

## Transcript

### The Jesus Story - The Woman at the Well

In our looking at the Life of Jesus, we have arrived at John chapter four where we find the story of Jesus and the woman at the well. The story is very simple and yet it's almost breath-taking. A man meets a woman in what seems to be a chance encounter and in a few brief moments her life is changed forever.

This is the longest recorded conversation anyone ever had with Jesus. It is longer than any recorded conversation with any of his disciples. The last time that I spoke we listened in on a conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus in which Jesus showed Nicodemus his need for a Saviour.

Now we find that Jesus' meets a Samaritan woman by a well. These are two very different people from two very different cultures, but they both have the same common need. Just as the great religious leader Nicodemus needed Jesus, so too did this Samaritan woman.

Here we have the conversation that Jesus had with the woman of Samaria and this conversation opened the way for two days of very successful gospel preaching in her city.

As we look closely at the conversation that takes place in John chapter four, and we compare it with the conversation in John chapter three, we find a series of very striking contrasts.

We see just how much God loves the whole world as Jesus moves from the night time visit with Nicodemus, one of the religious "in crowd", to an encounter with a woman whose name is never given; an outsider coming with her burden of loneliness and guilt. It would be very difficult to find a greater contrast than this.

In John 3 we have a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus. In 4, we have a woman, who is not even named.

In John 3 we have a man of rank, a master in Israel. In 4, we have a woman of no rank, a water carrier.

In John 3 we have a favoured Jew. In 4, we have a despised Samaritan.

In John 3 we have a man of high reputation. In 4 we have a woman of ill repute.

In these two chapters, we have a wonderful view of the gracious ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nowhere can we find two greater contrasts than these. No consideration is shown for position or rank, Jesus came to seek and to save the lost and nothing would be allowed to deter him from this mission.

Jew or Gentile. Male or Female. High or Low. Jesus would fulfill that mission.

In John 3 we found a man that all men could look up to. In chapter 4, we find a woman that all men would look down on.

One an educated Rabbi of good reputation, the other an alien woman of questionable character. There could not be two more different personalities and yet they both had the same need. There was one thing that they did have in common. They both had a

great need and Jesus would meet that need.

The message that I want to try get across today is that ‘Jesus cares about people’.

Not their nationality, or their position. Not the opinions others may have of them, or even the opinion they may have of themselves. Jesus has no set pattern of approach in dealing with either. To one he speaks of being “born again”, and to the other He offers “living waters”.

When Jesus met the woman at the well there were a number of barriers between them. There was a religious barrier, a gender barrier, a racial barrier and even a moral barrier. Jesus found a way through all of them.

We pick the story up in John 4:3:

***3 He left Judea and departed again to Galilee.***

***4 But He needed to go through Samaria.***

The simple geography is important in understanding this story. In Jesus’ day there were three regions stacked on top of one another. There was Galilee in the north, Samaria in the middle, and Judea in the south. The easiest and quickest way to get to Galilee from Judea was to go due north right through Samaria.

Verse 4 says that Jesus “needed to” go through Samaria. Now, why did he have to do that? One answer is, he didn’t! There was another route he could have taken. Most religious Jews would go east, cross the Jordan River, then go north, re-cross the River Jordan and they would be in Galilee.

This was out of the way but it meant they wouldn’t have to go through Samaritan territory. The Jews looked down on the Samaritans as religious and racial half-breed heretics. It’s hard for us to understand the animosity that existed between these two groups.

The real reason that Jesus “needed to” go through Samaria; it was simple and yet really wonderful. Jesus went because he intended to meet this woman. He knew she would be coming to the well at exactly the same time he was sitting there weary from his journey.

A six hour journey brought Jesus there wearied and worn out, so he seated himself by the well to rest and to wait his opportunity for a drink of water. Nothing happens by chance in this story. Every detail is part of the outworking of God’s will.

And that is a very important point. This woman is not looking for Jesus. All she wants is water, but Jesus is looking for her. Although she does not know it, this woman has a “divine appointment” with the Son of God.

***5 So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.***

***6 Now Jacob’s well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.***

Utterly worn out, Jesus sits by the well. John does not show to us a character free from tiredness and the struggles that we have to face. He shows us one who was tired but had to go on. We tend to forget the human frailty of Jesus.

