
LIFE IN HIS NAME
SIX QUESTIONS FOR WORSHIP

John 4:1-45

Our text today is almost this entire chapter, and I am not going to read quite all of it -- I want to begin in verse 7. I am going to try to read a good bit, because it will really help us in our study of the woman at the well. John Chapter 4, verse 7:

A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock." Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, 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." 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."

Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true." The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 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. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." 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.” Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.”

Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, “What do you seek?” or, “Why are you talking with her?” So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, “Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?” They went out of the town and were coming to him.

Then if you would skip to verse 39: “Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, ‘He told me all that I ever did.’” And verse 42: “They said to the woman, ‘It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.’”

We have been studying our way through the book of John. Most recently we looked in John, Chapter 3, at a man named Nicodemus. He was a Jewish leader -- a man, probably, of a certain amount of wealth. He was established. He was respected. He was well educated. He was a leader in his community, a very religious man.

We have today in John, Chapter 4, a woman who is really opposite in every imaginable way from Nicodemus. She is an immoral woman. She has a track record of broken relationships in her life. She is not well respected. She is not received. In fact, the very fact that she is coming to the well at noon almost certainly points to the fact that she is not going in the morning or in the evening when it is cool, and with everyone else. It would not have been typical to go alone to the well, but she is coming alone at noon, at an hour when no one else is there, because she is an outcast.

She is a Samaritan, and the text draws attention to the fact that Samaritans were hated by the Jewish people. Samaritans were viewed to be racially impure. Their theology and understanding of God was a mix that was heretical. And it was uncommon in Jesus’ day for a man to speak to a woman. It was even unusual at times for a husband to have much conversation with his wife. I know -- some of you are thinking some things never change, but that is not the point of the text.

Jesus’ disciples are shocked when they come back. He is talking to a woman. He is talking to a Samaritan woman. Jesus just shatters these boundaries. We now see this complexity of the perfect humanity of Jesus and the perfect deity of Jesus, where he draws in this religious seeker in

Nicodemus and welcomes in this non-religious Samaritan woman and engages her, draws her into a conversation about her soul. Really, the conversation lands on the subject of worship. There are a number of themes here in this chapter, but the main theme is the theme of worship. The English word in our text appears almost a dozen times. The conversation revolves around the subject and the entire encounter illustrates the subject.

So, our study today will be an overview of worship. In fact, we are going to try to answer six diagnostic questions: Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How. Some of you get nervous and say, "Brian, you take forever to make one point. How are you going to make six points?" Rightly so -- you should be nervous, but, we are going to spend most of our time on the first three questions. We will take them in this order: What, Why, and How. If you can answer the What, Why, and How of worship, the other three come almost automatically, almost instantly, though all six are addressed here in this text.

- I. What. As much as I want to start with Why (because if I don't answer the Why question for you, the other five don't really matter), I am going to start with the What because we need to have a sense of what it is we are talking about when we talk about worship. Some of you, as soon as we start to talk about worship, you are thinking about what we do here in this service. This is a worship service, and certainly, this is worship -- we come together and express glory to God, adoration, and enjoy his presence together.

But, if you have studied the scripture at all and you are familiar with the wider teaching of the scripture, you understand that our entire lives are to be lives of worship, and that this is a mountaintop experience. This is designed to be the highlight of your week as a follower of Jesus Christ. We go up on this mountain together to express worship to God. Really, all of the Lord's Day is to be a day which focuses on him. We set aside production. We rest. We live it unto the Lord. We get renewed in the presence of the Lord.

All of the week is to be lived as worship to the Lord. So we descend the mountaintop and we go down the valley and we live our lives. On Wednesday night we have a little peak where we come together for encouragement. We come together for a little peak in home groups -- sharing fellowship and encountering one another through the week. Then we come again to the following Sunday where we express our worship together. Having said that, everything is worship and we wouldn't want to draw this separation where we are

saying only what we are doing here is really worship, as we live all of our lives to the glory of God.

Let me give you three words under this first question of the What that will help us to unpack it.

1. Adore.
2. Worth.
3. Intimacy.

If you can just grab those words, the associations that you will make with them will help you fill out what we mean by “What is worship?” A dictionary definition is a good place to get started. Worship is defined as “an adoring reverence and regard; to highly value, to adore, to feel and express adoration.” Here, the biblical word is “proskuneo” and it means to prostrate yourself before one and to kiss. It is literally an image of lying on the ground and kissing the feet or the hem of one’s garment. You see that there is this picture of adoration and intimacy that is inherent within the various basic testimonies.

