

The Woman with Relational Failure

Encounters With Jesus--part 3

John 4; Feb. 23, 2014

DAY 1: Jesus Takes the Initiative With Us!

1. Have you experienced the heartbreak of relational failure? This week we'll look at "the woman at the well," a nameless woman who knew repeated relational failure. How did Jesus relate to her? What was He trying to do for her, and build in her?

John 4:7 When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" 8 (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) 9 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.) 10 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."

2. 2,000 years ago, in the middle east, the Jewish people looked down on the Samaritans as "half-breeds," "sell-outs" who intermarried with the pagan people around them. In addition, women were generally considered "2nd class citizens." Jewish men did not talk to women in public. Thus, the Samaritan woman is stunned when Jesus talks with her. What reasons do you think He would talk with her?

3. Who initiates the conversation?

4. How does He initiate the conversation?

5. Jesus' answer in v.10 is intriguing! Place a check mark next to the things that strike you about it.

He suggests that God wants to give her a gift!

He works to create "spiritual curiosity."

He moves the conversation toward a spiritual direction, but only with a nudge.

He doesn't use the "dump truck" method with her, dumping on her a truck load of truth.

He assumes she may not know God, but hints that if she did, something good would happen.

He relates to her as personal equals and spiritual "equals."

He takes something very ordinary, "water," and uses it as a metaphor for what He can give.

He uses a vague term, "living water," to prompt a response from her.

Other: _____

6. Does this story prompt you to think about someone in your life?

7. Do any of items in question #5 give you an idea of your approach to that person? Which one?

7. Pray for your friend. Ask God to open their heart, and to give you an opportunity with him/her.

DAY 2: Internal Thirst; Internal Quenching!

John 4:11 "Sir, you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself...?"

1. Did the woman understand Jesus' reference to "living water?"

2. Her initial idea of Jesus is that he is just another man. But now, she compares Jesus to the great Jewish patriarch, Jacob. Why?

John 4:13 "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, [14] but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

3. Jesus compares "water" to the "water" He can give. Contrast the two "waters."

4. What do you think each of the following characteristics mean?

a. "water I give him..."

b. "spring of water welling up..."

c. "welling up to eternal life."

5. "Eternal life" is a phrase that has a quantitative *and* qualitative meaning to it. As to quantitative eternal life, Jesus refers to heaven. As to qualitative eternal life, He means "life to the full." Which of the following statements strike you about His words in 4:13-14?

___ With physical water, you can drink and drink but you will always still be thirsty.

___ What the world has to offer to slake your personal, human thirst will still leave you thirsty.

___ What I have to slake your *personal* thirst is the only thing that can slake your personal thirst.

___ What the world has to offer, from the *outside* cannot slake an *internal* thirst.

___ You are looking for something to meet the deep needs of the human heart. If you look to the world, you will never have that thirst slaked.

___ Your *internal* thirst can only be slaked by an *internal source*. That's where I come in!

___ You have a need for eternal life, both now and forever.

___ Jesus is still not using the "dump truck" method. He is creating more spiritual curiosity.

6. What strikes you most about today's study?

DAY 3: "Spiritual" Things; "Real" Things

1. In a Sinclair Lewis book, one of the characters is a businessman who is talking to the woman he loves. She tells him, "On the surface we seem quite different; but deep down we are fundamentally the same. We are both desperately unhappy about something—and we don't know what it is."

2. "At the heart of all this there is the fundamental truth that in the human heart there is a thirst for something that only Jesus Christ can satisfy." -William Barclay

3. So far, Jesus has initiated the conversation, kept it moving, slowly turned it to spiritual matters, and has sown a few spiritual seeds. She is engaged in the conversation and her curiosity is piqued, but so far she doesn't "get it." The story continues...

John 4:16 He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."

4. Jesus abruptly changes the subject *away from "spiritual things."* Why do you think Jesus turned the conversation to her "husband?"

John 4:17 "I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. [18] 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."

5. It is one thing to discuss theological topics, like eternal life and living water. It is another thing to pierce through what I'd like to think about my life and the reality of my life.

a. What has been this woman's approach to life?

b. Why do you think she has had five husbands? What factors could all be in play?

c. What has been her "real" "water" for trying to slake her thirst?

d. Has her strategy been working? Why not?

6. If you had been the woman, where would your mind have gone at this point in the conversation?

7. Talking about the real things of life with your friends helps to wed "spiritual" things "real life" things. Think about one of your lost friends. How can you use Jesus' approach with your friend?

8. Pray for your friend, and opportunities to talk with your friend.

DAY 4: Helping People Focus on Jesus

1. Jesus' approach is steeped in care. A Jew did not care about a Samaritan. A man did not care about a woman. Jesus takes the initiative to not only talk with her but to engage with her in conversation. What things do you think the woman sensed from Jesus by how he related to her?

John 4:19-20 "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. [20] Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

2. How has this woman's view of Jesus changed from the beginning of this story to now?

3. The woman then changes the subject from Jesus to being "religious." Is she on track or moving in the wrong direction?

4. When we initially believe the world has what I need, and it doesn't, we "naturally" move to human-motivated religiosity. Do you think that is helpful?

John 4:21 Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem."

5. What is the essence of Jesus' answer? Is religiosity the answer? Is it even "helpful," or does it miss the point? Jot down your thoughts...

6. Is Jesus being "pushy" or obnoxious, or is He just leading her little-by-little?

7. "Witnessing" is mostly about "sharing" in the context of "caring." The sharing is done in small snippets, seed ideas. There is time for feedback and questions, a dialogue. How does Jesus' approach give you insight as you engage with people? List the items that are pertinent to how you want your relationships with lost people to be:

John 4:22 "You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews."

8. Jesus starts to point toward Himself as the "living water." He "hints" at it, nudging her toward Himself. Why is the "nudging" important?

DAY 5 Love and Truth!

1. Jesus continues His sharing with the woman at the well...

John 4:23 "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. [24] God is Spirit and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth."

2. What does Jesus point to for the woman?

John 4:25 (woman) "I know that Messiah (Christ) is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

3. What is she starting to realize about the Man she is talking to?

4. Is her "solution" of religiosity cracking?

John 4:26 Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he."

5. What would have happened if He had started out the conversation with this truth? What do you think she would have done?

John 4:28-29 Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, [29] "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?"

6. What does she realize about Jesus Christ?

7. What happened to her at the end of their conversation? What does she realize about herself?

"There are two revelations in Christianity; there is the revelation of God and the revelation of ourselves. No man ever really sees himself until he sees himself in the presence of Christ; and then he is appalled at the sight of himself...Christianity begins with the sudden realization that life as we are living it will not do. We awake to ourselves and we awake to our need of God." - William Barclay

8. Think about the entire story we studied this week. How has your view of "witnessing" changed this week?

a. CARE: How did you see Jesus CARE (relating to her) for the woman?

b. TRUTH: How did you see Jesus nudging her toward truth?