The conversation begins with a simple request from Jesus: “Will you give me a drink?”

***7 A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give Me a drink.”***

Jesus is tired and thirsty and she has the water he needs, but he has the water she needs. He was thirsty and knew it. She was thirsty and didn't know it. The woman did not come to the well seeking Jesus, but He came to the well seeking her.

In his approach we see the great heart of Jesus is without prejudice. It does not matter to Jesus that others would not go to Samaria and that others would not speak to this woman. Jesus welcomes all, and rejects none. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. This story tells us just what that means.

John 4 is all about sovereign grace. Jesus found this woman. She did not find him. What happens in this chapter looks like a chance encounter but it was nothing of the kind. The time and place and all the circumstances. These had all been arranged by God before the world began.

The woman had come to the well to draw water, and if Jesus had not spoken to her, she would have done just that: she would have drawn her water and gone on her way. She would have been lost to the kingdom of God for ever.

But, the woman at the well found, probably for the first time in her life, a Jew who treated her as an equal, and she is so amazed.

If there is one lesson that we can all learn from this story it is that ‘Jesus care about people. Jesus has a heart filled with compassion’.

The dictionary defines Compassion as: *A feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for another who is stricken by misfortune, accompanied by a strong desire to alleviate the suffering.*

That is the way that most of us view compassion. For most of us compassion begins and ends with feelings. When we study the life of Jesus we find that He redefined Compassion; for Jesus compassion never stopped with a feeling, it always led Him to do something.

Just think about this for a minute. Jesus, in spite of an over whelming schedule, walked miles out of His way just to speak to a lonely woman at a well. Jesus not only walked to that well, He waited until the woman turned up.

Who did He wait for? Some famous personality with all the right connections? No! She was a no name, five-times divorced promiscuous woman, with a bad reputation and a live-in boyfriend.

We really need to understand this. When others may be looking at our past, Jesus is looking to our future. Jesus did not see this woman as bad, He saw her as lost and there is a big difference! Skilfully and tenderly, Jesus leads the mind of this Samaritan woman into the great things of gospel salvation.

The conversation began with a simple request from Jesus: “Will you give me a drink?” Immediately the woman was impressed by the friendliness of Jesus.

It was unusual for her to hear a kind greeting from a Jewish man. How is it that you, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?

Jesus speaks to her again in verse 10:

**10 Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."**

**11 The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water?"**

**12 "Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?"**

**13 Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again,**

**14 "but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."**

**15 The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw."**

As Jesus appeals to her curiosity, Her attitude immediately changes. Throughout His ministry, Jesus continually worked to make himself understood. He used parables and simple illustrations to convey His message. Light is now beginning to dawn on the heart of this woman.

Now she can be made aware of the real greatness of her need. First she needs to be made aware of her sin. Jesus makes a simple request: "Go, call your husband".

An opening has come. Everything that has taken place between Jesus and this woman has been a preparation for this delicate moment. Now Jesus lays bare the woman's deepest self. With one simple sentence. "Go, call your husband," Jesus exposes the disorder of her domestic life.

"I have no husband". On one level it appears that Jesus is being insensitive. Why bring up anything about her past? Is Jesus trying to embarrass her? The answer is no.

But his instruction to call her husband made her very uncomfortable. She doesn't want to go into detail so she simply replies, "I have no husband." Now that was true but it wasn't the whole story. She knew she was hiding the truth, but what she doesn't know is that Jesus knows it, too.

And so Jesus goes on to reveal the rest of the story. This woman has had five husbands and the man she is living with currently is not her husband. Had she been divorced five times? Probably. Was there promiscuity involved? Most likely.

And, certainly she is currently living in a sinful relationship with a man outside of marriage. She has lived with a passing parade of men, five of them technically husbands, and the latest a live-in affair. Not one of them has been a lasting, meaningful relationship. "She belongs to no man, but has been the property of five."

Why did she marry so many times? It could be she was seeking happiness through human love. “Most people are seeking the same thing – happiness.” Some people, like this woman, think that happiness is found in human love. Some think it is found in sports. Others think that happiness is found in money. Men especially think that they will gain satisfaction in their life through a successful career, position, authority or power.

