



Small Group Leader Guide

John 4:1-42 | Spiritual Courtship

Note:

This is a standalone Bible study for your small group. Unlike our standard Small Group Curriculum, it is not associated with the weekend's preaching content. This material is provided for your group as a resource to be used during times between preaching series or church-wide campaigns. May it bless you and your group in your community development and faith walk in following Jesus!

Prepare: Things to do before your small group gets together

- **Reflect** on your own salvation. Who shared the Gospel with you? What was your relationship with that person? What did you have in common with that person? How did you come to trust that person and believe what was shared about the Gospel? **Pray, thanking God** for the person and circumstances that resulted in your salvation. **Ask God** to guide you in your study of the Scriptures, so you can help your group see the obligations and opportunities they have in sharing the Gospel with others, as followers of Jesus.
- **Read** the following Scriptures: John 4. **Explore** the details presented about the details of Jesus' journey and the interactions Jesus had in Samaria. **Personalize** the principles revealed in the Scriptures. **Invite** God to lead you in your preparation, guiding you to develop a small group experience that will speak to the needs of every person who participates. **Submit** your heart to God's conviction, that you may be exhorted to experience anew the timely activity of God's Holy Spirit in your life.
- **Preview** this material and engage with God's Spirit as He guides your study.
- **Pray** for your small group members by name, asking God to use you to be a teacher of influence for each person in your group, for the glory and cause of Jesus. **Seek** God's wisdom in leading your small group to apply God's word to their lives. **Commit** yourself to the Lord, that you would live what you teach.

To The Point – What to impart to your small group

Objectives: Through your time exploring this passage, your small group members will:
Explore details of Jesus' journey to Samaria and encounter with the woman at the well.
Personalize the principles of building relationships and sharing your faith.
Discuss the opportunities God is giving you to share the Gospel.
Apply the principles shared and engage in the work of God's advancing Kingdom.

Encounter: A suggested plan for your small group experience

Conversation Starter: Courtship Stories

Say We're going to have our engaged or married participants give 30-second summaries of their pre-marital relationship. Each partner will give their account, and be sure to give your account from your perspective. If you were the one who took the initiative, mention why you did so. If you were the one who was the object of the other's affection, mention what it meant to be so pursued, or how you determined you were ready and willing to be have the relationship take this new direction.

Allow participants to respond.

Say It's wonderful to hear and share these courtship stories. In our modern day, "courting" is an outdated concept to many people. Courtship is nothing more than the declaration of a specific intent for the direction of the relationship. We are going to look at a provocative encounter in Scripture where Jesus engages in spiritual courtship, and in doing so, challenges us to adopt spiritual courtship as a mindset and approach for our own relationships. We'll look at what that looks like for us, and explore the potential outcomes as well.

Open in prayer for your time together.

Start with a Conversation (John 4:1-26)

Read John 4:1-26 as a group. Either have one person read the passage, or have each person read one verse at a time until the passage is read in full.

Say God is preparing opportunities for spiritual courtship all around you. He has established circumstances and situations where you will cross paths with somebody who needs a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Right now, God is straightening your own path so you will recognize that there is a place that "you must go" to spiritually court a person. This place you must go is possibly somewhere you have never gone before...

- *Relationally...* Is God leading you to spiritually court a spouse, a parent, a child, or a sibling with whom you have never shared your faith?
- *Culturally...* Is God calling you to spiritually court a neighbor who is Asian, or a co-worker who is Persian, or an classmate who is Indian, or the person in your carpool who is Hispanic? (*note: this question focuses first on their personhood and secondarily on their culture or ethnicity*)
- *Religiously...* Is God calling you to spiritually court a friend who has a Mormon background, or a cousin dabbling in Wicca, or the family of Muslims that moved in down the street?
- *Dangerously...* Is God calling you to spiritually court the single mother addicted to crystal meth, or the divorced dad who is drinking too much, or the college kid who thinks he might be gay, or the young woman who just had an abortion, or the new couple next door always fighting over money?

Ask Who in your life do you know and relate with on a regular basis who does not have a relationship with Jesus Christ? Where will you have to go with them (relationally, culturally, religiously, or dangerously) to begin courting them?

Allow participants to respond. Encourage people to identify people by name, specifically. It

is a common misconception that Christians “don’t know any unbelievers.” This is a great opportunity for group members to begin to recognize the opportunities that God is establishing in their already-existing relationships.

Say The person or people you have mentioned are going to be your own “woman at the well” for the rest of our time together. Think of that person in the context of what we will continue to discuss.

Spiritual courtship is an adventure of faith. The Lord will likely take you somewhere you have never before journeyed, either literally or figuratively. It may frighten you a little because of the “unknown factor.” Take courage and do not be afraid (Isaiah 35:4). Not only is the Lord with you (Romans 8:38-39), but the Holy Spirit goes before you in preparation for the relationship to be built (John 15:26).

