

## App Notes

### LIVING WATER

This is week 4 of our series exploring the gospel of John. Today, we're taking a look at the story of the so-called woman at the well.

*Fun Fact: It's notable that Jesus meets this woman at a well. In the Old Testament, when men meet women at wells it's always an important place for God's Spirit to move and each encounter tells us a lot about the character of those involved. If you want to look them up, you can find Abraham's servant seeking a bride for Isaac and meeting Rebekah at a well in Genesis 24:1-27, Jacob meeting Rachel at a well in Genesis 29-1-12, and Moses meeting Zipporah in Exodus 2:15-21.*

#### **John 4:3-9**

*So he left Judea and returned to Galilee.*

*He had to go through Samaria on the way. Eventually he came to the Samaritan village of Sychar, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there; and Jesus, tired from the long walk, sat wearily beside the well about noontime. Soon a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Please give me a drink." He was alone at the time because his disciples had gone into the village to buy some food.*

*The woman was surprised, for Jews refuse to have anything to do with Samaritans. She said to Jesus, "You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?"*

Samaritans were either foreigners planted there by Assyria during the exile, or they were Jewish people who had mixed and intermarried with these foreigners. Regardless, most "pure-blooded" Jewish people thought of Samaritans as Gentiles - outsiders.

*Fun Fact: Undoubtedly ritual purity was in mind when the woman asks Jesus why he'd want a drink from her. By touching shared vessels like her bucket, Jesus would presumably become ritually impure. I saw this mindset in action in India when I had chai at a roadside stall. They used clay cups so they could be smashed after each use to avoid caste cross-contamination.*

#### **John 4:10-14**

*Jesus replied, "If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water."*

*"But sir, you don't have a rope or a bucket," she said, "and this well is very deep. Where would you get this living water? And besides, do you think you're greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us this well? How can you offer better water than he and his sons and his animals enjoyed?"*

*Jesus replied, "Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again. But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life."*

John paints her as a worthy debate partner with Jesus. She goes toe to toe with him. I love it. She's spicy. She wants her questions answered!

In the ancient world, "living water" was a way of talking about water that moves. It could be a spring or a stream.

*Fun Fact: There is an ancient document called the Didache which was something of a church planting manual for very early Christians. In the section about how to perform baptisms, it suggests that baptizing someone in "living water" (i.e. a river or stream) is preferable to still water.*

The eternal life God wants to give to us... It's not some status we've earned. It's a living, life-giving force that erupts from within us. That refreshes us and renews everything around us.

*Fun Fact: Back in 2016 I got the chance to visit Yellowstone National Park and see Old Faithful. By chance, Olivia and I were alone on a trail behind the geyser when it erupted. While everyone else was packed onto bleachers on the other side of a hill to watch it, she and I were sprayed by the geyser with nobody else around. It was magical!*

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## SURRENDER

### **John 4:15-18**

*"Please, sir," the woman said, "give me this water! Then I'll never be thirsty again, and I won't have to come here to get water."*

*"Go and get your husband," Jesus told her.*

*"I don't have a husband," the woman replied.*

*Jesus said, "You're right! You don't have a husband—for you have had five husbands, and you aren't even married to the man you're living with now. You certainly spoke the truth!"*

Whether she is immoral or whether she is a broken woman just trying to make it another day, what Jesus is doing here is not condemning her. He's showing her that he knows who she is. He knows what she's been through. And he wants her to come alive.

### **John 3:17**

*God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.*

**John 4:19-26**

*“Sir,” the woman said, “you must be a prophet. So tell me, why is it that you Jews insist that Jerusalem is the only place of worship, while we Samaritans claim it is here at Mount Gerizim, where our ancestors worshiped?”*

*Jesus replied, “Believe me, dear woman, the time is coming when it will no longer matter whether you worship the Father on this mountain or in Jerusalem. You Samaritans know very little about the one you worship, while we Jews know all about him, for salvation comes through the Jews. But the time is coming—indeed it’s here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way. For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.”*

*The woman said, “I know the Messiah is coming—the one who is called Christ. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”*

*Then Jesus told her, “I AM the Messiah!”*

In the gospel of John, this woman is the first person to hear the good news that the gushing spring of eternal life is for *everyone*, Gentiles included.

*Fun Fact: In John 4:25, the woman says, “I know the Messiah is coming.” This is one of only two instances in the New Testament where the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew māšīyaḥ is used (the other is in John 1:41). In every other place we read “Messiah” in the NT, it is the Greek Christos. Both “Messiah” and “Christ” mean “anointed one.”*

Here the word ‘worship’ is *proskyneō* - to bow in reverence. This kind of worship is a posture of surrender. When this is our posture, that’s when the spring of true life – the geyser of New Creation – begins to flow.

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**GOOD NEWS****John 4:27-30**

*Just then his disciples came back. They were shocked to find him talking to a woman, but none of them had the nerve to ask, “What do you want with her?” or “Why are you talking to her?” The woman left her water jar beside the well and ran back to the village, telling everyone, “Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did! Could he possibly be the Messiah?” So the people came streaming from the village to see him.*

**John 4:39-42**

*Many Samaritans from the village believed in Jesus because the woman had said, “He told me everything I ever did!” When they came out to see him, they begged him to stay in their village. So he stayed for two days, long enough for many more to hear his message and believe. Then they said to the woman, “Now we believe, not just because*

*of what you told us, but because we have heard him ourselves. Now we know that he is indeed the Savior of the world.”*

John chapter 3 leaves the response of Nicodemus unspoken. We don't know how he responds to the teaching of Jesus. But this woman? This confrontational, outcast, cursed, broken woman... She doesn't just believe. She brings her whole village out to meet “the Savior of the world.”

**John 3:16**

*For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.*

Nicodemus was on the fence. This woman was an evangelist.

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REFLECTION QUESTIONS

**What is your source of life?**

When you look at your life does it feel to you like every day is dry and thirsty and you're constantly going back to the well for another sip of water? Whatever that well is: success, popularity, entertainment, money, self-medication, stuff... Or have you tasted true life? Do you have a bubbling spring of New Creation within you?

**John 4:14**

*Those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again.*

Stop lugging your bucket to the sun-scorched well when you could have a spring inside.

**Are you “going there” with Jesus?**

Jesus can take your questions. He can handle your doubts and your skepticism. He wants to help you rebuild your faith - truer, deeper, stronger than ever before. But you've got to be willing to go there.

**John 4:10**

*If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water.*

The spring of true life can still leap up within you even if the simplistic faith you once had doesn't hold water anymore.

*Fun Fact: In case you haven't heard, I am teaching a four-week "Bible Class for Bible Skeptics" starting March 21. It's going to be a safe place to explore some challenging questions about the Bible. You are more than welcome to come if you want to "go there" along with me!*

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