1.0

SOMETHING MORE

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In 2005, Tom Brady won his third Super Bowl. Already known as one of the greatest quarterbacks of all time, he had achieved the goal of a lifetime — three times!

But in an interview afterward, Brady revealed something surprising. When asked about what he thought of all he had accomplished, he said this:

> Why do I have three Super Bowl rings, and still think there's something greater out there for me? I mean, maybe a lot of people would say, "Hey man, this is what is." I reached my goal, my dream, my life. Me, I think … it's gotta be more than this. I mean this can't be what it's all cracked up to be. I mean I've done it. I'm 27. And what else is there for me? … I wish I knew. I wish I knew. I mean I think that's part of me trying to go out and experience other things. I love playing football, and I love being a quarterback for this team, but, at the same time, I think there's a lot of other parts about me that I'm trying to find.[1]

Tom Brady's experience recalls the popular U2 song: "I still haven't found what I'm looking for." This is something we all can relate to. No matter what good things we might experience in life — a great group of friends, a successful final grade, a profitable work project, a spouse, a great movie, our team winning the championship, a hard-earned vacation — after a while, we discover that none of these things fully satisfy us. We still long for something more. Ultimately, everyone is looking for happiness that is deep and that lasts.

In the biblical passage we'll look at today, Jesus has a conversation with a woman from Samaria. As we witness their encounter, we'll discover Jesus' response to her desire (and ours) for something more.

DISCUSS

Have you ever achieved or received something you thought would satisfy you and found that it didn't? How did you respond?

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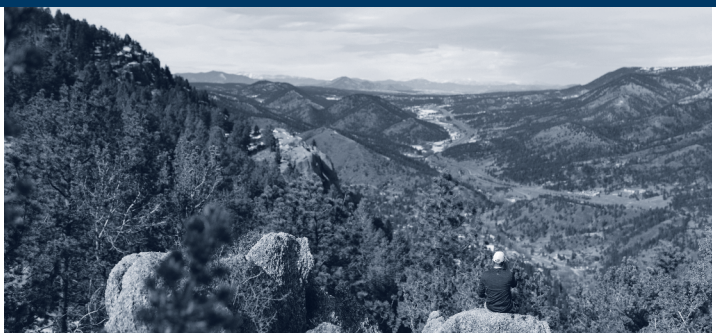

GIVE ME A DRINK (JOHN 4:7–9)

The Gospel of John tells of a woman who, like many people today, was searching for something more in life. Let's read the start of that story in John 4:7–9:

> So he came to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and so Jesus, wearied as he was with his journey, sat down beside the well. It was about the sixth hour [noon].
>
> There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.

DISCUSS

This biblical passage draws attention to Jesus talking to a woman of Samaria*. Why do you think this is significant?*

The fact that Jesus spoke to this woman from Samaria would have been shocking in the first-century Jewish world. Jews and Samaritans did not get along. Imagine a big, ugly family feud, carried out over

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the course of dozens of generations and hundreds of years. The gist of the falling-out was this: The Samaritans and Jews both used to be part of the one Kingdom of Israel, but through civil war and exile, they were separated. As a result, they hated each other and tried not to interact with one another. Samaritans also intermarried with pagan nations and started worshiping pagan gods (2 Kgs 17:24–31). As a result, they were viewed with disdain by the Jews.

LIVING WATER (JOHN 4:10–15)

Let's continue the story in John 4:10–15:

> Jesus answered her, "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." The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?"
>
> Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw."

DISCUSS

Both Jesus and the woman use the word "water," but they seem to be talking about two different kinds *of water. What kind of water is the woman looking for? What do you think Jesus might be talking about when he speaks of "living water"?*

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Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever dinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst.

— John 4:13–14

The woman is looking for water from the well — i.e., ordinary water for drinking. She is understandably puzzled about how Jesus could provide the water from the well since he has "nothing to draw with, and the well is deep" (Jn 4:11). She seems a bit suspicious of his claim to be able to provide her with water.

As the conversation moves on, however, she becomes more curious, intrigued that Jesus somehow might be able to provide her a never-ending water source. She says, "Sir, give me this water ..." — but she still thinks of this water as merely drinking water from the well: "... that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw" (Jn 4:15).

