

Excerpt from  
*Changed by Jesus*

## WOMAN AT THE WELL

### Day 1: An Outcast

CHANGED BY ACCEPTANCE AND LOVE

Have you ever felt like an outcast? Moving to a new school or a new city can make someone feel like an outcast. When I was freshman in High School I transferred to a small private school. I was the outsider. I still remember the feelings of wanting to fit in and hoping someone would talk to me. As an adult, moving to new cities and new churches have produced similar feelings - an outsider, hoping someone welcomes me. Eventually, in high school and in new cities, I made new friends and was accepted. Some people have been outsiders, outcasts, much of their lives, feeling unloved and not being accepted.

Jesus loved the outcast. Throughout His ministry He reached out to those shunned by society. When Jesus chose to go to a region of outcasts, Samaria, and associate with a woman who was an outcast among outcasts, His message changed her life.

GOING TO THE SOURCE FOR CHANGE

Read John 4:1-6.

Jesus had been teaching in Judea but eventually grew frustrated at the opposition, so He left the region and went to Galilee. In order to reach Galilee from Judea, Jesus and His disciples had a choice to make. They could either travel around Samaria and avoid any contact with Samaritans, or they could go the most direct route and travel through Samaria. John 4:4 says that Jesus “had to go through Samaria.”

Why was it surprising that Jesus would leave Judea and go to Samaria?

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Jesus' mission took Him through Samaria because there were people in Samaria searching for the Messiah. Jesus left His own people, Jews, to go teach people whose hearts were ready to receive Him.

What was so bad about Samaritans? Why did Jews not associate with Samaritans? Hundreds of years before Jesus, the Israelites were taken into captivity by the Assyrians because of their disobedience.

What does 2 Kings 17:24 say the King of Assyria did in some of the northern cities?

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In the days of Nehemiah, after the return of some Israelites, some Israelites intermarried with Assyrians. This story in 2 Kings tells of the Lord sending lions into their land because they did not worship Him. When a priest was sent to teach them about the Lord they adopted some of the Jewish religion while worshipping other gods as well.

Who does 2 Kings 17:33 say they worshipped? \_\_\_\_\_

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By Jesus' time the Jews had grown to despise the Samaritans because of their ancestry and their distorted religious practices.

The fact that Jesus chose to travel through Samaria was hard for some Jews to accept. In his commentary on John, John MacArthur says, "The road through Samaria was shorter. . . .But so great was their disdain for the Samaritans that the stricter Jews avoided traveling through Samaria altogether."<sup>i</sup>

According to the Jews, there were three reasons that Jesus should have never spoken to this woman: she was a Samaritan, she was a woman, and she was immoral.

Read John 4:7-9.

According to John 4:6, what time of day did the Samaritan woman go to the well?

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According to the Hebrew clock, the sixth hour was noon. Women typically went to get their daily water when it was cooler, either early morning or evening.

Why do you think this woman went to the well at a different time than most women?

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Can you imagine getting water as a social occasion for the village women? It was a good time to catch up on local gossip and share news about the community. Women walked together and caught up on the day's events. They met at the well and talked about their children and their husbands. Like many outcasts, this woman understood that she was not accepted by others so she avoided them.

Can you relate? Have you ever gone out of your way to avoid someone? What were some of your reasons for doing so?

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From what she told Jesus, maybe she was shunned because of her lifestyle. She was living with a man who was not her husband and she had been married five times.

If you knew this woman's background what would you have thought about her?

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Even today, this woman would probably be treated as an outcast because of her lifestyle. To make her situation even worse, this woman was an outcast even among the outcasts. Her people, the Samaritans, were despised by Jews and she, an immoral woman, was despised by Samaritans.

Our culture often treats the poor and the homeless as outcasts. Sometimes the handicapped are treated as outcasts, as well. Women who do not have children may feel like outcasts among women who have children. Divorced and single women may feel like outcasts among couples. Women who struggle with depression or an illness may be treated as outcasts by those who do not understand their situation. Differences in religion makes many people feel like outcasts. Others may be treated as outcasts by their family, by coworkers, in their neighborhood, and even by Christians.

