

1.3

WATER FROM THE WELL

LESSON BIG IDEA

I will show mercy and share God's love with those who have made life-altering mistakes.

FOCUS VERSES

John 4:13-14

¹³ Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

¹⁴ But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

LESSON TEXT

John 4:5-42

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God will share living water with anyone who comes to the well.



Thinking about Last Week:

Have students refer to their Daily Devotional Guide to answer the following questions:

1. What most affected you as you read through the Bible Reading Plan, the Lesson Text, and the Biblical Insights?
2. How did it shape your prayers and thoughts throughout the week?
3. Do you feel you grew closer to the Lord this past week? Why or why not?

LESSON CONNECTION I

Carl sort of stood out the first time he walked into our church. His polo shirt—which may have been his nicest—had certainly seen better days. He sported cargo shorts and well-worn tennis shoes. His shaved head, face, and hands all bore scars that told many stories, some too horrific for public consumption. He shuffled through the main doors and shook the greeter’s hand. Carl chose to sit on the back row closest to the door in case he needed to make a quick exit. He came by invitation of a lady in the church whom he barely knew. But there he was, not knowing what to expect.

Teacher Option:
Show Image to help illustrate the Lesson Connection.



Little did Carl know that sitting near the door would guarantee everyone in the church would see him as they came in. One by one they approached him and excitedly shook his hand. “So glad you’re here,” one said. “Thank you for coming; you’re going to love it!” another promised. The pastor, assistant pastor, and a slew of other ministry leaders introduced themselves. Carl couldn’t understand it. *If only they knew*, he thought to himself. As soon as service was over, Carl made a beeline for his truck and scooted out of the parking lot.

However, something about the warmth of the congregation made him come back again the next week. The second service was not much different than the first—cargo shorts, back row, and lots of love and handshakes. After the service, Carl once again rushed out to his vehicle, but as he started the engine, something caught his eye. One of the church elders, Sister McGrady, was hurrying down the steps of the church, waving at him, yelling, and asking him to wait.

Carl was shocked. This lady was obviously in her 70s and couldn’t walk well. The steps were clearly causing her trouble as she clung desperately to the rail for balance. When Sister McGrady finally got to Carl’s truck, she gripped the side mirror for balance and support as she caught her breath. “Carl,” she said, “I didn’t get a chance to shake your hand today and wanted to tell you that we love having you here. You don’t need to feel like you have to run off after church. We all have a past here. We love you and just want the best for you.”

Carl was dumbfounded. After a few seconds, he mumbled some words of thanks and then sped away from the church. He pulled over into an empty restaurant parking lot not too far from the church and wept. No one had ever said anything like that to him before. No one had ever shown him that type of love and compassion. And it wouldn’t be the last time.

Shortly after this interaction, someone started giving Carl a Bible study and discovered his past. He had lived a life of drugs, involving both using and dealing. Carl had experienced gang fights and trauma that left his body scarred and left him feeling irredeemable. However, because a handful of people in a small Pentecostal church looked beyond his past, loved him unconditionally, and envisioned what he could become, Carl found a new home and became a new creature in Christ. Within a couple months, he was baptized in Jesus’ name and filled with the Holy Spirit.

SG TEACHING OUTLINE

Icebreaker: What does it feel like to watch someone get baptized in Jesus' name or filled with the Holy Ghost?

Lesson Connection: Share the Lesson Connection on page 371. **I**

I. JESUS WENT THROUGH SAMARIA

A. Jacob's Well

» *What testimonies do you have of God's reconciling and redeeming work? What altars or monuments have you created to remember those instances?*

B. The Woman Went to the Well

C. Jesus Respected the Woman by Engaging Her in Conversation

D. The Woman Was Ashamed, but Jesus Was Not Ashamed of Her

» *How can we be faithful, loving witnesses to people who have made major, life-altering mistakes, while also protecting ourselves and our reputations?*

E. We Must Be Compassionate Like Jesus

II. JESUS OFFERED LIVING WATER

» *What are some non-Christian "spiritual wells" in this world that people keep turning to? Is there a well you used to draw water from? How can we reach people who have been deceived in such a manner? **V***

A. Jesus Was the Well from Which the Woman Could Drink

B. God Will Share Living Water with Anyone Who Comes to the Well

» *What are some extreme situations and circumstances God saved you from? Share your testimony with the group.*

C. I Will Show Mercy and Share God's Love with People Who Have Made Life-Altering Mistakes

» *What are some of the things you are already doing to share God's living water with people? What more do you feel you could do?*

Internalizing the Message

Prayer Focus

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- That we would be led to minister to people whose lives are messed up
- Thanking God for the mercy and grace He has shown to us

LESSON COMMENTARY

I. JESUS WENT THROUGH SAMARIA

Jesus knew what He was doing when He chose to go through Samaria, even though His disciples did not. Jews and Samaritans did not like or trust each other. Samaritans considered Jews to be snobby and elitist, while Jews considered Samaritans to be unequal because of their ancestry. However, Jesus had a plan to tear down all the hatred that existed between these two people groups by offering His love and salvation to both. Jesus revealed who He was directly to the Samaritan people. This is the way Jesus operates in our lives today. He comes to us and meets us where we are.

