

Preparation for Session 9 – Role of Women in the Church

Read John 4: 1 – 42. Think about the role of women during New Testament times compared to Old Testament times (refer back to Session 7). Consider the following questions.

1. What was the status of women during New Testament times related to: 1) marriage rights; 2) property and economic rights; 3) political rights; and 4) religious rights? Did the status of women vary significantly from upper class to lower class women? Was the status of women different than during Old Testament times? Was the status of women different for Greco-Roman women compared to Jewish women?
2. Name some women who were major characters in the gospel of John. Are women given more attention in this gospel than would be expected from a writing of this era?
3. Was there anything unusual about the Samaritan woman coming to Jacob's well at midday?
4. How did the woman know that Jesus was a Jew?
5. Did the attitude or approach of Jesus vary with women he encountered from the attitude and approach he used with men?
6. Were there restrictions upon the interaction of men and women in public places among the Jews of the first century CE?

7. How would you compare this woman's response to Jesus' discussion of "living water" compared to the response of Nicodemus in John Chapter 3?
8. Some have suggested that the insight of this woman into the person of Jesus was remarkable and unique. How would you characterize the response of this woman to Jesus?
9. Did Jesus first *reveal* himself to this woman as the Messiah? We know that he was recognized as the Messiah earlier (John 1:41). Are there any other "firsts" in the life of Jesus which involve women rather than men?
10. Can you give some reasons this woman was such an effective witness? She persuaded the townspeople to come and see Jesus.
11. Summarize the barriers the Samaritan woman overcame in both approaching Jesus and in her witness of her encounter with Jesus.
12. Why do you think John featured this encounter with the Samaritan woman rather than perhaps another encounter with a man? Remember that John notes later in the gospel that he had to "pick and choose" (John 21:25). Many readers of the gospel early on might have tuned out a story of a woman.

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