

**Beyond The Doors: Sharing a Life
That Really Matters
“The Door of Conversation”
John 4:3-15**

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There is an old story about Christopher Columbus who was discouraged one day as he walked by a monastery. The great explorer was also thirsty, so he went in the monastery and asked for a drink. As he was being refreshed with a drink of water, an old monk listened to Christopher's dream of sailing the seas to find another land. Christopher finished his story, along with his water, and went his way. But that old monk happened to be a friend of Queen Isabella. He convinced her to finance Columbus on the expedition. The discovery of America may have started with a drink of water in a monastery.

I guess it is safe to say, no one knows what potential a conversation holds over a cup of coffee at a local watering hole. At least that is true for an unnamed woman from the little town of Sychar in central Samaria. One of the longest dialogues in the gospels is held between Jesus and this woman he met at the town well. Come let us listen in.

THE CONVERSATION IS ABOUT A WISH

Jesus is thirsty. It is high noon in Palestine. The sun is hot. The disciples have gone into town to buy food when Jesus encounters this woman at the well and asks for a drink. Suddenly we are drawn into a dialogue with all kinds of wishes and deep kinds of thirst. Jesus is thirsty. But so is the woman. Jesus had no bucket to draw from the well. The woman had spiritual thirsts and no one to tell. Jesus and the woman meet at the point of neediness. Soon we are carried into a conversation about spiritual water that quenches life's deepest thirst.

Like the woman at the well, we are seeking
For things that cannot satisfy
And then we hear our Savior speaking
Draw from the well that never shall run dry.

Fill my cup, Lord, I lift it up, Lord.
Come and quench this thirsting of my soul.
Bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more;
Fill my cup, fill it up and make me whole.

The Psalmist said, *“As a deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for you, O God.”* Jesus said, *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be satisfied.”*

What were the wishes the woman brought to the well that day? She was wishing for respect. *“Go call your husband,”* said Jesus. *“I have no husband,”* replied the woman. *“You are right,”* said Jesus, *“The fact is that you have had five husbands and the man you now have is not your husband.”* Almost all of us in the West condemn the woman for her loose morals and dysfunctional life style. Little do we know, in the Middle East divorce was a man’s prerogative. Maybe she was a poor cook. Maybe he found another woman. How many times can a person be rejected and still maintain their self esteem?

In George Bernard Shaw’s, Pygmalion, Henry Higgins and Colonel Pickering set out to change Eliza Doolittle from a flower peddler to a duchess. Eventually Eliza says, *“The difference between a lady and a flower girl is how she is treated.”*

Some of you have not been treated very well. Your parents neglected you. Your spouse abused you. Your boss harassed you. It is hard for you to respect yourself. Like the woman at the well, you are thirsty today, deeply longing for a better way.

SHE WAS WISHING FOR MEANING

How many trips can one make to the well with a water pot and still find it meaningful? Where is the life we have lost in living? What dreams have died in the dailyness of life? What ruts have we dug with the routine?

Tony Campolo said, "There is a latent desire in every human being to do something of worth that will have lasting significance." There is a longing in most people to do something that will make life better for others. Fifty people over the age of ninety were asked, "If you could live your life over, what would you do differently?" The three things most said were: I would reflect more, I would risk more, and I would do more things that would live on after I am dead.

SHE WAS WISHING FOR GRACE

Could we start again, please? Could we start again? Do you ever feel like that? Do you ever long for a second chance? Would you like to keep coming back until you get it right?

Wayne Oates says America's obsession with game shows, casinos, state lotteries, and charitable gambling is a secular quest for grace. We want more than we have. We deserve better than we get. So we hope against lightening that we will be lucky. We cannot find in wishing wells the grace we deserve in times of need. It takes living water to quench our spiritual thirsts. That is what Jesus offers.

THE CONVERSATION IS ABOUT A WELL

At the Living Well the water is plentiful. Where I came from there were cisterns and there were wells. Cisterns collected rain water for the needs of the day. Wells were fed from underground springs. Both worked fine until the rain stopped and the droughts came. Cisterns ran dry. Wells kept up the supply.

Jesus 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.*" Water is a

biblical symbol of God's grace. By the waters of baptism we are claimed and cleansed. By the waters of life we are called to discipleship. By the streams of mercy we are refreshed for the day. God's grace is sufficient for every need.

All the way my Savior leads me,
Cheers each winding path I tread,
Gives me grace for every trial,
Feeds me with the living bread.
Though my weary steps may falter
And my soul a thirst may be,
Gushing from the rock before me,
Lo, a spring of joy I see.

A person was seen fooling with a water fountain at an amusement park. It had no tap. It had no button. It had no foot pedal. Frustrated and helpless the person just stood there until somebody pointed to a sign which read: "Just stoop and drink; the sensors will do the rest."

When it comes to God's amazing grace, we best stoop and drink, and let God do the rest. At the Living Well, barriers are broken. It was a long leap for Jesus to talk to the Samaritan woman. He had to cut across race, religion, sex, culture. The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. Jewish men thanked God every morning they were not born a woman. Jesus worshiped at Jerusalem. The woman worshiped at Mt. Gerizim.

Paul says in Galatians 3:28, "*There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*" We are a greatly divided country, and a deeply divided Church. We are straight and gay, conservative and liberal, North and South, East and West, black and white and Hispanic, Christian, Muslim and Jews. Will we continue to choose up sides and yell at each other or will we find the grace to sit down at a common table for the good of all? Can we find the grace to live together as God's people before we perish apart as fools? When Methodists meet in

May, where three rivers merge in Pittsburgh, will we step into one stream of Christ's mercy or continue our conflicts toward the destruction of the Church? Can we find a meeting place at the well of God's grace?

THE CONVERSATION IS ABOUT A WITNESS

Verse 28 – *Then, the woman left her water jar and went back to the city saying to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Is he not the Messiah?"*

As Jim Moore tells the story, a man accused of some wrongdoing was brought before the judge. When the judge asked if he had an attorney to represent him, the man said, "No, I can't afford one." The judge replied, "Well, don't worry about that, I'll appoint a lawyer to represent you and I'll choose a real good one." "I appreciate that, judge," the man replied, "but if you really want to appoint somebody to help me, what I need most is not a real good lawyer but several good witnesses."

What God needs the most are several good witnesses. A witness is intent on telling what they have seen and heard and experienced to be true. Would you be a witness for our Lord? The woman at the well did not know the Apostles Creed and could not recite the four spiritual laws. But she had a first-hand experience with Jesus Christ that she was determined to share with others.

A businessman went to a Billy Graham Crusade and went forward to accept Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. The next Sunday he attended a church nearby and ran into a business associate he had known for 25 years. As they discussed the man's new found faith, he inquires of his friend, "Have you known Christ as your Savior for all these years?" "Yes I have," said the friend. "Then why didn't you ever mention it?" asked the man.

We've a story to tell to the nations,
that shall turn their hearts to the right,

a story of truth and mercy,
a story of peace and light.

We've a message to give to the nations,
that the Lord who reigneth above
hath sent us his Son to save us,
and show us that God is love.

Let those who know tell those who don't that the world may
realize that Christ is Lord.

Amen.

Sharing a Life with Christ
The Door of Conversion

John 3:16-18

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