In the Bible, water is a symbol of new life, spiritual life, and God coming to bring healing and forgiveness of sins. In Ezekiel 47, for example, waters pour out of the temple to bring life and healing to trees, fruit, and fish of every kind (Ez 47:7–12). In other passages, God himself is described as a fountain of living water (Jer 2:13; 17:13). When Jesus describes himself offering "living water," he's portraying himself as the living water of God: the water that brings life, healing, and forgiveness. Jesus is the one who quenches our deepest thirsts, which nothing in this world can fulfill — thirsts that ultimately are for God.

DISCUSS

Jesus is using the image of water to describe our deep human thirsts. What do you think people are thirsting for today? And what do people often turn toward to try to satisfy this thirst?

People today are thirsting for meaning and purpose. They long to be known. They yearn for acceptance, respect, friendship, and love. Ultimately, even if they don't realize it, they desire a happiness which can only be found in God.

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To satisfy their thirsts, however, people try turning to things like success, wealth, status, or sex, which can never bring lasting happiness. They ignore the deeper longings of their hearts, distracting themselves with incessant noise, activity, busyness, and entertainment. They amuse themselves with social media, shows, and screens. They do everything they can to avoid being alone in the silence of their hearts and the stillness of their souls. But none of these approaches can satisfy the deepest thirsts of the human heart, which only leave us with emptiness, restlessness, and a yearning for something more. As St. Augustine once said, "You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you."[2]

"I HAVE NO HUSBAND" (JOHN 4:16–19)

Read John 4:16–19:

> Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband; this you said truly." The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet."

DISCUSS

How has the woman been seeking to quench her deep thirst? How's that been going for her?

Like some people today, this particular woman has been seeking to fulfill her deepest desires, her thirsts, in a series of failed romantic relationships. Jesus already knows her heart-wrenching story of going from one man to the next; he also points out that the man she's with now is not truly committed to her either: "He whom you now have is not your husband" (Jn 4:18).

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Having her life story told to her by Jesus, the woman starts to see something more in him. She realizes Jesus is no ordinary man. He is the prophet sent from God (Dt 18:15).

DISCUSS

What do you think it's like to be this Samaritan woman? What do you think she's thinking at this moment in John's Gospel?

It's likely that this woman already was an outcast in her community. The fact that she comes to the well at "the sixth hour" (Jn 4:6) — which is noon, according to the ancient Jewish way of keeping time — is telling. This is not the normal time for women to be dragging their jugs to the well to fill them with water; that would normally be done in the early morning or evening when it was cooler. At those times, the women of the village would come together and socialize. The fact that this particular woman comes to the well at high noon, in the heat of the day, suggests that she has been ostracized by her community and that she is too ashamed to come out when others are there.

As a result, she probably felt very alone, forgotten, and abandoned. Then, think about how she might have felt to have Jesus bring her sad life out into the open. That might have only added to her feelings of embarrassment, guilt, shame, despair, and worthlessness.

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But that's not what happens. Jesus doesn't condemn her. He wants to offer her a fresh start in life. He gently points out her misdirected desires and lovingly offers her a better way. His point is this: God is the only one who can fill our need for love, even though we often chase other things to fill this void. Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman symbolizes this dynamic. Jesus is revealed as the one who will fulfill the deepest thirst of our hearts: our thirst for God.

In the end, the woman seems to feel loved and cared for by Jesus. She perceives Jesus is the great prophet sent by God (Dt 18:15). And, as we will see next, she goes on to joyously tell others about Jesus.

LEAVING THE JAR BEHIND (JOHN 4:25–30)

Read John 4:25–30:

> The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ); when he comes, he will show us all things." Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."
>
> Just then his disciples came. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but none said, "What do you wish?" or, "Why are you talking with her?" So the woman left her water jar, and went away into the city, and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?"

Christians throughout the centuries have seen profound symbolism in the woman leaving her jar behind. She came to the well with her jar, hoping to fill it with water from the well. She leaves the well with something so much greater, having encountered Jesus Christ, the

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living water who fulfills our deepest thirsts. Leaving her jar behind symbolizes that she is giving up her old life and her pursuit of earthly things to fulfill her heart's desires.