Tim Keller defines worship as “intimacy with the infinite; to recognize someone or something as of superior value.” He draws attention to the fact that our English word has its origins in the Old English. Go all the way back to the year 1000 A.D. and the word used for worship would have been “worth-ship.” It calls attention to the value or the worth of something or someone.

My kids make fun of me because my favorite movie is Secretariat. They will at times find me, if I ever get a moment alone at home (it happens rarely), sneaking a peek at this movie. Diane Lane plays the heroine of the movie. She is the owner of Secretariat. She comes to own Secretariat through a coin toss. It’s really a fascinating story. It’s a true story, basically. She comes to this coin toss, and she is standing in a room with the richest man in America. There are two mares that are going to give birth. There will be two foals, and they are going to choose who gets which one. She wants the unconventional choice. He is more of a horseman and he wants the more conventional choice, based on the history of breeding. She loses the coin toss. The richest man in America chooses the horse that does not become Secretariat. She gets the horse that she wants. Her brother is there in the room

with her. She turns to her brother and says, "I got what I want." Then he says very tellingly, "No. You got what no one else wanted."

Three years later, the richest man in America comes back to her and offers her \$8,000,000 to buy the horse that he could have had for free. What has changed? Well, Secretariat. This is the horse that goes on to win the Triple Crown for the first time in 25 years and is believed by most people to be the greatest racehorse that ever lived. Many of this horse's records still stand today.

There is this unveiling as the story is told, of just what a rare, exceptional animal this is. As the story unfolds, her family ridicules her for her conviction, her belief, her commitment to Secretariat -- even to the point when she is offered \$8,000,000 for the horse and she turns it down, her brother is so angry at her. You see, she sees something of value that goes beyond even the monetary value of the horse. It takes the entire telling of the story for others to catch up with what she saw from before the beginning. Worth-ship.

My Mom and Dad were given a table on a certain occasion. My Mom has gone to be with the Lord and my Dad lives up in central north Florida. My Mom and Dad were never people that had a lot. My Dad has been a pastor and they just lived a very simple life. Even now, my Dad lives in a double wide trailer -- very, very simple. I remember growing up that we had everything we needed, but nothing really matched. Did I say it was simple? It was simple. So, we were given this table. It was this round table, and it was heavy, and there were these four legs that descended out, and they were kind of parallel. In a weird way, the table flipped up. It was this really dark wood. There were four decorative pieces on the legs -- three of them were of one style and the fourth one didn't match. I thought, "Wow, what in the world is this table?"

Until one day, my Mother told me that an antique dealer that they had been helping in counseling gave it to them. It was worth \$11,000, and that it would be worth double that if the decorative pieces matched. Do you know what I said? "I love this table. What an incredible table! Let's put it in the living room!" Right? "Why don't we find the piece that matches so that we have all four matching pieces? Even if you go to a finish carpenter and he constructs just the perfect piece, it won't be authentic, it won't be real, but it will look real, so it has to enhance the value."

The moment you begin to see the worth of something, you happily reorient your life around the value of it. This is Secretariat! Right? Have the vet come every day. You hire people. You hire the best trainer. You get guards. This is not just an animal. This is not just the best racehorse alive, this is the best racehorse of all time! And worship begins with seeing the surpassing value of God. True worship is one of a kind, yes in ascending ways what God does for us, but that's not really worship yet. Because if we just want money or health or contentment or good relationships and we see God as the means to get that, in some ways we are still elevating those things above God. Until we see it's not just what God can do for us, but who he is, then we begin to grab ahold of something that is really beyond us. God is infinite.

So we come to this passage and we behold just one picture of the glory of Jesus, one small snapshot. When you take it and you put it beside Nicodemus, you begin to say, "Wow." Because you and I, by experience, no matter who we are, we know what it is to have disdain for religious people who secretly come at night, asking questions like Nicodemus, pretending to be something, maybe even being something, according to others. Then to have someone that we think has made bad choices and made a wreck of their lives -- to see Jesus embrace these two people, to give his time, to give his life, to invite them into intimacy with the infinite is glorious!

We will be tempted to act like we are better than other people when we are not, and to treat them as less than they are, when Jesus, who is better than other people, welcomes them into his presence. We begin to see the majesty, the glory, the compassion, the mercy, the wisdom, and the sheer incomprehensible love of our Lord and Savior -- and we worship. The Spirit of God takes this scripture, breathes on our hearts, and opens the eyes of our hearts to behold the glory of God as revealed in Jesus. So, we adore. We begin -- we don't exhaustively understand the worth of God, the glory of God -- but we begin to behold and we are drawn into intimacy, into relationship with him. That's the What.

