

## Identity Study: John 4:1-30 – Choices are Made – Lesson Summary

When you take a minute to consider the number of choices you make in a day it's overwhelming. Some of these choices are quick and easy while others are more difficult. Some have greater consequences or rewards and some are so routine that they are made without conscious thought. When society encourages us to find our identity in our choices, can you see how it can be confusing? Which choices define us? Finding an identity in our choices is impossible. We make too many of them and they are always changing. As we engage *John 4:1-30* we are informed of a number of choices made by Jesus and a Samaritan woman. I want you to consider the choices that Jesus makes in this passage and how they can radically redefine our identity.

While we will spend the majority of our time considering *John 4:1-30*, it is important to look at *John 3:1-21* where we see a prominent man's interaction with Jesus. Nicodemus, a Pharisee, approaches Jesus and engages in conversation. Jesus proclaims that one must be born again. His words expose Nicodemus' lack of understanding. Jesus goes on to explain Himself but Nicodemus' reaction is never revealed to us. John records Jesus' interaction with Nicodemus in order for us to understand the gravity of Jesus' choice to interact with this Samaritan woman. Let's consider some of the choices Jesus makes.

*John 4:4* states that "Jesus had to travel through Samaria". That's not completely true. There was nothing preventing Jesus from going another way. It wasn't the only path to follow. In fact, it wasn't the normal route for a devout Jew. Despite this, Jesus chose to go this way. He "had" to go this way in order to accomplish what He was going to do. Jesus chooses to sit and rest. He could have continued on with His disciples, but He didn't. Upon the Samaritan woman's arrival, Jesus chooses to speak with her. Unlike Nicodemus who approached Jesus, Jesus initiates the conversation with this Samaritan woman. She's clearly confused by Jesus' request. Jews don't speak to Samaritans, and certainly not Jewish men to Samaritan women. Jesus is undeterred by her response and chooses to continue speaking with her. In doing so, despite her continued confusion, He chooses to share the Gospel with her. Now let's consider the woman's choices.

The Samaritan woman chose to go to the well at noon. This is a very interesting choice. It's not normal for a woman to be going to the well at noon. Women went to the well in the morning or in the evening, rarely in the middle of the day. Her decision to come at this time of day is likely because her past sins have made her an outcast. The Samaritan woman chooses to respond to Jesus. She could have ignored His request and continued on. Instead, she begins to ask Him questions which ultimately lead her to choose to ask for the living water Jesus is talking about. At first glance, this is great. She chose living water. However, Jesus chooses to press further in order for her to understand the gravity of what living water truly is.

Jesus' next choice seems confusing. Rather than respond to her request, He chooses to expose her sinful choices in the past. He acknowledges her 5 husbands and her current decision to live with a man who is not her husband. Jesus presses into her sins that others have used to identify her. Jesus isn't satisfied with her partial understanding of His offer of living water. Jesus exposes her need for a living water that purifies her heart. Ultimately, Jesus chooses to reveal His Messiahship as He declares, "I am He". Jesus speaks His first "I Am" to a broken sinful outcast rather than Nicodemus a religious elite. Her response is beautiful. In her new freedom, she leaves her water behind and goes into town in order to tell others about Jesus. She chooses exposure over isolation as she invites others to come and see the man "who told me everything I've ever done". She no longer defines herself by her sinful choices, but instead, by the grace and mercy that she's experienced through Christ. Are you looking at your sinful choices as the defining characteristics of your identity? Or, like this woman, are you finding your identity in the reality that Jesus chose you?

### Discussion:

- 1) What choices do you make on a daily basis? How might those choices reveal what is important to you? How might they reveal what you put your trust in?
- 2) The woman at the well's sinful behavior and choices in her life likely led to her hiding in shame until Jesus revealed them to her. What sins, mistakes, or poor choices are you hiding from others?
- 3) How does Jesus' willingness to enter into this woman's sin, remain with her, and offer her a spring of living water leading to eternal life encourage you?