

# “I AM HE”

John 4:1-26  
Key verse 26

**“Then Jesus declared, ‘I, the one speaking to you - I am he.’”**

In the last passage we learned God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life. But how does one go from being disinterested or unaware of Jesus to believing in him? Sometimes we think we pursue Jesus; in reality, God took initiative. He is pursuing us through sending his Son Jesus. In today’s passage Jesus brings one ostracized woman into God’s kingdom, God’s family. He helps her to know him as the Savior and her personal Lord. Let’s remember how Jesus led us to believe in him. Let’s see how he is working to remove obstacles through his words.

**First, “Will you give me a drink?” (1-14)** Jesus had been gaining disciples at the Jordan river. I’d like to think the last straggling disciples of John the Baptist finally began following Jesus. The Pharisees now turned their attention to Jesus as well. But instead of engaging them, Jesus left Judea and went back to Galilee, a journey of around 70 miles. Jesus had to go through Samaria. Sure, there were other ways. But there was something that needed to be done in this region; someone whom he needed to meet. Coming upon the town of Sychar about noon, Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. His disciples, ever hungry, went to see if there was a local kosher deli, with air conditioning. It was the middle of the day, sun beating down, nobody in their right mind wanted to be out at that time! But while they were gone, a woman from a nearby town came to draw water. Why would she come at this time of the day, instead of the morning or evening when many other women came? The answer is in the question. She seems to want to avoid all the other women.

What an awkward meeting this was. She thought she would be alone, and there is this tired and thirsty Jewish man sitting at the well! She ignores Jesus. But Jesus didn’t ignore her. Look at verse 7. **“When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, ‘Will you give me a drink’”** Jesus broke the awkward silence by asking for a drink, something they had in common at the well in the heat of the day. Jesus took the initiative to talk to this woman. Jesus’ speaking to her is the exact representation of God’s love expressed in sending his son, incarnating himself to dwell among us. Beautiful Jesus, Savior and Lord, opened a dialogue with this woman, in order to save her. Although she had no interest in Jesus, he took great interest in her.

## “I AM HE”

It was a simple request by Jesus, but it sparked a sharp response from the woman. Verse 9 reads, **“The Samaritan woman said to him, ‘You are a Jew and I’m a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?’ (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)”** Why does she make such a big deal about this? Sure, there was some racial and religious tensions between them. The Jews despised Samaritans, who had corrupted themselves through idol worship for hundreds of years. But it seems to be an excuse not to help him. Perhaps she liked to see a man suffer for once. There were many obstacles to her ever opening her heart to Jesus on her part. She was from a different religious and cultural background. There is the man vs. woman dynamic. We’ll see later she has a questionable moral past, while he is a Jewish Rabbi. For these reasons, and her general anti-social demeanor, it would seem impossible for her to receive Jesus. Perhaps we’ve all felt that way before? About ourselves or about another? Who really seeks Jesus? Left to our own devices, we are incapable of finding the Savior.

Did Jesus become offended and close his heart to her? Let's read verse 10. **“Jesus answered her, ‘If you knew the gift of God and who it is who asks you for a drink, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.’”** Jesus saw into this woman’s heart, and knew that if she only knew who he was, she would ask and receive the gift of God, the living water, eternal life!

See, that’s what is so wonderful about Jesus. Jesus is love. He is patient; he is kind. He is not easily angered, he keeps no records of wrongs. Jesus always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres - Jesus never fails (1Co 13:4-8). Can’t we all say that’s true, as we remember how Jesus came to us? In 1995, when I was invited to Bible study, I was like this woman; offensive and insulting. I had hair down my back, wore offensive clothing, and smelled of smoke and other things. Yet Jesus saw something in me; and so he, in his own initiative, went to me. Jesus believed that if I knew the gift of God, and if I knew him, I would seek him and find him. Jesus sees past the outward crust into the person below. Jesus is so confident in the gift of God and who he is, he takes no offense at our pride, arrogance, and lack of interest. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. Praise Jesus for his beautiful initiative!