- II. Why? Why worship? Well, this passage gives an explanation or a definition, if you will, and then also illustrates the Why throughout very, very powerfully. The explanation, I think, is found most simply in a phrase that we can point to in verse 23: "But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth" (here is the

phrase) “for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.” God is seeking true worshippers. That is an important statement. God is seeking worshippers.

To answer the bigger question of Why, let’s ask ourselves: “Why is God seeking such people?” To find the answer, we have to go back to Creation, to think for a minute, “Why did God make us? And why did God make us as we are?” What we find there is that God did not create us – this is very important -- God did not create us because there was some insufficiency or lack within himself. He didn’t create us because he had a need. He didn’t create us because he was lonely. He had the perfect fellowship as the triune God of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He made us as an overflow of his infinite love nature.

So, we are made as an overflow of God’s love. You are the product of God’s love. You are the result of God’s love in Creation. Therefore, you were made for the purpose of worship. You were made to know him and to know his love and to live in the overflow of his love.

We see Jesus inviting her into this conversation in this passage, and he deals with these ultimate questions of purpose. What is the whole conversation about when Jesus talks to her about water -- when he tells her, “Listen, if you knew who I was, you would have asked me and I would have given you a drink, a drink of living water?” In fact, he takes it really beyond that, doesn’t he? He promises her not just a drink of living water, but a well within herself springing up to eternal life. Jesus operates on a basic assumption that’s true for her and true for you and me -- that apart from him we do not find our purpose, we do not find happiness, we do not find ultimate happiness.

He uses this very vivid image, something that was so much a part of her everyday life, living in a dry, arid place, needing water, needing clean water, and depending on it for her very existence -- Jesus uses this familiar image to say to her, “I am going to meet your very deepest need. You were created to know me, to intimately know God. You were created for the purpose of living in relationship with me. You were created to worship me. You will find fulfillment and life, life eternal, only in me. Within your very heart is this desire to overcome death and to live forever, but not just on and on and on, but a quality of life that can only be found in me.”

This exchange illustrates all of that. She is slowly brought into an awareness of the worth of Jesus Christ. She hears the promises and she engages with Jesus in this discussion about

worship. But as it happens slowly, her eyes are opened and she begins to see who Jesus is. She experiences intimacy. Jesus knows her like she has never been known before. In this one short encounter, there is an accelerated rate of relationship and intimacy taking place, so much so that the disciples come back and she disappears.

She goes back to the town and worship becomes witness. Now she is so overcome with the greatness, the glory, and the majesty of Christ that she brings everyone she can back to encounter Jesus. Here is a woman with no credibility, no testimony of any worth, but because of the change in her life and the experience of meeting Jesus, she brings everyone back.

My son was home for spring break. One of our boys was home from D.C., and he had a guest - a young man who is a friend in law school. They were here with some other friends in the area. This is what they do: One friend goes to another friend, who goes to another friend, and they just freeload off of all of us. So, they had a friend staying in the Ritz-Carlton in Miami. Of course, what are they going to do? They are going to go to the Ritz-Carlton. They're not staying there, but they are going to go down to this nice hotel in Miami. They go all the way down to Miami to swim and spend the day. And do you know who is there? Do you remember? Did you hear in the press who came to see Dwayne Wade this week? LeBron James. LeBron James was in the swimming pool. Right? LeBron James. My son sat in the kitchen and said, "Like from here to the refrigerator: LeBron James."

"I'm right here!" I said, "What did you do?" "Well, you know he had his whole entourage and the security guard told us to quit taking pictures." "So, what did you do?" "Well, we took a picture of each other with LeBron in the background." Then what do you do? You come home! "Guess who I saw today?! I mean, I can't even afford to park at the Ritz, but I saw LeBron James!" Right?

This woman goes back to her town and says, "Come and see a person who told me everything I have ever done. When we begin to just get a glimpse of Why -- who God is and how we were made to know him, and how sin has wrecked all of that, and God in his love has come after us, the weary Savior of the world (after days of ministry and fighting with people who are opposing him, arguing with him) comes to Jacob's well in Samaria. He doesn't think "Just leave me alone." He enters into a pursuit of this woman's soul, a woman

that no one else wants, because he is glorious, because he is your savior -- and he invites you to live with him in intimacy, to spend your life knowing him when you will never know the infinite completely.

