

Shaping Holy Hearts, Fill 'er up . . . with premium
Read John 4:4-42

Garbage in, garbage out.

My Mom used to say that all the time, protecting our minds from the junk in the world. I was never allowed to see R-rated movies, which really became a problem when Saturday Night Fever came out. All of my friends saw it, but I wasn't allowed. It was rated R, so she wouldn't even consider it. Then it came out in a PG version, so I got to see it. I loved the dancing, but the story really bothered me, it was a dark chronicle. My parents sheltered me from all darkness, and while this movie was fun in its dancing, the storyline was murky and sad. To this day, I don't like dark movies, books, or tv shows.

When my brain was forming, I only put good, wholesome things into it, even in the entertainment I watched. So when I first saw dark entertainment, my mind rejected it. I guess you could say I was wired with happy, rose-colored glasses.

The Samaritan woman had a tough life. She was an outcast, uneducated, despised, and immoral. While we don't know much about her young life, her adult life was bleak. She probably felt little hope for a better life.

Make no mistake; this is a divine appointment. Jesus sent His disciples away because He knew they would disapprove. Jesus is weary, yet he goes to this well in the heat of the day. He even asks to share her cup, an unheard-of act for a Jewish man, for it would make him unclean in that culture. he couldn't fathom that he would want to do that and said so. (John 4:1-9)

Jesus meets this woman right where she is. He knows what she needs and uses that to pique her interest.

“Jesus answered, ‘if you knew the gift of God, and who is saying to you ‘give me a drink,’ you would ask him, and he would give it to you.” (John 4:10) It's like a puzzle, but the Samaritan woman is missing some pieces. I'm sure she is asking herself; who is this man? What is this gift of God? And what the heck is this living water?

Jesus uses her most urgent physical need, water, to introduce her to her most crucial spiritual need, the Spirit or living water. He points out her ignorance to three important facts; who he was, what he had to offer, and how to receive it. To get this living water she needs to:

Know it's free gift (eternal life)

Know Jesus

Ask Jesus for it

But she still doesn't get it. (John 4:10-15)

I recently started a new job. For years, I have been in aging services. I know the language and the slang for that genre. Now I am working in a new environment, and I don't know any of that. I sit in meetings, sometimes wondering what in the world they are talking about. I didn't have all the pieces of this language puzzle to assemble a complete picture. Yesterday, my boss sent me a cheat sheet to fill in the pieces I didn't know. Now I can see how all the parts work together.

The Samaritan woman is about to get more pieces of the puzzle. Jesus' willingness to drink from the cup opens the door for Him to reach her spiritually and address her sin. Jesus personalizes the living water ideology by asking for her husband, knowing this will lead her to her sin. Like many of us at one time or another, she deflects the hard stuff and focuses again on who the heck this guy is. In His never-ending patience and grace, Jesus shares with her that the things she worries about aren't necessary. Where worship takes place on earth won't matter in heaven, salvation comes through the Messiah only, and she just met Him. (John 4:16-26)

Garbage in, garbage out.

The Samaritan woman's heart and mind were running on empty. This despised and broken woman now has the information she needs to fill her heart up.

What we put into our hearts and minds matters. What we cherish and spend our time on shows in how we live our lives. (Proverbs 4:23)

What a heart change! Jesus met this woman where she was, but she left the encounter better. This woman couldn't wait to tell other Samaritans about Jesus. He filled this snarky, broken woman's heart and mind with the premium ideology she needed for healing, for her salvation. Everything else became insignificant.

This week's challenge. Find one way to change what you put into your heart and mind that will allow you to live an abundant life.

Prayer - Thank you Abba, for meeting us where we are! Your love for us, your patience with us, and your desire to be with us is a fantastic gift! Open our hearts and minds to your premium Lord, don't let us be empty or, worse, filled with the wrong things. In Jesus name, Amen.

How do you like to spend your time? Write your five favorite ways to spend your downtime.

How do these affect the way you live your life? Do they fill you with peace? Strength? Compassion? Love? Something else?

Is there something you can take off that list or add to that list that will fill you up with Jesus? Knowing Him better?

Dive deeper,

What is the significance of where the Jews and Samaritans worship?

Read John 4:21-26

Who wouldn't rather talk about religion than dive into our sins? (John 4:17-19) Or could it be that she was just thoroughly confused by "right and wrong" within each culture and was desperate for answers?

There are so many schools of thought in Christianity today;

We must lead with repentance; how will they ever get to heaven if they don't know about their sin?

If you don't know the Spirit intimately, you're sunk.

The Bible isn't real; it's a story with advice.

You are not saved unless you speak in tongues.

The Bible is old and not relevant to our times.

Love, just love, the rest will take care of itself.

And on and on and on.

Have you ever just thrown up your hands and said, "I'm out! I don't understand what any of this means. Who's right? Who's wrong? Where are the answers? There appear to be so many opinions, and too many choices. What is the truth?"

The Samaritan woman wasn't sure who to worship, how to worship or where to worship. There was so much animosity between the Jews and Samaritans, but did she even know why?

The Samaritans were of mixed heritage; they married other ethnicities that worshiped idol gods. They violently opposed the Cyrus restoration. And they built their own counterfeit temple. A long and complicated history divided the two groups at every turn.

She probably knew that the Jews were God's chosen people, but Samaritans started out as Jews. I wonder if she was asking where we stand in this mess. Whose worship is "real."

Jesus explains to her that Truth trumps race and culture. A day is coming soon that the place of worship will be irrelevant. This would be a harsh fact to absorb because the temple for both cultures was significant. But Jesus tells her that God is simply looking for those who worship Him in Spirit and truth. (John 4: 21-24)

This is such a new concept that I don't think she has grasped it yet. But we see a sliver of faith when she says, "I know the Messiah is coming. He will explain everything." (John 4:25) When Jesus tells her He is who she's waiting for, she runs home. The woman has forgotten all about the physical water she came for. She has the living water and wants to share it with her people. She's filled up with premium now.