

Aim of lesson

To understand what Jesus teaches us about worshipping God.

Bible background

John 4

Outline of lesson

There is a map in the Students' workbook, after Lesson 100, which shows where Samaria is.

A Samaritan woman

Read together John 4:6-42. This could be read dramatically if you have sufficient students to play the parts; characters would be needed for the woman, Jesus, the disciples and the Samaritans. Simply introduce the setting at the well.

Get the class to turn to the workbooks. Ask them to think of the things that, for the woman, were a barrier between her and God. The idea is that they should write in each of the 'blocks of stone' one phrase, for example: she was a Samaritan and a woman (Jewish men, in their prayers, would thank God that they were not women). Note also the surprise of the disciples in verse 27. She was a sinner and not in Jerusalem. To the Jews each one of these things meant that she was not able to draw near to worship God; she was on the outside.

Removing the barriers

Ask the class to look up the verses to demolish the wall, choosing the appropriate phrase to demolish each block. Show that neither sex, race, background nor place is a barrier to worshipping God; they are quite unimportant to him. You may like to include how much money you have, whether you are clever at school, what you wear, whether you get a good job, if you are good at sports, or whatever else may seem important to your class. Don't let the class miss the point that sin is no barrier to God; Christ died to take away the sin of the world, though it can be a barrier to us if we don't want to give it up and ask for forgiveness.

Four steps

The workbook outlines four steps to worship:

- Step one – God seeks (verse 23). He really wants people to worship him, not that he just accepts it if we do. It really matters to him. We should be aware that God wants us to worship him.
- Step two – Knowing whom we worship (verse 22). Jesus says it is important to know whom we worship. Worship means worth-ship, that is recognising and acknowledging his worth. We should know something of his greatness and his kindness and know him as a Father. We should be aware of whom we are talking to.
- Step three – Worship in truth (verse 24). We should be honest before God, not making a show or pretence, but making sure our hearts feel what our mouths say. The fact that Jesus knows "all we ever did" should help us to be honest.
- Step four – Worship in spirit (verse 24). This is a large subject but it may help to have the class look up Romans 11:34 and compare it with Isaiah 40:13 which is being quoted. The verse in Romans speaks of the 'mind' of God (the Greek word is 'nous'). The one in Isaiah, however, refers to his spirit (Hebrew 'ruach'), although the NIV confuses things rather by translating the word as 'mind', so it's worth having some other versions available. This may help the class understand something of what Jesus means in John 4: in worshipping God we must use our minds. Not only our intellect (what we think about) but also our feelings and desires must be opened up and brought before God, with the desire that he in turn will transform us by his Spirit (his mind, his thinking, his feelings, his desires) as supremely seen in Christ (2 Corinthians 3:17,18).

Digging deeper

Samaritans

This section is a study of the Samaritans, and covers the parable of the Good Samaritan. This is an important parable, teaching us not only about how we should treat other people but about how the behaviour of the Good Samaritan foreshadows the work of the Lord Jesus. If you can, try to spend some time thinking about it, as it is not otherwise covered in depth in these lessons.

Relevance to our lives

Ask the class to spend a minute of each day (perhaps before they pray) in just being conscious of God's awareness of them and of his desire for them to know him.

Prayer

Dear Father, you are a great God and can do anything, and yet you ask us to come near to you. Thank you that you want us to know you. Help us to worship you in spirit and in truth.

Other suggestions for activities

- The class could write a letter as though they were the woman writing to a friend about this day that changed her life.
- The class could make a poster illustrating all the barriers of race, colour, etc., that they see as important in the world, with God's answers and values knocking them down.