Ask What are some topics that make for easy conversation? How can that topic be “shaped” toward a spiritual conversation? What are some questions you could ask to gently probe the person’s spiritual worldview?

Allow participants to respond.

Say When God leads you to begin spiritually courting someone, learn the lessons shared by Jesus:

- **Establish value in the other person.** Apply the principle that Jesus exemplified, which is to *break down the walls of stereotype and tradition* that have previously worked as barriers. Try a new meal that you’ve never eaten before. Play a new game. Read a book by an author they suggest. Work to establish understanding and build trust. Show your friend that artificial obstacles won’t keep you divided any longer.

Ask What are some things other people have done to establish value in you? How did that make you feel about yourself? How did it make you feel about the person? Did their establishing value in you change the nature of your relationship?

Allow participants to respond.

Say

- **Season your conversation with spiritual truth.** As the 1 Peter 3:15 exhorts, “But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.” *To do this, you should be trained in sharing the gospel.* Scottsdale Bible offers several ways for you to be trained:
 - Periodic evangelism training classes
 - Small group lessons on evangelism (like this one)
 - Access to online training resources
 - Apologetic events

Ask How confident are you in sharing the gospel? What training have you received? What training would be useful to you?

Allow participants to respond. If a reply highlights a training opportunity that isn’t

currently offered, please share it with the small groups or evangelism pastor.

Be prepared for a Divine encounter! (v.27-38)

Read John 4:27-38

Say As you spend more time with the person you are spiritually courting, trust will build. The more time you spend in a relationship, the more the other person will feel accepted. The more time you invest talking about real matters and eternal issues, the more value will be established and increased. **Accordingly, your opportunities to court the person will increase as well.** As trust increases, you'll be able to share a biblical worldview on an increasing number of topics. You'll be able to share how you face the matters of the world, and explain how the Lordship of Jesus Christ shapes and guides your entire life. You may even find yourself in a situation like the one recorded in John 4; being able to share this same spiritual truth with the friends and family of the person you are spiritually courting.

Ask How have you seen your opportunities to witness increase as another's trust in you increases?

Allow participants to respond.

Say As you enter in to these opportunities of spiritual courtship, you will inevitably face times where your priorities will be challenged. You at times will be tempted to put off meeting with this person in order to meet your own interests.

Ask What are some distractions that are "good things," but not necessarily "God's things?"

Allow participants to respond.

Say Just as Jesus refused to set aside God's agenda to indulge in the disciples' good intentions, you can do intentionally commit to some steps to stay "on point:"

- *Do Something Somewhere* – Don't worry about having it all figured out.
- Take that first step of faith that initiates the relationship and establishes trust. Knock on their door. Give them a call. Go get coffee together. See a movie together. Just do something somewhere!
- *Do Something at "Your Place"* – Invite your friend in to your world. Have them over for a meal, or for a game night. Find reasons to invite your friend over...to watch a movie, or try a new recipe, or just to have another great conversation!
- *Do Something at "Their Place"* – Sometimes one of the biggest obstacles to effective spiritual courtship occurs when the "courter" refuses to step in to the world of the person being courted. Remember, Jesus was willing to walk twenty miles and spend two days in Samaria. Surely, you investing a few hours in their world is time well spent. As trust increases, and they invite you in to their world, jump at that opportunity.
- *Do Something for Someone* – Jesus offered "living water" to the woman, and he put everything aside for two days because the people of Samaria expressed a need for him. The person you are spiritually courting will have a need that you can meet. Give of yourself, and look for opportunities to share truth along the way.
- *Do Something at God's Place* – The truth you share with the person you are spiritually courting will become even more real and understandable if that person has an opportunity to come to your house of worship. Invite them to experience the presence of the Lord in

vibrant, life-changing worship. Encourage them to come to your small group where real people have real conversations about how the real Lord guides them through real life. Provide them an opportunity to be placed under the influence of godly, biblical preaching, where they can respond to the work of the Holy Spirit. More than just “church” though, invite your friend to any activity or event taking place at the church. As the body engages in **Connection Points** that help show the love of Christ through the church, you will have an increasing number of non-threatening, highly-relational opportunities to invite your friend to something exciting taking place through, at, or because of your church.

Ask Thinking of the person you may court, identify one option for each opportunity to:

- Do Something Somewhere:
- Do Something at “Your Place:”
- Do Something at “Their Place:”
- Do Something for Someone:
- Do Something at God’s Place:

Allow participants to respond.

Say What really matters is to **be sensitive to where God is at work**. Realize that God is at work all around you and he has ordained for this relationship to develop for the purpose of seeing your friend come to faith. Honor that work of God by staying faithful to the relationship! Just as in marital courtship, infidelity damages trust and ultimately destroys the bond. If the person you are spiritually courting feels that you aren’t committed, and that you keep putting the relationship off so you can indulge in your own good intentions, your relationship will quickly fall apart because trust is destroyed.