Sometimes following Jesus feels like you are getting saved every day, because you see a little bit more of him, you see a little bit more, but it's not like every day is predictably more. Some days are low, but you come to these points where you are like, "I feel that in this moment I see you a little bit more."

Do you remember John 2? We see the light and immediately we are aware of our darkness. It's a spiritual reflex. The moment I comprehend Jesus in his glory, I want to repent of my pride and my sin against him. The moment I get a glimpse, by the Spirit of God, of the compassion of Christ in this passage, the patience of Christ in this passage, I immediately become aware of my impatience, my petty judgments of other people. And he says, "Listen, this is all you have to do: Come out into the light. Come out. Admit that. I gave my precious blood to redeem you from that sin." Why. I am tempted to say more about Why, but I want to move on.

- III. I want to go to How. If we can answer these three questions, we have done well today. How. There is an explanation. It really is a little tough for us in verses 23 and 24, but if you will just look at it for a moment, I think it will help. Jesus tells her, "...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. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." There is an explanation here of the How -- that we worship in spirit and truth. How do we approach God? How do we worship him?

Remember what has gotten us to this point. She is asking questions of Jesus: "Where do we worship? You say this mountain, we say this mountain." There has been this progression in the conversation that is taking place. Let me simplify what I think verses 23 and 24 mean. At its most basic level, it means that we worship in Jesus. Jesus has told us that we must be born of the Spirit of God -- that in order for a man to see God, in order for a man to see heaven, he must be born of the Spirit.

Do you remember what he said to Nicodemus? "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born

again.” “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit (water speaking of cleansing), he cannot see the kingdom of God.” John has made it abundantly clear that the Spirit of God has been given to Jesus without limit, and that Jesus gives the Spirit.

Powerful image: He baptizes us in the Spirit. We do baptism right here behind this screen in a baptistery. We tell people, “Listen, when you come for baptism, you are going to be lowered in the water and you are going to be drenched, so dress appropriately. Prepare appropriately. Have a blanket, because water is going to take over your physical existence for a brief moment.”

The Spirit of God is going to take over your existence as the Spirit of God comes upon you and drenches you. You are going to be immersed in God. That’s the promise of Jesus, so that emphatically Jesus says, “God is Spirit.” We would say in drawing out the implications of that, God is not flesh, which speaks to the miracle of the incarnation, that he took on flesh in the person of his Son. He is not flesh. He is not human. He is Spirit, and in order to worship him, you must worship him in spirit. You must be born of the Spirit. You must be given the Spirit, immersed in the Spirit by Jesus himself. Jesus is the giver of the Spirit. Jesus is the truth - John 14:6.

Emphatically throughout the progression of the gospel of John, these themes will be demonstrated over and over and over - that Jesus gives life, Jesus gives the Spirit, he is the truth. The only way to worship God the Father is in and through Jesus Christ. It is God’s grace. It is his gift. John began with this theme. Jesus - John 1:14 - full of grace and truth. So we come to worship him, the Word of God, the life-giving Word of God, we come to worship Jesus and we know God -- God, the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit - through him.

Let me make one secondary application before we leave this point of How. Remember, if you have been with us for the whole study, we started with the prologue, where Jesus is called the Word of God. We tried to unpack what that means. We are seeing here a connection to that in this emphasis on truth and this declaration of Jesus as the truth. We can only worship God in spirit and truth. You will notice often when we come to our time of ministry of the word, I always stop before preaching/teaching -- Adam does basically the same thing - and we pray. We pray for the help of the Holy Spirit.

When you sit down to have time with the Lord, to have a quiet time, a time of devotion, where you open God's word and you pray to him, you want to very early in that time ask the Spirit of God to help you, to open the eyes of your heart to see and to behold him, because no true worship can happen apart from the Spirit of God enlivening us and helping us. We see all of that made possible and fulfilled in Christ alone. Alright?

We have briefly answered What, Why, and How. We could obviously say much, much more on those. Now, very quickly: Who, Where, and When.

- IV. The Who. Well, isn't the answer to the question of Who glorious? We have seen Nicodemus. Now we see the woman at the well. We would say, "Well, who not, right?" We have seen two people come to Christ -- who can be excluded? If it's just the woman at the well, you think, "Well, religious, moral people, people who are trying to do right can't be saved. They can't come to Jesus." But it's two extremes, and by way of implication, absolutely everyone in between. Who.

