

(REENACTMENT) *THE DAY THAT CHANGED MY LIFE!!*

Let me tell you about a day that changed my life! It was a hot and sunny day and I decided that I didn't want to be bothered by the whispers and stares of the women of the community by going to the community well at the 6:00 in the afternoon, rather I went to Jacob's well outside of town at noon day. As I went I saw a dozen Jewish men going into town as I was leaving town. As I approached the well I noticed that was a man sitting there, but I didn't give him a thought. I knew that he would say nothing to me because men don't speak to women in public and besides, he looked Jewish like the men I saw early. I thought he was probably an Orthodox Jew who did want to go into town since they avoided Samaria because there was a long-standing, deep-seated hatred between them and us Samaritans. They claimed that we were a mixed race, part Jew and part Gentile, that grew out of the Assyrian captivity of the ten northern tribes in 727 B.C. We were rejected by the Jews because we could not prove our genealogy, and we established our own temple and religious services on Mt. Gerizim.

So you can imagine my surprise when the man asked me for a drink of water. As I said, it was not considered proper for any man, especially a rabbi, to speak in public to a strange woman or any woman (John 4:27). I assumed he was a Jewish rabbi, and I wondered what he really wanted. Everyone knows that Jews and Samaritans don't share eating and drinking vessels. Why would this man, a Jew, want to use my vessel to get a drink of water? I think it was just his way of starting a conversation and share with me the truth about "living water." This was an honor as he asked me my thoughts and seemed to listen to what I said. He seemed a person with genuine sympathy and seemed to respect me even though I am a woman. I am told that a Rabbi might not even speak to his own wife or daughter or sister in public. There are even Pharisees who were called "the bruised and bleeding Pharisees" because they shut their eyes when they saw a woman on the street and so walked into walls and houses! For a Rabbi to be seen speaking to a woman in public was the end of his reputation—and yet Jesus spoke to me, a woman. Not

only was I a woman; I was also a woman with a reputation. No decent man, let alone a Rabbi, would have been seen in my company, or even exchanging a word with me—and yet Jesus spoke to me.

The man said: “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.” He had the audacity to pointed out to me that I was ignorant of Who He was, what He had to offer, and how I could receive it. Normally I would not have talked with him, but his words aroused my interest, so I continued the conversation.

He said he could give me living water. Since I had come for water I wanted to know where he was going to obtain this water. The well itself was more than 100 feet deep. It is not a springing well of water; it is a well that gathers rain water. But clearly it was a well so deep that no one could gain water from it unless he had something with which to draw the water. But where was he going to get running water? No river flowed in the area. I didn’t think it proper to simply ask him to give me a drink of it.

I asked him if he was greater than Jacob—and greater than the well itself! He said: “Whosoever continues to drink of this material water (or anything the world has to offer) will thirst again. But whosoever takes one drink of the water I give will never thirst again!” (see John 4:13–14) I discovered that Jews had another way of using the word water. They often spoke of the thirst of the soul for God; and they often spoke of quenching that thirst with living water. Jesus was using terms that religious scholars should have understood. Sometimes the Rabbis identified this living water with the wisdom of the Law; sometimes they identified it with the Holy Spirit of God. Jewish religious language was full of this idea of the thirst of the soul which could be quenched only with the living water which was the gift of God. But I didn’t understand.

Jesus went on to make a still more startling statement that he could give me living water which would banish my thirst for ever.

I asked for this gift of living water. He asked me to get my husband. When I explained that there was not problem because I had no husband, he told me that I had had 5

husbands and the man I was with now was not my husband. Since I had not told him this information I realized that he was a prophet. If he really is a prophet and knows about my situation he also knew that I needed to ask God for forgiveness. So I asked where I could go to make my sacrifices to God. The Jews say the place is the temple in Jerusalem, but my people say I should go to the mountains. I was not sure how to worship or where to worship. The man made it clear that all religions are not equally acceptable before God, that some worshipers act in ignorance and unbelief.

Jesus had told me the old rivalries were on the way out, that the day was coming when controversy about the respective merits of Mount Gerizim and Mount Zion would not matter, that the person who truly sought God would find God anywhere.