On the other side of the coin, invest where you see God at work. If you don’t know the answer to a question your friend asks, promise and commit to following through and finding the answer. Keep your appointments with your friend. Be on time. Stay the entire time. Honor the purpose of having a spiritual conversation, which is *to lead toward another spiritual conversation*. Cultivate that relationship. Invest in your friend and let your friend invest in you.

Ask Where is God at work? What can you as a small group do as a Connection Point to reach out and show the love of God through the church?

Have the class agree on 1 idea and commit to do it in the next two months.

Expect to make spiritual investments (v. 39-42)

Read John 4:39-42

Say Spiritual sowing will reap eternal rewards. Spiritual courtship is an investment, not an expense. Truths from John 4 certainly need to be remembered as you commit to the process of spiritually courting a friend.

Your investments will open new doors. You will get to speak to more people and share the truth in new opportunities. If a person identifies you as trustworthy and true, they will bring other seekers to you. The Apostle Andrew is known for being the disciple mentioned most often for introducing people to Jesus. He trusted Jesus and he knew Jesus offered life to people.

When you become identified as a trustworthy source for truth, hope, and life, you will have increasing opportunities to share what you have been freely given.

Ask What are some open doors to witnessing that you have observed around the community? Around the Valley? How can our church increase its influence by making spiritual investments?

Allow participants to respond.

Say This privilege will require more of you, in terms of time and commitment. You will have to have to give more time to share with more people. Rather than let that dissuade you, think about this from the perspective of Jesus. While Samaria was the obstacle between Judea and Galilee to the disciples, it was the very purpose of Christ's journey. He "had to go" there. Likewise, spiritual courtship is one of the purposes for which you were created. Other people are the reason you are here! You have been called, equipped, and commissioned to make investments in other people. These investments take time. You cannot rush this process, and you may not abandon it simply because it takes longer than you initially thought. Remember how many years it took for you to come to faith, even if you came to faith as a child. The person you are courting may be hearing the gospel for the first time in your life, or perhaps for the first time in years. **You will give more time** as you spiritually court, but it is time that is redeemed in eternity!

Ask How many hours a week do you spend watching television? Surfing the Internet? Where could you cut out wasted (or non-prioritized) time from your day for investing in spiritual courtship?

Allow participants to respond.

Say Spiritual courtship results in salvations. A simple principle will be honored: **The more you do it, the more people will come to faith.** From the perspective of spiritual courtship, you may not have the result you'd like in your first conversation, but if that first conversation leads to another conversation, you will have another opportunity for success. Don't give up or become discouraged. Just work on cultivating that relationship honestly and purposefully. Believe that God is big enough, smart enough, and loving enough to overcome any obstacle. Ask him to give you the grace, wisdom, mercy, patience, and perseverance to stay faithful and committed to your spiritual courtship relationship.

Ask How do you feel knowing that God has saved you, called you, prepared you, equipped you, and now commissions you for the purpose of spiritual courtship? How does the exhortation of Philippians 1:6 (He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.) affect how you will proceed?

Allow participants to respond.

Jesus in Focus

Where in this study do you see Jesus: Christ-like practices, examples, principles?

Among the many acceptable answers:

- *Jesus went to the farthest degree necessary to save you. He will do the same for the people you are spiritually courting.*

- Don't "write off" someone just because it isn't easy. Jesus didn't "write you off."
- Jesus saved you and determined to use you in the work of saving the lost. Participate!
- God has uniquely positioned you in the lives of lost people, and favored you with influence to help shape their faith and understanding of the goodness of God. Be confident!
- Jesus has said He will never leave you or forsake you, that He will be with you always until the end of this age of evangelistic assignment! Persevere, knowing you are not alone!
- God's Holy Spirit empowers you for this work (see Acts 1:8). Be bold knowing God has equipped you to succeed!

What are some other Scriptures that come to mind or are relevant to this chapter's themes, teachings, or emphases?

Among the many acceptable possibilities:

- Matthew 28:18-20
- Acts 1:8
- Philipians 1:6
- 1 Peter 3:15

What is one "take-away" for you from this chapter?

Allow the group participants to respond.

Say Despite traditional prejudices and logical demands, Jesus intentionally did not go out of his way to avoid Samaria, the woman at the well, and the "many people" of Sychar who believed on him. There are people all around us, all around our church, and all around the Valley who are different than us. Yet, God is calling us today to go out of our way to befriend them. In your remaining time today, invest in prayer asking God to knock down barriers that obstruct your relationship with the person you are going to spiritually court. Ask God to prepare that person's heart, and to embolden you to the process of seeing that person come to faith through Jesus Christ.

Let's close in prayer:

Invite the group to pray for one another. **Pray** over any needs or issues that were shared in your time together. **Pray** over the content discussed in your small group, highlighting the aspects that God's Spirit revealed to your group as important. **Confirm** your plans for your next gathering!