

## Preconceived Categories and God's Grace

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### Introduction

The fourth gospel offers yet another perspective on the ministry of Jesus. It is helpful to think of the difference between a photograph and a portrait. Each author offers a portrait of Jesus' life and ministry in the context of history, culture, politics, and religion, using various literary genres. The writer of the fourth gospel uses dualistic themes, irony and questioning to tell his story of Jesus.

### Outline of John

#### The Book of Signs

- I. John 1:1-51            The prelude to his ministry
  - A. 1-18                The Prologue
  - B. 1:19-34            Testimony of John the Baptist
  - C. 1:35-51            The First Disciples
  
- II. John 2:1-12:50
  - A. 2:1-4:54            The first stage of self-revelation
  - B. 5:1-10:42          The second stage of self-revelation
  - C. 11:1-12:36        Preparing for his "hour"
  - D. 12:37-50          Conclusion and summary of his public ministry

#### The Book of Jesus' Hour

- III. Chapters 13-21
  - A. 13:1-21            The Passover meal
  - B. 13:31-17:26        The parting message/prayer
  - C. 18:1-19:42        The Passion narrative
  - D. 20:1-21:25        The Resurrection and appearance stories

A distinctive pattern in John: Jesus speaks; listeners misunderstand; Jesus continues to further develop the theme. Take note of the "I AM" statements of Jesus in this story of Jesus. How many do you find?

### Discussion Questions

1. When you were growing up, with whom were you told not to associate?
2. In this text Jesus challenges the status quo. What were the boundaries Jesus crossed in this story?
3. Why do you think Jesus risked his reputation to ask a favor from this woman?
4. What are the three titles spoken by the woman in the story? (two from the Old Testament, one, a new attempt to explain the identity of Jesus)

5. What is this woman's response when their conversation ends and what is the outcome of her response?
6. In reading this text, did you come to recognize yourself as a "Samaritan---one to whom the good news has come in unexpected places at unexpected times?
7. How would you compare your own spiritual beginnings with God to that of the Samaritan woman?

**Prayer**

God of love, acceptance and grace for all, help us to accept the living water offered to us from your Son. With that gift, may we be bold and courageous to witness to those whose spirits are thirsting for your presence and your peace. Amen.

**Week of July 6-12: Read Luke 18 - John 9 Focus text: John 4:1-42**