True happiness is found on the inside. It is the well of living water that Jesus told this woman about. We can be content in whatsoever situation we find ourselves in if our spiritual well is bubbling. There can be tears streaming down our face and we can still have the Joy of the Lord in our hearts.

An opening has come. Everything that has taken place between Jesus and this woman has been a preparation for this delicate moment. Now Jesus lays bare the woman’s deepest self. With one simple sentence. “Go, call your husband,” Jesus exposes the disorder of her domestic life.

If she cannot face herself and admit that her tangled, sick relationships are sin, she can never drink of the living water. The gift is free but it cannot be received without repentance. You can almost feel a note of sad regret in the woman’s brief reply, “I have no husband”.

Jesus commends her for telling the truth and then He opens up her whole confused situation. The words of Jesus are a verbal slap in the face, and yet it was the most loving thing he could have done for her. There is an important spiritual principle at work here. Without conviction of sin there can be no conversion. Is Jesus being cruel? No!

No more than the doctor who prescribes surgery to save your life. Unless he removes the tumour, you are certain to die. Will the operation be painful? Maybe, but weighed against death the pain is part of the price that is worth paying.

There is something that we need to understand. No human relationship can satisfy our needs. We are spiritual beings made for a relationship with God. There is a “God-shaped vacuum” inside the human heart that nothing else will ever fill. We were made to know God, and until we know God through Jesus Christ, we are destined for a life of emptiness and disappointment.

Does Jesus care about this woman? Yes, he does. He knows the truth about her, and still offers her eternal life. This is the wonder of God’s grace. Only someone who really loves you can look at your past without blinking. Real love means knowing the truth about someone else and reaching out to them anyway. Jesus is not ashamed of her past but he cannot help her until she gets beyond the shame and admits the truth.

She is almost but not quite saved. She is near the kingdom but not in the door yet.

Jesus laid bare what she thought she could keep hidden. That always makes sinners uncomfortable.

***17 The woman answered and said, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You have well said, ‘I have no husband,’***

**18 “for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly.”**

Now, she wants to change the subject:

**19 The woman said to Him, “Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.**

**20 “Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.”**

**21 Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father.**

**22 “You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.**

**23 “But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.**

**24 “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”**

When the change comes, then worship wherever it is done, will be done by people who want to worship, so it will be done in the right spirit and it will be true. It will not be a lie.

God is a Spirit. This means he is not confined to a place. He can be everywhere. So anyone can address him and be heard. He wants people to come to him at any time and any place and he will listen to them. But, they need to do it sincerely. God must be worshiped with the heart, in spirit and in truth. Spiritual worship can be offered in any place, wherever people can humble themselves before God. God is seeking for such true, spiritual worshipers.

**25 The woman said to Him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). When He comes, He will tell us all things.”**

Then Jesus declared, “I who speak to you am he”.

In the marvellous way in which He always spoke to the humble and simple of heart, Jesus told the woman of Samaria the Divine secret of His Messiah-ship. This ordinary, sinful woman stands out among Bible women as the first person to hear from the lips of Jesus the story of His mission on earth ‘I that speak to you am He.’

**27 And at this point His disciples came, and they marvelled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, “What do You seek?” or, “Why are You talking with her?”**

This interview had been personal, between Jesus and the woman, the details of this woman’s sin was nothing to do with anyone else, but herself and Jesus. Jesus came to seek and to save those who were lost. He did not come to seek and embarrass them. This woman’s sins like the sins of all of forgiven sinners are in the sea of God’s forgetfulness, never to be remembered any more, and that is the sea that no-one has any right to fish in.

The woman is converted between verses 26 and 27. How do we know? Because she leaves her water pot and goes to tell the others in town. When we read these verses, we are struck by how little the woman understands. This is Jesus' first express revelation of himself as the Messiah. Jesus chose a Samaritan woman of tainted character to be the first to hear it, from his lips, and another soul has stepped out of darkness into light.

Jesus reveals His true personality to her by knowing her past and by showing her kindness in spite of it. His acceptance of her and His answers to her questions win her over and she, the outcast, gains the courage to go tell her neighbours and friends about Jesus.