A. Jacob's Well

Although the Old Testament does not specifically mention Jacob's well by name, Genesis 33:18-20 records that Jacob purchased a piece of land and constructed an altar, which he called "El-elohe-Israel," which literally means "God, the God of Israel." This happened immediately following Jacob's reunion with Esau after many years of separation. Scholars believe this is the precise location where Jacob constructed the well.

Similar to Jacob and Esau's estrangement, the Samaritans had experienced a long separation from the greater mainstream of Jewish Israel. But just like Esau and Jacob were able to experience reconciliation, so Jesus came near Sychar in Samaria to reconcile a lonely Samaritan woman and many others to Himself. Jesus is still doing this same reconciliatory work today. He still has the power to bring the lost back to Him, regardless of how long they have been away.

B. The Woman Went to the Well

The woman went to the well at the sixth hour—twelve noon. It was the hottest part of the day, and drawing water from a deep well was difficult, laborious work. The primary reason someone would do such a wearisome, sweaty task in the hottest part of the day would be to avoid other people. This woman probably went to the well at this time to avoid long stares and whispered conversations behind her back about her past. However, regardless of what experiences she had in the past at this well, on this day she would have a vastly different experience.

People who have made life-altering mistakes often avoid invasive questions. They avoid places and people where they know they will face embarrassment and confrontation. If people have been hurt by church members, they might be reluctant to darken the doors of a church, fearing they might once again experience embarrassment as in the past. The commission of Christians, therefore, is to go out and find these people and love them back into relationship with Jesus Christ. Just as the

What testimonies do you have of God's reconciling and redeeming work? What altars or monuments have you created to remember those instances?

Good Shepherd left the ninety-nine safe sheep and went into the dangerous woods to find the single straggler, so we must be confident enough to go into the highways and byways to find those who are embarrassed by their past mistakes.

C. Jesus Respected the Woman by Engaging Her in Conversation

While most Jews might not have even looked this Samaritan woman in the face, Jesus spoke directly to her with kindness and respect. He treated her as a person, which is more than most who knew her past would have done. Jesus did not treat her as anything less than one of His creation.

In a similar way, the church today should not avoid or treat harmfully anyone God sends into our path. Everyone who walks into our churches can tell stories of shame, pain, heartache, and sin, but Jesus Himself demonstrated that no sin in a person was so great that Jesus would not sit down and have a conversation with that individual. Similarly, we should be willing to look beyond each person's past and treat everyone with the same respect and dignity we would hope to be offered.

D. The Woman Was Ashamed, but Jesus Was Not Ashamed of Her

This woman had a lot to be ashamed of—her past seared her memories and her conscience, and she tried her best to avoid revealing what she had done. However, when Jesus finally revealed that He knew everything, He did not embarrass her or speak down to her. When the disciples returned and even when the townsfolk came to see Jesus, He did not hide the fact that He had spoken to her and ministered with compassion to her. Jesus did not care what people said about Him. All He knew was this woman needed the hope and salvation only He could offer.

Christians may worry about witnessing and reaching out to people with less than reputable pasts. Some may think they will be mocked or ridiculed because they are seen with people who curse, abuse substances, have been known to be sexually promiscuous, or have some great sins hanging over their lives. However, we should not be ashamed of being seen with these individuals, just as Jesus was not ashamed to be seen with the woman at Jacob's well. Obviously, Christians should exercise wisdom and caution. But if Christians avoid people with a past, how will they ever hear the message of Jesus, the water of life?

How can we be faithful, loving witnesses to people who have made major, life-altering mistakes, while also protecting ourselves and our reputations?

E. We Must Be Compassionate Like Jesus

Jesus provided a perfect example of how we can be loving, compassionate examples to people with disreputable pasts. Because of sin's pervasiveness, more and more people with life-altering mistakes in their past are coming into our churches. Their experiences may be vastly different from our own. Regardless, the love and compassion Christ has offered us is the same He is offering to them.

Many verses of Scripture give us the commandment to be like Christ in this regard. When Jesus washed His disciples' feet—a clear demonstration of love, compassion, and servitude—He told them, “Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you” (John 13:13-15).

This commandment to imitate Christ was taken seriously by His followers. Paul wrote in one place, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” (I Corinthians 11:1). Paul wrote in another place, “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour” (Ephesians 5:1-2). Part of walking in love as Christ walked in love is showing love and compassion even to the most undesirable in society.