He said we Samaritans worshipped in ignorance. We accept only the 5 books of Moses. The Jewish Rabbis had always charged us with a superstitious worship of the true God. They always said that our worship was founded not on love and knowledge, but on ignorance and fear. When our ancestors were brought in to dwell in Samaria, they brought their own gods with them (2 Kings 17:29). A priest from Bethel came and told them how they should fear the Lord (2 Kings 17:28). The Jews believed we merely added Yahweh to our list of gods because we were superstitiously afraid to leave him out. After all he was the God of the land in which we were living and it might be dangerous not to include him in our worship.

Jesus pointed to the true worship. God, he said, is spirit. God is not confined to things; and therefore idol worship is an insult to the very nature of God. If God is spirit, God is not confined to places; and therefore to limit the worship of God to Jerusalem or to any other spot is to set a limit to that which by its nature overpasses all limits. If God is spirit, a person's gifts to God must be gifts of the spirit. Animal sacrifices and all human-made things become inadequate. The only gifts that befit the nature of God are the gifts of the spirit—love, loyalty, obedience, devotion.

A person's spirit is the highest part of them. That is the part which lasts when the physical part has vanished. That is the part which dreams the dreams and sees the visions

which, because of the weakness and faultiness of the body, may never be carried out. It is the spirit of a person which is the source of highest dreams and thoughts and ideals and desires. The true worship is when a person attains to friendship and intimacy with God. Genuine worship does not consist in coming to a certain place nor in going through a certain ritual nor even in bringing certain gifts. True worship is when the spirit, the immortal and invisible part of a person, speaks to and meets with God.¹

I told him that I knew the Messiah was coming and would reveal the secrets of hearts. Then he said he was the Messiah. He dared to utter the holy name of God!

At that point I put my faith in Jesus. I wanted to share her faith with others, so I went into the village and told the men I had met the Christ. God used my simple testimony, and many of the people came out to the well to meet Jesus. The rabbis said, "It is better that the words of the Law be burned than be delivered to a woman!" But Jesus did not agree with that narrow prejudice.

I left my water pot when I hurried into the city! But now I had the living water within and was now satisfied. I planned to come back; and besides Jesus and his disciples could use the vessel to satisfy their thirst. Now we are all one in faith and love!

I wonder sometimes why Jesus was so patient with me. I was the least likely prospect for salvation, yet God used me to win almost an entire village!

Many of the Samaritans believed because of my testimony, and then many more believed when they heard Jesus personally. My neighbors were so excited they begged Him to stay with them; and He stayed for two days. During that short time, His word produced fruit in our lives, and gave them living water.

Our faith was grounded in every Word that he taught us. They began their spiritual walk by trusting in what I said, but they soon learned to trust the Word taught by the Jesus. Theirs was no "secondhand" salvation. They knew that they were saved because they had believed His message. "Now we know!" was their happy testimony.

¹ Barclay, William, lecturer in the University of Glasgow (Hrsg.): *The Gospel of John : Volume 1*. Philadelphia : The Westminster Press, 2000, c1975 (The Daily Study Bible Series, Rev. Ed), S. 146

My people were not narrow in their faith, seeing Jesus as the Savior of the Jews and the Samaritans. But they declared that He was “the Savior of the world” (John 4:42). They had been converted only a few days, but they already had a missionary vision! They wanted to share the living water with the whole world!

It is interesting to trace Jesus’ movements that brought Him to Samaria. He was in Jerusalem (John 2:23) and then came into Judea (John 3:22). From Judea He went into Samaria (John 4:4), and we Samaritans declared Him to be “the Savior of the world.” (This is a perfect parallel to Acts 1:8—“And ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”) Our Lord has set the example. If we follow, He will give us the harvest.

Before he left Jesus told my neighbors that I was a fruitful believer: I bore fruit (“many believed”), more fruit (“many more believed”), and I continue to bear “much fruit” to the glory of God (see John 15:1–5). I encourage you to share your story of faith with others. Nobody knows how many lost sinners have come to the Savior because of my witness (recorded in John 4) and yours. Let us all share the living water that has been so freely given.^{2 3 4}

²Wiersbe, Warren W.: *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. Jn 4:1

³Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 2:285

⁴Richards, Lawrence O.: *The Bible Readers Companion*. electronic ed. Wheaton : Victor Books, 1991; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996, S. 681