

## LESSON THREE

# THE WOMAN AT THE WELL

*“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”*

JOHN 4:13-14



REFLECTION

Some of us can hardly remember a time when we weren't Christians. Others among us have become followers of Jesus more recently. Think about the story of your conversion. How did your life change when you accepted Christ as your Savior?

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SITUATION

The shortest route between Jerusalem in the south and Galilee in the north required walking through Samaria. For Jews in Jesus' day, this region was definitely on the "wrong side of the tracks." The Jews despised the Samaritans, and the Samaritans did their best to return the compliment. Jesus often seemed to go out of his way to challenge these traditional animosities. On one occasion, he showed up at the well of Sychar in Samaria just as a woman arrived.

OBSERVATION

*Read John 4:5-30 from the New International Version or the New King James Version.*

NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

<sup>5</sup> So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup> Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

<sup>7</sup> When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" <sup>8</sup> (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

<sup>9</sup> The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

<sup>10</sup> Jesus answered her, "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."

<sup>11</sup> "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?" <sup>12</sup> Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?"

<sup>13</sup> Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

<sup>15</sup> The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

<sup>16</sup> He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."

<sup>17</sup> "I have no husband," she replied.

Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. <sup>18</sup> The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

<sup>19</sup> "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup> Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

<sup>21</sup> "Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup> You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup> Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. <sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

<sup>25</sup> The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

<sup>26</sup> Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he."

<sup>27</sup> Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?"

<sup>28</sup> Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people,<sup>29</sup> "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?"<sup>30</sup> They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

#### NEW KING JAMES VERSION

<sup>5</sup> So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup> Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

<sup>7</sup> A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." <sup>8</sup> For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

<sup>9</sup> Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.

<sup>10</sup> 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."

<sup>11</sup> 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? <sup>12</sup> 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?"

<sup>13</sup> Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, <sup>14</sup> 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."

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

<sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here."

<sup>17</sup> The woman answered and said, "I have no husband."

Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband,' <sup>18</sup> for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly."

<sup>19</sup> The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. <sup>20</sup> Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship."

<sup>21</sup> Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father.

<sup>22</sup> You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

<sup>25</sup> The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When He comes, He will tell us all things."

<sup>26</sup> Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He."

<sup>27</sup> And at this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why are You talking with her?"

<sup>28</sup> The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, <sup>29</sup> "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" <sup>30</sup> Then they went out of the city and came to Him.

## EXPLORATION

**1.** How did the woman respond when Jesus first spoke to her? Why did she react this way?

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**2.** What did Jesus mean when he said he could give her “living water” (verse 10)?

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**3.** What can you conclude from Jesus’ statements about this woman’s character?

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**4.** How did Jesus demonstrate his love for this woman in spite of her character?

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**5.** How did the woman react at the end of her encounter with Jesus?

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**6.** What do the woman’s actions reveal about the way Jesus affected her life?

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## INSPIRATION

Talk about a woman who could make a list. Number one, discrimination. She is a Samaritan, hated by Jews. Number two, gender bias. She is a female, condescended to by the men. Third, she is a divorcée, not once, not twice. Let’s see if we can count. Four? Five? Five marriages turned south, and now she’s sharing a bed with a guy who won’t give her a ring.

When I add this up, I envision a happy-hour stool sitter who lives with her mad at half boil. Husky voice, cigarette breath, and a dress cut low at the top and high at the bottom. Certainly not Samaria’s finest. Certainly not the woman you’d put in charge of the Ladies’ Bible Class.

Which makes the fact that Jesus does just that all the more surprising. He doesn’t just put her in charge of the class; he puts her in charge of evangelizing the whole town. Before the day is over, the entire city hears about a man who claims to be God. “He told me everything I ever did” (John 4:39), she tells them, leaving unsaid the obvious, “and he loved me anyway.”

A little rain can straighten a flower stem. A little love can change a life. Who knew the last time this woman had been entrusted with anything, much less the biggest news in history! In fact, flip to the left out of John 4, and you’ll make this startling discovery. She is Jesus’ missionary! She precedes the more noted. The lineage of Peter and Paul, St. Patrick and St. Francis of Assisi can be traced back to a town trollop who was so overwhelmed by Christ that she had to speak. . . .

Why? Not just because of what Jesus did, though that was huge. But because she let him do it. She let him on board. She let him love her. (From *A Love Worth Giving* by Max Lucado.)

## REACTION

**7.** In what ways can you identify with the woman in this story?

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When we least expect Jesus in our lives, he shows up. Sometimes, when we are actively trying to avoid anything that would remind us that our lives are not as they should be, we find Jesus waiting in the very place we have run to hide. Jesus never forces himself on us, but he does have an uncanny way of interrupting our thoughts and actions with truthful questions and challenging ideas. Just think about the times Jesus

## DEVOTION

## JOURNALING

## FOR FURTHER READING

To complete the book of John during this twelve-part study, read John 3:1–4:42. For more Bible passages on God’s mercy and love for sinners, read Exodus 34:6; Deuteronomy 4:31; Luke 19:1–10; John 3:16; 8:3–11; and Ephesians 2:1–6.