DISCUSS

Put yourself in the shoes of the Samaritan woman. What "water jugs" do you think God wants you to leave behind to make more room for those things which truly satisfy?

For additional insights into this passage, see the "Additional Background" Supplemental Resource on the next page.

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCE:

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1.0 SOMETHING MORE

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND

Symbolism of the Well (Jn 4:7–9)

In the Bible, the well is a place where many of Israel's ancient leaders found their wives: Isaac's wife Rebecca (Gn 24:11); Jacob's wife Rachel (Gn 29:2) and Moses' wife Zipporah (Ex 2:15). Now Jesus meets a Samaritan woman at the well. However, instead of marriage as we usually think of it, Jesus is setting the stage for a relationship with him that is even more profound.

Symbolism of the Five Husbands (Jn 4:16–19)

The fact that the woman has been married to five men is very significant.

The Samaritans intermarried with five foreign nations. These nations introduced their own gods; the main one was Baal, which, in Hebrew, can mean "lord" or even "husband." When the Samaritans intermarried, they also accepted these foreign gods of the pagan nations around them, spurning their relationship with the one true God himself, their true husband.

Throughout the Old Testament, when the Israelites worship foreign gods, it is considered an act of covenant infidelity. The prophets even compared it to adultery. This was a fitting description because "God's relationship with Israel was likened to the kind of intimate union that exists between a husband and a wife: God was the bridegroom and Israel was the Bride. The Samaritans' unfaithfulness to the covenant and their worshiping of other gods was, according to the prophets, similar to the infidelity of a spouse."[3]

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But the prophets foretold that, one day, God would come back to Samaria as a bridegroom. Despite Samaria's infidelities, the Lord, the divine bridegroom, would come to his spouse again, speak to her in love, and call her back into relationship. God foretold this in the Book of Hosea: "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her ... For I will remove the names of the Ba'als from her mouth, and they shall be mentioned no more. And I will make for you a covenant ... And I will betroth you to me forever" (Hos 2:14, 17–20).

Now, centuries later, Jesus comes to this woman of Samaria and fulfills this prophecy. He is the divine bridegroom coming to reunite the Samaritan people to himself. Two facts support this: First, Jesus is explicitly called the "bridegroom" by John the Baptist (Jn 3:29–30). Second, Jesus meets her at a well, which in Scripture has important marital symbolism. Now Jesus, who already is called the "bridegroom," meets a Samaritan woman not in any ordinary location but specifically *at a well*.

> As we listen to their conversation, we discover that the Samaritan woman has had a heart-wrenching life — one that actually embodies the disastrous history of her nation. She has suffered through the misery of marital infidelity. Like Samaria, she had been an adulterous wife; she yoked herself to five different men, just as Samaria had yoked itself to five foreign nations and their idolatrous practices (2 Kgs 17:29–34). Her life, therefore, is an icon of the covenant infidelity of Israel that Hosea had condemned.
>
> But now, Jesus tenderly approaches her as the divine bridegroom seeking out unfaithful Samaria to woo her back into covenant union, just as Hosea prophesied. He speaks gently to her and extends his loving mercy. As the ever-faithful husband, Jesus does not reject her but invites her to return to God's kingdom.[4]

God's point is this: He is the only one who can fill our need for love, yet we continue to chase other things to fill this void. Jesus and the

Samaritan woman symbolize this dynamic. Jesus comes as the true husband to this Samaritan woman, the Samaritan people — and the world.

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[1] Tom Brady, "Transcript: Tom Brady, Part 3," interview by Steve Kroft, *60 Minutes*. November 4, 2005. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/transcript-tom-brady-part-3/.

[2] Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. John K. Ryan (New York: Image, 1960), I.i.1.

[3] Curtis Martin and Edward Sri, *The Real Story: Understanding the Big Picture of the Bible* (Hebron, KY: Dynamic Catholic, 2012), 139.

[4] Ibid., 141 – 42.