Write about a time when you felt like an outcast.

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Write three words that describe the feelings of an outcast.

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Jesus did not let society tell Him who He could or could not associate with. **While society loves to tell us who we can or cannot associate with, God looks at people differently. God loves the unlovable.** God's love reaches to those who do not feel loved. Jesus saw past the rejection and He loved the outcast.

What was the Samaritan woman's reaction when Jesus asked her for a drink of water?

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In Jesus' day, a man would never speak to a woman in public who he did not know. By speaking to a woman, a rabbi could give the impression that he was flirting with her. "A man in the Jewish world did not normally talk with a woman in public, even with his own wife. For a rabbi to discuss theology with a woman was yet more unconventional."<sup>ii</sup>

The immoral life that this woman led was another reason for Jesus not to speak to her. The Jewish leaders taught that not only was she unclean but whatever she

touched was unclean as well. For Jesus to consider drinking out of her water jug was unthinkable.

What barriers did Jesus break down when He spoke to the Samaritan woman?

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According to Galatians 3:28 what other barriers did Jesus tear down?

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Why is this important information for Christians today?

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#### LIVING CHANGED LIVES

Who are some of the outcasts in our society?

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As Christians who have been changed by Jesus, it is our responsibility to reach out to the outcasts. **We are called to love those who have been rejected by the world, or their family, or even their church.**

When have you reached out to the outcast?

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How can you reach out to the outcast?

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While the world may reject outcasts and even Christians may reject outcasts, Jesus came to this world to reach out to them. The woman at the well was changed because the Son of God loved her enough to reach out to her.

You may feel that you are an outcast who has been rejected by the world, or your family, or even Christians, but Jesus came to this world to reach out to the outcasts.

His love changed an immoral, Samaritan woman. His love can change all of us.

## Woman at the Well

### Day 2: An Outcast's Story

*I was so lonely. Most of my life I have been rejected. My family has rejected me. Other women would never consider accepting me. The men in my life have never loved me.*

*My greatest desire is to be loved and accepted, and I have always been rejected.*

*I hated going to get water. Other women went to the well for their social time. It was a time for them to spend with friends. I had learned years ago that it was better if I went to the well when no one else was there. I hated that women talked about me but more than that, I hated being ignored.*

*Being lonely makes you question a lot of things. Why was I here? Would it matter to anyone if I was not here? Did my life matter? The day I met Jesus, I was seeking answers in my life.*

*As I was coming up the road I saw a man sitting beside the well. My first thought was relief that it was not a woman. The closer I got I realized that this man was a Jew. I assumed that he would ignore me just like everyone else. Jews rarely traveled through these parts and if they did they would not want to drink our water.*

*Immediately I knew this man was different because he asked me for a drink. Jews claimed that drinking our water would make them unclean. When he asked me for water I was so stunned that I asked him why he was speaking to me.*

*I had known many men, but this man was different. I have been an outcast most of my life but for some reason this man wanted to talk to me. As we talked I began to realize that this man cared about me. Why would he care about me, a dirty Samaritan woman? I wanted to know more about this man.*

#### LIVING CHANGED LIVES

Put yourself in this woman's place. Was she happy? Did she have a good life?

Explain your answer. In what ways can you relate to this woman?

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Jesus loves the outcast. Sometimes that is hard for us to understand. When we feel like we are not loved by others our natural reaction is to wonder how God could love us.

Have you ever wondered if God loves you? Why or why not?

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Have you ever had questions about your life? Have you ever wondered why you were here? If you have, then you have a heart ready to receive Jesus. This woman was a seeker and that is why Jesus came to her.

Write Jeremiah 29:13.

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Are you a seeker? In what ways? If you already know Jesus, are you continuing to search for His will? How are you doing this?

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<sup>i</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary John 1-11* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2006), 141.

<sup>ii</sup> Evelyn Stagg and Frank Stagg, *Woman in the World of Jesus* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978), 116.