We don't know what happened to her previous five husbands, if those relationships ended in divorce or death, or exactly what the trail leading back in her life would reveal. But we understand that she is living now with a man who is not her husband, or she is in relationship with him, and that there is something immoral revealed there. It's interesting in light of the conversation that Jesus has with her -- I think her life, her testimony reveals how we try to find the What and the Why of worship in other things, in created things.

Many of us here today look at patterns in our lives, patterns of broken relationship, patterns of unforgiveness, patterns of sin and addiction, where we have looked to created things to bring fulfillment in our lives -- and that is the story of all of us. The bible teaches us that at the heart of all sin is the sin of idolatry, where we have taken something created and we have tried to make it supreme in our lives. This paradigm unlocks for us an understanding of the dynamic of what's going on in our souls all the time.

We were made to worship. We can't help but worship. We can't help but when we see LeBron James, when we hear the story of Secretariat, whatever it is -- it takes different shapes for all of us -- but we see these things and our hearts admire and then go after them. Then we look for fulfillment in money, in marriage, in sex, in food, whatever it is. Then the

next thing you know, we are taking good things, things that are gifts from God, and we are making them ultimate things.

Her life is a vivid testimony. Maybe for Nicodemus it was religion. Maybe it was prestige. Maybe it was a good family. Who knows? But Jesus comes to remove those idols, put them in balance, and put them in perspective in our lives so that he can be ultimate. He invites all of us to come. That was Who.

- V. Very quickly: Where? There is a part of the conversation that deals with this theological question of Where. Here is what's interesting. The last two questions are Where and When. You know, as your pastor, I want to say, "Here, and on-time." But I'm not exactly sure that's what - yeah, you knew I was going to get that in -- I'm not sure that that does justice to the passage.

The Where. There is this whole conversation that takes place. "You know, we have this mountain, Mount Gerizim. You say here in Jerusalem. We say here." There is a whole history behind that. At first look, you think Jesus' answer to the question is, "Well, you worship anywhere." But that's not exactly how he answers it. He says, "Okay, there is an answer to your question that's right: Salvation comes from the Jews, and God's stream of salvation history runs through Jerusalem. But, you are asking the wrong question, because the hour has now come where worship will be found in me."

This has already been taught in the gospel of John, but the point is that Jesus is declaring, "I am the meeting place for God the Father." You must worship in spirit and truth. I am the truth. You will only receive the Spirit from me." The Where question is a little bit more complicated than anywhere/everywhere. In one sense, yes, that's true, but it's in Jesus Christ.

- VI. And the When. There is one time reference here in this same verse that's important: "...but the hour is coming, and is now here, when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth." Throughout the gospel of John when Jesus refers to "the hour" he is pointing to his appointed time at the cross. Jesus is saying, "I am going to offer myself for the sin of the world. I am going to offer myself for the sin of all who trust in me, that they might be forgiven, and that's going to completely change worship. That's going to change everything you know about worship."

So, I said Where and When, and I made a joke about how I wanted to answer that, but our human tendency is always to go there first. Right? The truth is, as the woman got deeper into the conversation, she eventually got there. I want to suggest to you that Where and When are important questions. We understand that we meet God the Father in Christ and that our whole lives are given to worship, though there are moments, these mountaintops that really capture that for us.

I want to suggest to you that when we get ahold of the What and the Why and the How, we take more seriously the Where and the When. We are in a position of saying, "I want to begin to prepare my heart to worship God on Saturday night. I want to think through what I am going to do Saturday night before I get there on Sunday morning. I want to have more than an afterthought. I am going to meet God!"

Good grief, some of us would get here on time if LeBron James were here. "Wow, maybe I'll see LeBron at the coffee table." Think about the What and the Why of worship. Oh God, open our hearts to see you and behold you. Maybe there's a point where we come and say, "Lord, I am ashamed to say, but sometimes this star athlete is bigger in my mind than you! How can that be?" "Oh, could you worship me in spirit and truth? My Holy Spirit lifts the veil that you might behold that which is completely beyond your view."

"The hour" refers to the appointed time when Jesus, the Son of God, gave his life at the cross to take away our sins, so that he might, as the truth, as the one who takes away your sin and my sin, give us the Holy Spirit. Jesus says to us today, "Life is found in me. I am the Lamb of God. Come and worship and know intimacy and worth and adoration."

Let's pray.