Jesus about the proper place of worship, the woman is not disengaging from Jesus. Rather, her inquiry about worship is an act of deepening engagement with Jesus, because she anticipates that the prophet Jesus will be able to speak an authoritative word on the subject.” Gail O’Day, *NIB, John*, p. 482

## II. Jesus Redefines Worship

A. A change in era, in – 4:21, 23

1. God did ordain it, the Jews had it right
2. But things are now changing

B. Not about a place

- “[Jesus] is summoning Jew and Samaritan alike to a new kind of worship, and this can only mean through a new Mediator. Small wonder that when the woman replies, her first words will be, “I know that Messiah is coming, who is called Christ” (v.25). J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, p. 254

1. A place implies rituals and formula
2. A place implies some places are better than others

- “‘*God is spirit.*’ When our Lord said this, he was seeking to disabuse the Samaritan woman of the idea that there could be only one right place for worship, as if God were locally confined in some way. *Spirit* contrasts with *flesh*. Christ’s point is that we, being flesh, can be present in only one place at a time, God, being spirit, is not so limited. God is nonmaterial, noncorporeal, and therefore nonlocalized. Thus...the true condition of acceptable worship is not that your feet should be standing in either Jerusalem, or Samaria, or anywhere else for that matter, but that your heart should be receptive and responsive to his revelation.” J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, pp. 120-121
- “The Samaritan woman saw worship as an occasion, a time, a place, a tradition. In one statement Jesus submitted *without condemning* the entire history of time and place,

tradition and protocol, under a singular paradigm: Spirit and truth. ...true worship is continuous; time and location are incidental. He was saying that salvation and authentic worship together mean always being in the Spirit and always being in the truth.” Harold Best, *Unceasing Worship*, p. 38

### C. But About a Person – God who is Spirit

#### 1. The Father

- “Worship “in Spirit and truth” is worship of “the Father” and worship of “the Father” is worship “in Spirit and truth.” The two expressions are virtually interchangeable, and to that extent redundant when used together. J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, p. 252.
- “To say ‘God is Spirit’ is not so different from saying God is invisible (1:18; 6:46), incorruptible, not to be worshiped in the form of idols or images (Rom. 1:22; Acts 17:29), and that God does not live in temples made with human hands (Acts 7:48-49).” J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, p. 253
- “Worship...is worship appropriate to the nature and character of God, and if God’s nature is revealed only in “God the One and Only, the One who is right beside the Father” (1:18), then such worship is impossible until “the One and Only” has come. “ J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, p. 253

#### 2. Implies a relationship has been established

- a. The worshiper has been born of the Spirit
- b. The worshiper has been given the gift of God – the Spirit
- c. The worshiper has drunk of the “living water.”
  - “Living water [is] the gift that brings people into relationship with God” Craig Koester, *Symbolism in the 4th Gospel*,. p. 61
  - “The question for the woman is not “how shall we worship?” but “Who are the true worshipers?” Not the Jews and not the Samaritans, but those who “worship the Father in Spirit and truth.” They are “the kind the Father is looking for to worship him,” Jesus adds (v.23). This pronouncement is crucial, for by now it is self-evident to the reader that only those “born of the Spirit” (3:5, 6, 8) worship “in Spirit and truth.” It is Jesus’ way of repeating to this woman and the Gentiles what he had already said to Nicodemus and the Jews, that they must (3:7) be “born from above.” He is not so much giving advice as stating a divine necessity or inevitability. Yet there is an element of appeal here that was not present in the conversation with Nicodemus. Those who worship “in Spirit and truth” are “the kind the Father is looking for” (v. 23). God *wants* those who are “born from above (3:3,7). God *wants* to be their “Father,” and God *wants* their worship. ...If “the Father” is actively seeking “true worshipers” to worship “in Spirit and truth,” so too is Jesus “the son.” J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, p. 254

#### 3. The Father seeks true worshipers

- a. Why does Jesus go to Samaria?
- b. The Father is seeking true worshipers.

c. Jesus is doing the Father's will and work – that is motivation for whatever Jesus does.

- In John 4 “Jesus discloses that the Father is actively seeking worshippers. The conversation ends with the [Samaritan] woman's heart captivated by the call to become an intimate lover of the divine Father. *The surprise is that [God] the Father is seeking intimacy with all people?(even Samaritans)...*” [Mark Stibbe, “Telling the Father's Story,” in J. Lierman (ed.)? *Challenging Perspectives on the Gospel of John*, p. 180]
- *“Jesus presents the Father...as a seeker.* In Scriptural tradition, we do not hear of God seeking worshipers & a movement from God in which? *God seeks the worshiper is a new notion...* The ‘seeking’ by the Father signifies, not a passive desire on his part, but his active causative action in the individual without which a genuine human response is impossible. ‘Seeking’ in this sense is an active movement from the part of the Father generating an attitude of worship in the worshiper making him/her active in responding to the Father...In the 4th Gospel, it is the revelation that the Father makes in Jesus that is his causative action. True worshipers are those who respond to this revelation.” [Benny Thettayil,? *In Spirit and Truth*,?pp. 119, 121]

