



Today we continue our series called Trending Now and we are looking at the topic of psychology. Out of the 144 credits it took me to complete my Masters of Divinity degree, only 4 were for Pastoral Counseling. Even with 16 years of pastoral experience under my belt, teaching about psychology is overwhelming because of its complexity. So, here's what we're going to do today. I'm going to stay in my lane and teach from a passage of the Bible where we see grace and truth connect with a hurting woman. Then I'm going to interview Dr. Sunny Arnold, a Christian psychologist, and ask him all the hard questions! I'm no dummy! At the end of the day, both Sunny and I want to help people become more whole, to become all that God intended them to be. For both Sunny and me, Scripture and the Gospel are paramount. Our goal is to help you see that God uses the Scriptures, the Gospel, the Holy Spirit and therapeutic practice to heal people and glorify Jesus.

To begin with, I want to look at a story found in John 4:1-26. It's a story that shows how Jesus came to heal the hearts of people with grace and truth. His healing touch is described here as living water. Jesus demonstrates that through his touch lives can be changed forever. This text gives us insight into how he engages people who need a healing touch. Let's read John 4:1-26.

Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John—although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

Now he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

"Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?"

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

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."

Jesus Talks with a Woman at the Well

Jesus has been ministering in Jerusalem and, sensing the pressure from the religious leaders decides to head to a region called Galilee. John tells us that he was going to make a pit stop; "He had to go through Samaria." While going through Samaria was the direct and quickest route to Galilee, there were two other routes Jesus could have taken. One route took you by the sea

and the other across the Jordan River. Why would Jesus, a Jew, go through Samaria, a region Jews stayed clear away from? Two reasons: One, to have a divine meeting with this woman and two, to teach his disciples about his mission.

Jesus reaches the outskirts of Sychar and sends the disciples into town to get lunch. The text says he is tired. It's around noon, the hottest time of the day, so Jesus decides to rest at a local well. Wells were a precious resources in the desert. Wells were a place of socialization for the women of that day, like the Starbucks or Philz of the ancient world! And this is not just any well, it's Jacob's Well, an important and historical well. Samaritans especially held this well close to their hearts because they considered Jacob to be their spiritual father.

To the modern reader, we think, what's the big deal with Jesus talking to a woman at a well? You need to know that there were three significant barriers Jesus overcame to befriend this woman. The first was the gender barrier. Jewish men and women did not interact publicly together in that day, especially women like this one. Because she came to the well at noon and was by herself (women came early in the morning with their friends), this woman was a social outcast. We learn from the passage she was an immoral woman who had several husbands. And because of her shame and her past, she came to the well alone to draw water.

Not only did Jesus have to overcome the gender barrier, he had to overcome the racial barrier as well. This was not only a woman but a Samaritan woman! Samaritans were a racial mix of Jew and Assyrian. They were considered half-breeds if you will. Assyrians were despised by the Jews for centuries. So, Jews and Samaritans had a long history of hating each other.

Jesus also had to overcome the religious barrier to connect. This woman had significantly different religious beliefs than Jesus and we see that in her interaction with Jesus. For example, the place Samaritans worshipped was different: Jews built their temple in Jerusalem, Samaritans built theirs on Mount Gerizim. They had different religious books: Samaritans only believed in the first five books of the Old Testament—the Pentateuch—while Jews also had the prophets and wisdom literature.

The reason why I love this story is because Jesus didn't let those barriers stop him from helping this woman. He befriends a Samaritan woman. John doesn't even tell us her name, further reminding us of her insignificance and unimportance to the community. But, Jesus met her where she was at. He initiates a conversation and engages her. Jesus related to her; they were

both thirsty and looking for water. And Jesus, the master at asking good questions, asks her a simple question, "give me a drink." Jesus wasn't tricking her, he was thirsty. She was shocked at his request. She says, "Do you realize whom you are asking for a drink?" Notice how Jesus doesn't confront her immediately. Jesus doesn't say, "Do **you** realize who you are talking to?" Jesus redirects her by asking a personal question that would open her up to grace and truth. Jesus asks, "Go get your husband."

Jesus Christ, the Wonderful Counselor, changes people with both grace and truth. Truth: "You have had five husbands." Grace: "I am living water and the one you've been waiting for." Jesus is offering her something for her deep-soul thirst. This living water, Jesus said, will become a spring of water welling up inside us. This water is eternal life. "And listen to me woman, if you drink from me, you'll never be thirsty again." Jesus is saying here that if she will come to him he will give her a spring within that is eternal, free, joyous and oh so wonderfully satisfying. Jesus was claiming to be the only one who can satisfy the deepest human longing.

"Give me this water!" she said. But obviously she still doesn't totally get it. She wanted a quick fix so that she wouldn't have to go to the well for water anymore. But Jesus is no quick fix to all our problems. In fact, Jesus promised that we will have troubles in this life but when we do, Jesus will walk with us through them.

The story ends with the disciples coming back and stunned to see Jesus talking with this woman. But, the woman drops her pot and goes into the city to tell others of this Jesus. Because of her testimony, many Samaritans come to faith in Jesus and many lives were changed. That's just one story about the healing power of Jesus. And while Jesus can heal us with just one word, one touch, he often uses trained counselors, psychologists, physicians, and others to make us whole. For example, how should Christians respond and get help for mental illness? To help us think about that, let's watch this video called, "There is Hope."

Sunny Arnold interview:

1. Tell us about yourself and how you became a psychologist.
2. What is psychology?
3. Why is this an "in house" Trending Now topic?
4. In your opinion, how does a Christian psychologist fit into the work of the Church?

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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