

**BIBLE STUDY: FACING LIFE’S ISSUES
WITH A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE –
GOD’S STRATEGY WITH OUR “ISSUES” IN LIFE
(THE SAMARITAN WOMAN AT JACOB’S WELL)
LESSON 5**

The Samaritan Woman at Jacob’s Well

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews assures us that our God is “able to sympathize with our weaknesses.” That’s because “we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are” (Hebrews 4:15). That’s both instructive and comforting. But Scripture reveals that God does much more than just sympathize with us. He has a strategy. He takes positive action on our behalf, just as He did repeatedly with His saints of old. In Lessons 3-5 we want to recall incidents from the lives of saints of God who faced serious issues in their lives, just as we do. From the experiences in the lives of God’s saints of old, we want to learn something about ourselves when we face similar difficulties, but more importantly, we want to discover what’s in the heart of God when life’s problems put a strain on our faith – leaving us with feelings of fear, shame and guilt.

Francis Thompson’s classic poem, “The Hound of Heaven,” portrays God as a relentless pursuer of the lost. Indeed, that is exactly how God portrays himself to us in the Bible. The Parable of the Lost Sheep provides a familiar example of that. Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well is another example. Take a moment to think of other examples. The list is almost endless – beginning with God’s relentless pursuit of Adam and Eve when they tried to hide from him during their attempt to “cover up” after the Fall. There are times in our lives too when we need to refocus on the portrait of our God as “The Hound of Heaven.”

Read John 4:1-25 with the intent of:

- probing the mind of the woman at Jacob’s well, and
- discovering “the mind of Christ” in His outreach to her

Consider the “issues” she faced:

- her race issue: a Samaritan, scorned by the Jews (like blacks in the USA in the pre-civil rights era)
- her gender issue: no women’s rights in her culture
- her morals issue: five divorces and now a live-in
- her religion issue: confused, and without hope
- her misfit issue: she purposely avoided the respectable women when they came to draw water at the well
- her self-esteem issue: others viewed her as scum (self-esteem is often a circumlocution for pride)

Consider the strategy Jesus employed in reaching out to her:

- Jesus initiates conversation with her (a taboo for Jews), ignoring the race and gender issues
- Jesus respects and accepts her as a person, dealing with the misfit and self-esteem issues
- Jesus carefully avoids intimidating her, even when addressing the morals issue
- Jesus resolves the religion issue, identifying Himself as the Messiah who had come to “explain everything”

What is at the heart of Jesus’ strategy in his effort to reach out to this woman?

What is Jesus careful to avoid in his dealings with her?

Five marriages, five failures, and still looking for something or someone to satisfy her “thirst.” Tactfully Jesus leads her to discover that He is that Someone, “the Messiah.” “I who speak to you am he.” He offers the water of life so that she will never thirst again.

She is overwhelmed with feelings of shame, guilt, failure, thirsting for a way to make sense of life.
Where was the focus in her life?

What new focus does Jesus give her?

CONCLUSION:

When issues in your life leave you with feelings of guilt, shame, failure, depression, listen for the voice of the Relentless Pursuer who says:

I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.” (Isaiah 43:25)

Everyone who trusts in him (Jesus) will never be put to shame.” (Romans 10:11)

Or, listen to the counsel of St. Paul who says:

“Forgetting what is behind and straining forward toward what is ahead, I press toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13).

Paul had good reasons for “forgetting what is behind.” He called himself “the chief of sinners.” Before his conversion, he had persecuted Christians. He had participated in the stoning of Stephen, the first martyr. But like a good track and field runner, he understood the danger of looking back while running ahead. His counsel: Keep your eyes on “the prize.” God has called you heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Psalm 103:8-12:

The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever, he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him;
[NOTE: Present tense, ongoing] *as far as the east is from the west, so far **has** he **removed** our transgressions from us.* [NOTE: Past tense, over and done]

The intent of God’s “relentless pursuit” of sinners is to give us a biblical perspective for facing issues that confront us. State it once more in your own words: What is that biblical perspective?

A final word:

“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.” (Hebrews 12:2)

Martin Luther, from the Introduction to his Commentary on Galatians:

“So then, have we nothing to do to obtain righteousness? No, nothing at all! For this righteousness comes by doing nothing, hearing nothing, knowing nothing, but rather in knowing and believing this only – that Christ has gone to the right hand of the Father, not to become our judge, but to become for us our wisdom, our righteousness, our holiness, our salvation!

“Now God sees no sin in us. For in this heavenly righteousness, sin has no place. So now we may certainly think. “Although I still sin, I don’t despair, because Christ lives – who is both my righteousness and my eternal life.” In that righteousness I have no sin, no fear, no guilty conscience, no fear of death. I am indeed a sinner in this life of mine, and in my own righteousness, but I have another life, another righteousness above this life, which is in Christ, the Son of God, who knows no sin or death, but is eternal righteousness and eternal life. For if the truth of being justified by Christ alone (not by works) is lost, then all Christian truths are lost. On this truth the church is built and has its being.”

Christian Life Resources
3070 Helsan Drive
Richfield, WI 53076
www.ChristianLifeResources.com