

Session 1

March 5, 2023

JESUS MET MY GREATEST NEED

John 4:7-18; 25-26

We get into trouble when we overgeneralize. Every cat has four legs, but not every animal with four legs is a cat! It's the same way with people. Every person is different. We come from different places, different backgrounds, different circumstances. Everyone has a story of their own. But there are some universal truths when it comes to humanity. The *Woman at the Well* in John 4 was a colorful character with a colorful past (and a sharp tongue!). Yet as different as she was from most of us, her encounter with Jesus reminds us that there are some universal human needs that go far beyond the typical food, shelter, and clothing.

Our greatest need is spiritual (vv. 7-14). We all know the story here. Jesus made a point to travel through Samaria to meet this divine appointment (vs. 4). The circumstances were *socially* awkward (men talking to women), *culturally* awkward (Jews talking with Samaritans), and *religiously* awkward (God-fearing Jews associating with heretical Samaritan gentiles; see v. 4). Beyond that, this woman was immoral, uncouth, and sarcastic. But as it turned out, she was also brutally honest. Her sharp tongue, however, was no match for Jesus. Her pointed jabs about His intentions and His promises were parried back towards her. He asked her for a drink, then offered her a better one. She bragged on her father Jacob. He bragged on His Father, God. She pointed out that He had no bucket. He told her He didn't need one; He had an entire spring! She thought her biggest need was physical: *water*. He told her that her biggest need was spiritual: it was *salvation*. For reflection: *Do some Bible study and see how many times Jesus and/or His salvation are compared to water. See John 7:37 as an example. How many more can you find? Why do you think this metaphor is so effective?*

Our biggest problem is sin (vv. 15-18). Like the modern-day text message, the narrative doesn't give sufficient emotion to know what was behind this woman's response to Jesus in verse 15. Three possibilities exist. Some believe she is genuinely drawn to the spiritual side of things and is legitimately open to what Jesus was offering. Others believe she was being sarcastic and taking yet another jab at Jesus the Jew. I lean toward the third view, that her mind had returned to the task at hand—drawing her water—and her remark was made in offhanded resignation. Regardless, Jesus abruptly turned the direction of the discourse from the woman's need, to the woman's problem: the immorality that was so plain to her was equally plain to Him. We must applaud the woman's honesty here (v. 17). She owed the stranger no explanation, but something about the conversation prompted an honest and immediate response. Could it be conviction of her sin? For reflection: *Read Isaiah 59:1-2. What does this tell us about our sin? What conclusions can you draw about what God can and will do regarding our sin? What does it indicate He will not do?*

Our only solution is the Savior (vv. 25-26). In the intervening verses (vv. 19-24), the woman identified Jesus as a prophet and turned the discussion toward religious practice. She preferred to discuss the impersonal aspects of religious life: the *where's* and *when's* and *what's right's*. Jesus, however, cut to the heart of the matter: it isn't the right *religion* that saves, but the right *relationship*. Acceptable worship involves worshipping the one true God *in spirit and in truth*

(vv. 23-24). Only when the woman was focused on a Savior (rather than rituals), did Jesus reveal Himself to her. Notice that her religious background was helpful: she knew about the Christ who would come, and the fulfillment that would come with Him (v. 25). And, because Samaritans accepted the books of the Law (Genesis through Deuteronomy), she would have instantly picked up on His reference to the burning bush of Exodus 3 and the divine title “I AM” that Jesus used in verse 26 (Note: the pronoun “he” is not in the original). For reflection: *Think about the woman’s religious background. In this case, while she was wrong about some things, I think her religious background helped her understand Jesus. What do you think happens when someone has no religious background at all? Where would you begin?*