**28 The woman then left her water pot, went her way into the city, and said to the men,**

**29 "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?"**

**30 Then they went out of the city and came to Him.**

These are the marks of a true believer. She heard, she believed, she ran to tell, as a result of her testimony many others believed. This woman is not only a Samaritan despised by the Jews, she is also a much divorced woman who is living with her boyfriend which makes her not very popular with the Samaritans either.

"He told me all that I ever did." The woman was amazed, not only that Jesus knew the facts about her life, but also that He loved her, even knowing the facts of her life. From that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all the things that I have done."

Many believed her account and followed Jesus because of it. This woman was obviously a well-known woman. She would have been the subject of the town gossip because of her waywardness and degenerate lifestyle. So, when she spoke of the things of God, it naturally had a profound impact on the people. They came running to meet Jesus. Many people turned to the Lord in this place.

The key was one woman. She was the most unlikely person to be used by God, but she had met Jesus, and it had changed her life. She became a flaming evangelist for the Lord. There are keys to certain situations, and some of the keys are the most unlikely ones.

It was her witness, not her knowledge or teaching ability, that affected others. Her witness affected others in a remarkable way. They came to see Jesus for themselves. They were prepared to listen. They believed what she said about Him, and after hearing Him for themselves they also believed in him:

**4:39 - "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."**

All she said was: "He knows me", and: "I think he is the Messiah", and that's not exactly a full blown gospel message.

In point of fact, she does not seem to be a very good witness at all. All that she said was: "Come and see." No threats, no promises, just come and see for yourself. Her

invitation is sincere, non-threatening, and open to everyone. When Jesus gives you living water, you want to share it with someone else.

We come to the end of the story in verses 39-42:

**39 And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all that I ever did."**

**40 So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days.**

**41 And many more believed because of His own word.**

**42 Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."**

The more we look at the life of Jesus, the more we see just how much He cares. Jesus cared about those early disciples, He cared about Mary, He cared about Nicodemus, He cared about the woman at the well; and let me say today Jesus still cares about people: He cares about you and He cares about me.

It really is mind blowing when you realise that the all-powerful, all-knowing, ever-present Son of God cares about you and me. The one who knows all about us and still loves us just the same. Does Jesus love you the way you are? He certainly does, but Jesus loves you too much to leave you the way you are.

Here is something I will leave you to think about. John begins his gospel:

***In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.***

When Jesus came to earth as a man, He laid aside his glory, but he did not lay aside his divinity. We as Christians must never try to diminish who Jesus is. Word was with God, and the Word was God.

But in verse fourteen we read:

***And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,***

In other words, Jesus was now touchable, approachable, reachable; and what is more, he was very ordinary. If he was here today you would not notice him if you passed him in the street. He would listen to what you had to say as if he had all the time in the world. It is worth noting that those who knew him best, remembered him as Jesus. Those who walked with him remembered him not with a title or designation, but with a name. Jesus.

Jesus took on human flesh, he came to where we were, He stood in our place, and died to pay the price for our sins. Romans 5v8 describes this:

***8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.***

Jesus came to die in our place but he also came to show us how to live the Christian life. The invitation to those early disciples was simply "Follow Me". Go where I go. Do what I do. Be like me. In other words, "Imitate me".



Perhaps one of the best illustrations of this was Paul when writing to the church at Corinth. This is what he had to say to them:

***1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.***

What a statement that is If you follow me, You will be following Christ.

What is it to be a follower of Jesus? I heard a quote once that was very sad but true. "I like Jesus, but, I don't like some of his followers". The reason so many people don't like some of the followers of Jesus is simply because they are not really following Jesus.

We are ambassadors for Jesus Christ; the only picture that most people will have of Jesus Christ is what they see in Christians.

If you were in court today charged with being a Follower of Jesus, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

This is what a man called Paul Gilbert wrote:

***"You are writing a Gospel, A chapter each day,  
By the things that you do, By words that you say.  
People read what you write, Whether faithless or true;  
So, what is the Gospel, According to you?"***

People are reading the pages of our lives to learn what a Christian looks like, but they also are reading us to draw conclusions about what God is like.

As an ambassador for Christ, we should be going about the business of representing Him just as well as we can!