

## The Transformational Encounter

**State:** God's gift of Jesus is life-transforming for people of all cultures

**Text:** John 4: 16-26

*'He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." "I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true." "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."*

*"Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."*

*The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am He."*

**Explain:** Having made the offer of the gift of living water Jesus gently unveiled his knowledge of the Samaritan woman's past. In verses 16-18 Jesus reveals the extent of his knowledge of her story. He is already cognisant that she has had five husbands and the man she is now living with is not her husband. This is quite incredible.

The text does not tell us the story of each broken relationship though it is likely that in each case it was the men in her life that had broken off the marriages, as women had no cultural right to initiate divorce proceedings. What is clear though, that although the men in her life had chosen to repeatedly reject her she had ended up with another husband.

It is easy to read our own cultural context into the text and suggest she simply wanted to be loved by men, that she wanted a relationship with a person that could meet her deepest needs. Whilst this could be an aspect of her being married again and again, we also know a woman in her culture had no ability to work or make an income on her own. A husband not only represented the possibility of love, he would also represent the opportunity for an income, provision, a home, security and a place in society. Perhaps she married again and again in the thirst for all these things. But again and again she was left unsatisfied.

She most likely had suffered deep wounds as a result of sin – the sins of many men and her own. Her string of broken marriages, whether through divorce, abandonment, promiscuity or because her husbands had died, would have left a woman who was longing for her deepest soul-thirsts to be met with anything and anyone but God. As Jeremiah so aptly put it; *'she needed to stop digging her own broken cisterns that couldn't hold water and turn to the spring of living water.'* (Jeremiah 2:13) She needed to turn from them to Him.

With each divorce her position became more vulnerable and her social status increasingly diminished. Living within the context of an honour-shame culture it seems she had spent all her social capital on these relationships to the point she was willing to live with the shame of being in a de-facto relationship in a culture where this simply did not happen. Thus we find the reason for being at the well alone, in the midday sun. She was socially ostracised.

Jesus knows this about her. Jesus wants her to know, that He knows. Number one, it reveals something about His status as a prophet that the woman herself will acknowledge in verse in verse 19 – a fact that she will try and use to leverage the conversation onto the more comfortable topic of religious meeting sites. Graciously He will condescend to go with her on her side-track. But even on the side-track Jesus reveals that he is the deepest fulfilment of both Jewish and Samaritan expectations of a Messiah. As verse 25 tells us, *'The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."<sup>26</sup> Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am He."*

But number two; in doing this Jesus reveals to her that even though her life is a mess, that she is covered in shame, He still offers her living water. She is not too far-gone for God. Though she may have given up on herself, God in Christ has not given up her. He loves her still. Jesus hints that to drink from Him, to receive this water that wells up to eternal life she will need to lay down some of her old water sources. It is very hard to drink from two cups at the same time. She will need to give up the search for her deepest needs in men that will disappoint her, and turn to Jesus who will not disappoint her. She will need to stop building her own cisterns and water tanks and turn to him.

**Illustrate:** Watch a Global Interaction team update video [www.globalinteraction.org.au/TeamUpdates](http://www.globalinteraction.org.au/TeamUpdates) or Medson's Story <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XMfGbcC4GOk> or read a story about transformation.

Can someone who has moved from destructive behaviours toward life in Christ in your congregation share their story?

**Apply:** Jesus transforms people. He transformed this Samaritan woman; He transformed the person in this story. He wants to transform your life. He already knows the issues in your life. The ways in which we chase things that will never satiate our thirst. He wants us to lay those things down – and drink from his living water. To have our thirst quenched, to transform our lives.

The woman ultimately left her water jar behind to go and tell the people of her village what had happened. What must you lay down in order share and experience Jesus' living-water?

How equipped is your church to walk with someone who is experiencing Jesus' soul-work? "He told me everything I have ever done," she said.

How, as a community, can you make your church a 'well'? How could you prayerfully support someone coming to the well?