



# John 4 - True Freedom

## The Freedom Of Acceptance

### A Life Group Study on John 4:1-26, 39-42

#### Opening Questions (Choose 2 or 3 of the following):

- 1) Fill a shopping bag with random items from your room/apartment. Include some items that are a bit quirky or unusual, as well as items that are used everyday. Have each person pull one item randomly from the bag. Have them share how their week/weekend/semester/spiritual life is represented by that item.
- 2) Describe an individual or social group who was considered outcasts in your high school. What was it about them that resulted in social isolation?
- 3) Who would you say are the people/types of people who are socially isolated or considered outcasts at UVM?
- 4) When you were growing up, who were the people you were told to avoid? What part of town were you warned about? Why?
- 5) When you are really thirsty, what's your favorite drink to have? (Consider bringing some special drinks in place of a snack such as iced tea, lemonade, tea, coffee, etc.)

#### Gospel Story

- 1) Read John 4:21-26. Have someone summarize the story and what takes place.
- 2) Jesus is breaking three significant social taboos in this story. Can anyone guess what they are?
  - a) *Men and women were never to be alone unless married. This would have been seen as sexually inappropriate and scandalous.*
  - b) *Jews considered Samaritans to be "half-breeds" for intermarrying with the Assyrians. There was significant religious and social tensions between the two groups. Jews considered Samaritans "unclean" and were to travel around the region rather than walking through it.*
  - c) *The woman is a serial adulterer and is currently living with a man who is not her husband. She would have been considered a "sinner" and to be avoided.*
- 3) Why is this woman drawing water from a well in the middle of the day, when it is hottest? Typically women drew water early in the morning. Why might this woman have come at noon? (Based on what you later learn about her relational history, how might this factor into her decision? Who or what might she be trying to avoid?)
- 4) Why do you think Jesus would risk his reputation to speak to this woman? Why do you think he asks her for a drink of water? What does this tell us about his character and his mission?
- 5) The woman believes she is having a conversation about water. What does Jesus mean when he begins to talk about "living water"? What do you think Jesus is describing when he

talks about “thirst”? What did this woman really want: intimacy in her relationships? intimacy with God? acceptance? forgiveness? meaning and purpose? basic survival?

6) When the woman asks for the water why do you think Jesus abruptly changes the conversation to be about her personal life? What strikes you about how Jesus responds to her claim not to have a husband?

7) Why do you think the woman changes the conversation to be about a religious controversy? Do you ever hear people do this today or do you ever do this yourself? Why?

8) What do you think it means to worship in spirit and in truth?

9) What is significant about Jesus choosing this woman to be the first person to whom he revealed himself?

Read John 4:39-42.

10) By the end of her encounter with Jesus, what changes in her behavior? Why do you think there is such a dramatic change in her? What was it about her encounter with Jesus that set her free to relate in this new way?

### **Your Story**

- 1) Who are the social-religious outcasts on our campus today? What would it mean for us to ask them for a drink of water?
- 2) We all have things, failures, temptations, doubts, or questions that we feel ashamed about. What would it mean for you to tell someone EVERYTHING, and to have them respond with love and acceptance? Do you have someone in your life that you can be completely transparent with?
- 3) What are you thirsting for most in life right now? What can you do to relieve your spiritual thirst?