### III. What is Worship?

A. The meaning of the words:

1. Hebrew: *shachad* – to bow (politely or respectfully), to prostrate oneself

2. Greek: *proskynein* – to bow, to respect, to reverence

- “*Shachad*, the primary word for worship in the Old Testament, means literally to “bow” (politely or respectfully), to “prostrate oneself.” It has a definite physical dimension to it.... *Proskuneo*, the primary Greek counterpart for worship in the New Testament, has the same overtones of “submissive lowliness and deep respect.” Barry Liesch, *The New Worship*, p. 128
- “Real worship reveals God's holiness, and in the presence of this holiness we bow down. This action expresses the essence of the word *proskynein*, the Greek word most commonly translated as “to worship” in the New Testament.” Andy Park, *To Know You More*, p. 32

B. An attitude more than a feeling

1. An attitude of lowliness with deep respect

2. Humbling e.g. Luke 18:10-14 – the Pharisee versus the tax collector coming to pray

- **10?** “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. **11?** The Pharisee was standing and praying like this about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I'm not like other people—greedy, unrighteous, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. **12?** I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of everything I get.’ **13?** “But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even raise his eyes to heaven but kept striking his chest and saying, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner!’ **14?** I tell you, this one went down to his house justified rather than the other, because everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

- “It is delightful to worship God, but it is also a humbling thing; and the man who has not been humbled in the presence of God will never be a worshiper of God at all.” A. W. Tozer, *Worship – the Missing Jewel of the Evangelical Church*, p. 9
- “Worship is always intertwined with humility. If we are impressed with ourselves and our good works, we have little room for worship....” Andy Park, *To Know You More*, p. 34

### 3. No confidence in the flesh – Phil. 3:3

- *3?For we are the circumcision,?the ones who worship by the Spirit?of God, boast in Christ Jesus,?and do not put confidence in the flesh—*

### 4. A heart of gratitude with reverence and awe – Heb. 12:28-29

- *Therefore let us be grateful for receiving?a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus?let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe,?29?for our?God is a consuming fire,*

### 5. A heart focused on God – Mark 7:6-7

- *He answered them,?“Isaiah?prophesied?correctly about you hypocrites,?as it is written: This people honors?me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. ?They worship me in vain, teaching?as doctrines?human command*

### 6. Putting God first – Matt. 22:37

- *37?And he said to him,?“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.?*
- “If God comes first in our lives and first in our churches, then worship must come ahead of everything else we do. Worship is that process in which we make God first in our lives.” Bruce Leafblad, *Music, Worship, and the Ministry of the Church*, p. 21

## C. An action

### 1. Presenting our bodies, sacrifice – Rom 12:1

*I appeal to you therefore, brothers,?by the mercies of God,?to present your bodies?as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. (CSB)*

*And so, dear brothers and sisters,?I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him (NLT)*

- “This [Rom. 12:1] is what worship is: day-in-day-out living for Christ, the knees and heart perpetually bent in devotion and service.” R. Kent Hughs, *Free Church Worship: The Challenge of Freedom in Worship by the Book*, p. 136
- “Worship involves all of life. Sacrificing ourselves for the flock and extending ourselves for our families is a demonstration of authentic worship.” Barry Liesch, *The New Worship*, p. 156
- “Our worship is acceptable and effective by our being moment-by-moment living sacrifices, doing everything in the Spirit and according to truth, seeking out the beauty of holiness as our only walk, holding fast to God, who alone is our praise and worship.” Harold Best, *Unceasing Worship*, p. 41

## D. Not an emotion

- God has no passions – this does not mean that he is unfeeling ...or that there is nothing in him that corresponds to emotions and affections in us, but that whereas human passions – especially the painful one, fear, grief, regret, despair – are in a sense passive and involuntary, being called forth and constrained by circumstances not under our control, the corresponding attitudes in God have the nature of deliberate, voluntary choices, and therefore are not of the same order as human passions at all. “ J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, p. 121
- Just as God cannot be “caught” or “comprehended” in any specific idea, concept, opinion, or conviction, he cannot be defined by any specific feeling or emotion either. God cannot be identified with a good affectionate feeling toward our neighbor, or with a sweet emotion of the heart or with ecstasies, movements of the body.... God is not just our good inclinations, our fervor, our generosity, or our love. All these experiences of the heart may remind us of God’s presence, but their absence does not prove God’s absence. God is not only greater than our mind; he is also greater than our heart, and just as we have to avoid the temptation of adapting God to our small concepts, we also have to avoid adapting him to our small feelings. Henri Nouwen

## E. Not requiring an atmosphere

- “To an authentic worshiper, any thought about liturgical or artistic or environmental “aids” to worship should be seriously questioned. The only aid to worship is the Lord himself....The burden shifts from our dependence on what is around us to our trust in the One at work within us.” Harold Best, *Unceasing Worship*, p. 61

## F. With others and alone

**IV. Examples of Worship**

A. Where people are gathered – Lydia – Acts 16:13-14

B. In times of persecution – Paul and Silas in prison – Acts 16:23-25

C. In times of weakness – Jacob at his death – Heb. 11:21

- *By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in **worship** over the head of his staff.*

D. In times of loss – Job losses all his children – Job 1: 18-21

**18?**... *there came another and said,? “Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house,?19?and behold, a great wind came across?the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead, ....”20?Then Job arose and?tore his?robe and?shaved his head?and fell on the ground and worshiped.?21?And he said,?“Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I?return. The?Lord?gave, and the?Lord?has taken away;?blessed be the name of the?Lord.”*

