



Further Study

The following is the official transcript of an actual radio conversation of a US naval ship with Canadian authorities off the coasts of Newfoundland in October of 1995. The conversation was released to the public during the same month.

Americans: "Please divert your course 15 degrees to the North to avoid a collision".

Canadians: "Recommend you divert your course 15 degrees to the South to avoid a collision".

Americans: "This is the Captain of a US Navy Ship. I say again, divert your course".

Canadians: "No, I say again, you divert your course".

Americans: "This is the aircraft carrier USS Lincoln, the second largest ship in the United States' Atlantic fleet. We are accompanied by three destroyers, three cruisers, and numerous support vessels. I demand that you change your course 15 degrees to the North, that's 1 - 5 - degrees North, or measures will be undertaken to ensure the safety of this ship".

Canadians: "This is a lighthouse. Your call."

Although that may be somewhat of a humorous story, I'm sure that the Captain of the USS Lincoln is not laughing about it even today. It had to be the most embarrassing moment of his life. As embarrassing as the event may have been for him, it does provide us with a beautiful biblical illustration for this current message series. Who you think you are is certainly important. But who you really are is even more important. The thing that gets most of us in more trouble than anything else is that we have too high a view of ourselves. The Captain of the USS Lincoln thought he was more important than he actually was. That is a common error that all of us make from time to time in our lives. The Bible is full of examples of people who did the same thing.

NICODEMUS

John 3 records the fact that Nicodemus suffered from the same problem. He had much too high a view of himself. He thought he was really important. After all, he was a Jew, a Pharisee, and a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin, the highest ruling religious court in the land at that time. He may have been the most renowned teacher of Old Testament law that that time. When he was confronted by Jesus Christ, he was told to "change his course immediately to avoid a collision". His response indicates that he really wanted Jesus to change His course.

WOMAN AT THE WELL

The same issue is found in John 4 in the account of the Woman at the Well. She had her own distinct religion that she was practicing. If she is to embrace faith in Jesus Christ, she must be willing to "change her course to avoid a collision" just like Nicodemus.

In reality, the entire New Testament is a collection of "confrontations" between the way people were living, acting, and talking and the demands that Jesus made upon them. In each case, Jesus wanted them to "change their course" to avoid a collision.

COMPARISONS BETWEEN NICODEMUS AND THE WOMAN AT THE WELL

On the surface, Nicodemus seemed to have an advantage over the woman Jesus met at the well.

- Nicodemus was a man - The Samaritan was a woman.
- Nicodemus was an orthodox conservative Jew - She was a half breed apostate.
- Nicodemus was highly regarded in the community - she was known for having 5 husbands.

Interestingly, the Scriptures do not say how Nicodemus responded to the words of Jesus. We do know there is no recorded influence that he had upon other people as a result of his encounter with Jesus. On the other hand, the Samaritan woman's faith in Christ was outwardly visible. She was eager for the entire town to know what had happened to her.

THE ENCOUNTER WITH THE SAMARITAN (John 4:1-9)

Jesus was retreating from Judea to Galilee to get away from the Pharisees. The perfect time to engage them had not yet come. Samaria lies almost exactly halfway between Judea and Galilee. The shortest route was to go through Samaria. Because of the animosity between the Jews and Samaritans, Jews would be willing to travel a further distance to avoid Samaria altogether. The trip from Judea to Samaria was a grueling 20 mile journey through the hot desert.

The KJV says that Jesus "must needs go through Samaria". He knew from before the foundation of the world that He would have an encounter with this Samaritan woman on this day that would change her life forever.

THREE DISTINCT DISADVANTAGES OF THE WOMAN

1. She Was a Samaritan:

From a reading of Luke 7:36-39, we already know how the Pharisees would have dealt with such a woman. Luke 7:40-50 shows how Jesus responded to such situations.

The Pharisees had a simple system for being holy - to keep away from people who were not as holy as they were. They believed that sin was as outwardly contagious as an infectious disease. This is why they were always so distressed when they saw Jesus getting too close to "sinners" (Luke 5:27-32).

2. She Was Guilty of Sexual Immorality: (John 4:17, 18)

In Bible times, only husbands were allowed to divorce their wives. Wives were never permitted to divorce their husbands. According to John 4, she had been "put away" five times. How do you think she felt? She was not married to the man that she was now living with. Evidently, she did not want to be put away for a possible sixth time. The statement made by Jesus in verses 17-18 was an indictment upon the men also.

3. She Was a Woman: (John 4:27)

In Bible days, many times women were treated like second class citizens. They were looked down on by some. Interestingly, John does not say that the disciples were shocked and amazed because Jesus was talking to a Samaritan, or because He was talking to a sinful person. They were amazed and shocked that he was talking to a "woman". According to the passage, the disciples seemed to agree that He should not be speaking to this Samaritan in public because she was a woman.

THE PROCESS OF GRACE IN HER LIFE

1. Jesus Had to Get Her Attention:

On the surface, this did not seem to be a good opportunity for Jesus to apply grace to someone's life. There seemed to be no common ground; no reason to speak to each other; nothing they could agree upon. In addition, He was a man, she is a woman. He is a Jew, she is a Samaritan. But in spite of these differences, He gets her attention not by telling her something she needed to know, but by asking for something that He needed from her - WATER! This must have completely caught her off guard. Also, Jesus never answered the question she asked in John 4:9 (See also Galatians 3:26-29).

2. Jesus Showed Her That She Was The One Who Was Really Thirsty: (John 4:10-14)

Jesus let her know immediately that they were not talking about the same kind of water. She was talking about the water from Jacob's well. Jesus was talking about "living water". Jesus even told her that she was ignorant of certain things, because just like Nicodemus, she is taking everything Jesus is saying very literally. She was at the well because she thought her greatest need was natural water. Jesus said her greatest need was "living water".

3. She Wants This Living Water: (John 4:15-18)

Now she understands what the conversation is all about. Grace has been applied to another undeserving candidate.

CONCLUSION/APPLICATION

Unlike Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman wants everyone to know what has happened to her. The impact of her testimony upon the city is truly amazing. "And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on Him for the saying of the woman which testified, He told me all that ever I did (John 4:39).

Jesus even tarried two more days at the insistence of the people and many more believed on His name (John 4:40-43).