II. JESUS OFFERED LIVING WATER

Sitting near a well, Jesus used an analogy that would be both relevant and universally understandable. Obviously, this was not the first time the woman had come to Jacob's well to draw water, nor would it be the last. Her physical thirst would inevitably return. However, Jesus offered an eternal solution to her spiritual thirst, another deficiency which constantly plagued her.

Just like for this woman, there is no shortage of spiritual thirst amongst people in this world. A quick glance at the Spirituality and Religion section at your local bookstore will prove this point. There is no shortage of self-help books, introductions to every belief system imaginable, and pages and pages of books promising lasting spiritual change. However, if these books worked in any type of enduring manner, the publishers might go out of business. Anyone who keeps going to those sources of water will surely thirst again. But anyone who comes to Jesus will find the only permanent thirst-quenching solution.

What are some non-Christian “spiritual wells” in this world that people keep turning to? Is there a well you used to draw water from? How can we reach people who have been deceived in such a manner? ▼

A. Jesus Was the Well from Which the Woman Could Drink

Jesus is the only well of eternal life. This is proven consistently throughout Scripture and echoed in other parts of John's Gospel. Jesus told a crowd gathered at a feast, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (John 7:37-38). He told another crowd, “He that believeth on me shall never thirst” (John 6:35). Jesus told many people about the living water that could only be found in Him.

Teacher Option:
Show Video to either take the place of the question or to help illustrate it.

When we share Christ with others, we can be confident we are giving them something that will last and will satisfy. If the water came from us, then we certainly should be worried. But if we connect people to the real source, then Jesus will make up the difference above and beyond anything we could ever hope to provide.

B. God Will Share Living Water with Anyone Who Comes to the Well

Jesus did not discriminate against this woman He met at Jacob's well, even though her past was certainly not ideal. Jesus also operates keenly and with intentionality. He knew by saving this woman, with all the problems in her past, her testimony would be effective to reach everyone in the entire area.

Jesus wanted to demonstrate at Jacob's well that the living water He offered was effective to save everyone, no matter how extreme a person's past. Similarly, when Jesus saved Saul—the domestic terrorist—Jesus demonstrated that His love could save anyone. He shared the living water with whosoever would come to Him and receive it.

What are some extreme situations and circumstances God saved you from? Share your testimony with the group.

C. I Will Show Mercy and Share God's Love with People Who Have Made Life-Altering Mistakes

Now is the time for us to be Christlike. Just as Christ was willing to share the living water with anyone, regardless of a person's past sin, we must be ready and willing to share it as well, regardless of the mistakes people have made in their past. Jesus is still calling for laborers to go into the fields and search for people who are ready to receive Him. Matthew 9:37–38 records what many people call Jesus' only prayer request. Jesus told His disciples, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest."

What are some of the things you are already doing to share God's living water with people? What more do you feel you could do?

A harvest can be backbreaking, uncomfortable, and laborious work. But the work put into the harvest is always worth it for the abundant bounty that is ultimately received. Similarly, the work we put in to share the gospel with everyone, regardless of a person's past, will always be worth it in the end. After all, if God could save me and you, He can save anyone.



INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

This is our challenge for today: if we are to be Christlike, then we must share the living water with people who have made life-altering mistakes. More and more people will walk into our churches from a myriad of backgrounds. We must remember Christ died for them just as much as He did for us. Though we may not know what is in someone's past, may we never forget where God brought us from. May we be compassionate and never condemn people because of where they are or have been. This is one of the reasons Paul wrote to the Corinthians. He wanted to remind them that even some of them had been promiscuous, idol worshipers, and abusive before God saved them. They had no right to pretend they got where they were by their own righteousness (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

Remember Sister McGrady, the elderly church lady who rushed out of the sanctuary to tell Carl, a drug addict and dealer, that he was loved and could be redeemed regardless of his past? At first glance, one might think that would be easy for the church matriarch to say. Sister McGrady appeared to be the image of holiness and godliness; most would only aspire to imitate someone like her. However, what you might not know is that fifty years earlier, God had saved Sister McGrady from a lifestyle of promiscuity and living in a brothel. To look at her after fifty years of salvation, one might not be able to imagine how God could have brought her that far. But Sister McGrady never forgot. And when Carl hurried through the back door of that church, Sister McGrady told herself once again, "If God could save me, He can save anyone." And she took it upon herself to share God's love one more time.

Will you join Sister McGrady in her desire and purpose to spread God's love, the same love you have received? Will you reach out to "the least of these" (Matthew 25:40) and spread the news of God's grace and mercy, which none of us deserve and yet all of us have a chance to receive? Will you pledge to look beyond someone's past and envision how God could transform that person? Let us all pray to be more like Christ in this regard.

