

Word Study Guide

Use this simple checklist as a guide for your word studies.
It will help you dig deep while keeping things clear and balanced.

- **Set expectations**

- Word studies are tools, not the whole picture.
- Focus on concepts, not just the word itself.

- **Pick a word**

- Notice words that stand out in your passage.
- Ask: 'Is there more going on here?'

- **See how the word is used**

- Find where else the word appears in Scripture.
- Compare other translations
- Look it up in a lexicon/dictionary.
- Note the different shades of meaning.

- **Consult commentaries**

- See how experts explain the word in context.
- Use books or Logos to find discussions.

- **Take notes & conclude**

- Write down insights as you go.
- Compare how different authors use the word.
- Summarize what you learned.

- **Apply it**

- Ask: 'How does this deeper meaning change the way I read this passage?'

Word Study: “Living Water” (John 4:10–14)

1. Set Expectations

In John 4, Jesus tells the Samaritan woman:

“If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.” (John 4:10, NIV)

At first, she thinks He’s talking about physical water — but Jesus is pointing to something much deeper. Word studies help us see those layers.

2. The Word Itself

- Greek: ὑδὼρ ζῶν (hydōr zōn)
 - **hydōr** = water
 - **zōn** = living, flowing, active (from *zaō*, “to live”)
 - In ordinary Greek usage, “living water” could mean **fresh, flowing water** (like from a spring or stream), as opposed to stagnant or collected water in a cistern.
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3. Biblical Usage

Old Testament Background

- *Jeremiah 2:13* — God is called the “**fountain of living waters**” rejected by His people in favor of broken cisterns.
- *Zechariah 14:8* — speaks of “**living waters**” flowing out from Jerusalem in the day of the Lord.
- *Isaiah 55:1* — “*Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters...*” (invitation to spiritual refreshment).

New Testament Connections

- *John 4:14* — Jesus says living water will become **“a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”*
- *John 7:37–39* — Jesus connects living water to the **Holy Spirit**:

“Whoever believes in me... rivers of living water will flow from within them.” By this he meant the Spirit...

- *Revelation 22:1, 17* — The river of the **water of life** flows from the throne of God; an invitation is given: “*Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.*”
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4. Commentary Insights

- **Physical vs. Spiritual** — Commentaries note the Samaritan woman first thinks Jesus is offering better *physical* water (flowing vs. stagnant), but Jesus quickly shifts to a *spiritual* meaning.
 - **Covenantal Echoes** — Scholars highlight how “living water” ties back to God Himself as the source of life (Jeremiah 2:13). Jesus is claiming to give what only God can give.
 - **Holy Spirit Fulfillment** — Most commentators connect John 4 with John 7:37–39 — Jesus’ “living water” is a metaphor for the indwelling Holy Spirit who brings eternal life and satisfaction.
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5. Observations & Conclusions

- **Literal Meaning:** Flowing, fresh water (vs. stagnant).
 - **Spiritual Meaning:** The life-giving presence of God, offered through Jesus.
 - **Theological Insight:** Jesus positions Himself as the source of what Israel’s Scriptures promised — true, eternal refreshment that no earthly well can satisfy.
 - **Application:** Only Jesus can quench our deepest thirst. He gives His Spirit as living water to satisfy and sustain believers eternally.
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6. Application (for Today)

Ask yourself:

- *What wells am I still drinking from that don’t satisfy?*
 - *Am I letting the Spirit be the source of life that continually refreshes me?*
 - *How can I offer this “living water” to others around me who are spiritually thirsty?*
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Key Takeaway:

“Living water” in John 4 is more than a metaphor — it is Jesus’ promise of the Holy Spirit, eternal life, and complete satisfaction for the soul.

Word Study: “Woman” (John 4:7, 4:21, 4:23)

1. Set Expectations

When we read John 4, we see Jesus call the Samaritan woman simply “Woman” (e.g., “*Woman, believe me...*” in John 4:21). In English, that can sound sharp or even rude. But the Greek word and the way it’s used elsewhere in Scripture shows that it was actually a polite form of address — similar to saying “Ma’am” in Southern English or “Madam” in more formal English.

2. The Word Itself

- Greek: γυνή (*gynē*)
 - Meaning: woman, wife, lady.
 - Usage: Can refer to a female person in general or to a wife. As a direct address, it’s formal and respectful.
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3. Biblical Usage

In John 4

- John 4:7 — “*A woman from Samaria came to draw water...*” (narrative introduction).
- John 4:21 — “*Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.*”
- John 4:23 — “*But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth...*”

Elsewhere in John’s Gospel

- John 2:4 — Jesus to Mary: “*Woman, what does this have to do with me?*”
- John 8:10 — To the woman caught in adultery: “*Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?*”
- John 19:26 — From the cross, to His mother: “*Woman, behold your son!*”
- John 20:15 — To Mary Magdalene at the tomb: “*Woman, why are you weeping?*”

Old Testament echoes

- Genesis 2:23 — Adam names Eve “*woman*” (Hebrew: *ishah*) as a mark of shared humanity.

4. Commentary Insights

- **Not harsh but respectful** — Most scholars agree that “woman” (*gynē*) in Greek was not dismissive but a dignified address. D.A. Carson notes it’s “a courteous, though not intimate, form of address.”
- **Acknowledgement, not insult** — Jesus uses “woman” to acknowledge the Samaritan woman’s worth and engage her in serious theological dialogue — something unheard of for a Jewish rabbi to do with a Samaritan woman at that time.
- **Consistent tone** — Jesus uses the same address for His own mother (John 2, 19), showing it carries respect, not disdain.
- **Breaking barriers** — By addressing her as “woman,” Jesus elevates her to a place of dignity — engaging her as a serious conversation partner, not dismissing her as “just a Samaritan” or “just a woman.”

5. Observations & Conclusions

- **Literal meaning:** Simply “woman” — the ordinary word *gynē*.
- **Cultural tone:** Respectful, polite address — closer to “Ma’am” than to the blunt English “Woman!”
- **Theological insight:** Jesus acknowledges her as a person worthy of truth and revelation. She becomes the first to hear His declaration of being the Messiah (John 4:26).
- **Application:** Jesus’ way of addressing people shows dignity and respect. Where culture excluded or demeaned, He acknowledged and included.

6. Application (for Today)

Ask yourself:

- *Do I acknowledge the dignity of others the way Jesus did — especially those society tends to overlook?*
- *How can I make my words and tone more like Christ’s — speaking truth with respect?*
- *What barriers might I need to cross in order to engage someone with the gospel, as Jesus did with the Samaritan woman?*

Key Takeaway:

When Jesus addressed the Samaritan woman as “Woman,” it wasn’t dismissal but

acknowledgement. In tone and meaning, it was respectful, recognizing her dignity and engaging her as a true conversation partner.