Jesus understood this woman. His words of mystery regarding himself and the gift of God stirred interest in her. She began to look at him. He had no bucket; the well was too deep to climb; who is this guy? She even compared him with Jacob, their common ancestor who had dug this well that provided water for

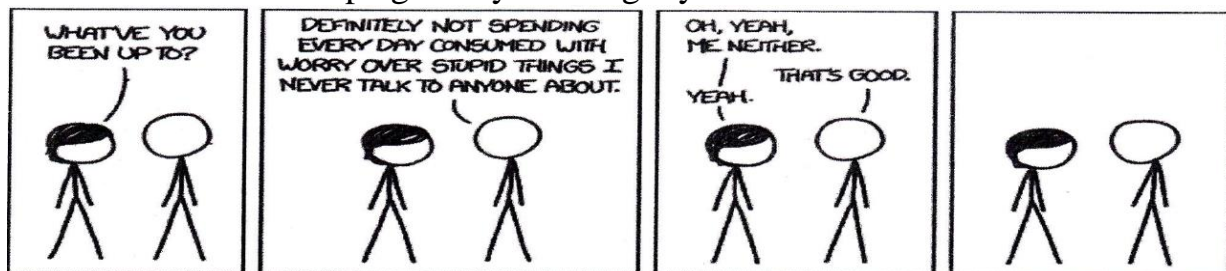
## “I AM HE”

generations of people and animals. **“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’” (13-14).** Jesus, in this subtle way, exposed the deep thirst of this woman. Jesus directly told her that true satisfaction is found in him alone; in him alone can we find that which leads to eternal life.

Sure, Jacob and many others have provided a myriad of things for us to invest our time and money in. We seek relationships, entertainment, material goods, experiences, spiritual encounters, ministry success, recognition, pleasure, accomplishment and that is just getting started! Whether good or bad, they don’t provide lasting satisfaction. Jesus said, **“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again.”** Everyone: this thirst is our common experience. In a world that offers limitless possibilities, but delivers on none, is it any wonder we are all thirsty deep in our hearts? We see this thirst in the eyes and activities of people all around us. We think, if I just finish school, I’ll be happy. If I get a good job, I’ll be happy. If I get married, I’ll be happy. If I have 2.4 children, I’ll be happy... it’s endless. How many people have gone from one mirage to the next? Going from one experience or relationship to another? We just experience the thirst more sharply. Jesus says: **“whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst.”** Jesus is the answer. The thirst itself is the evidence of our need for Jesus.

**Second, “Whot you have just said is quite true.” (15-18)** As Jesus had predicted in verse 10, the woman’s attitude toward Jesus completely changed. **“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’” (15).** She asked him, acknowledging her thirst, without going into detailed specifics. Oh, that it were so easy. But Jesus knew what plagued her in her heart. Jesus knew the agony that caused her to sneak out alone in the middle of the day to get water; Jesus knew why she responded so harshly to simple requests. Jesus knew her.

So often we are plagued by inner agony that no one knows about.



## “I AM HE”

Jesus isn't like the friend in the xkcd comic. Jesus knows, and Jesus addresses it directly. Look at verses 16-18. **“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.”** Wow, Jesus just popped the lid on this woman's personal life. But he didn't post it on her Facebook timeline. He didn't make her confess every excruciating detail. But he did reveal that he knows. Jesus knew her story - not just the facts, but the heart motives and intentions in all that she went through and experienced.

This woman must have been attractive, or witty, or cute, or seductive, or something, because she went through five husbands, and now had a live-in boyfriend. But each one, for one reason or another, abandoned her. She couldn't leave them in that male-dominant society. Unless she poisoned them, I guess. We don't know. But we do know that every time a family splits, agony follows. It wasn't just a matter of her and him; every time she went to get water, there was her ex-mother-in-law, as well as an ex-sister-in-law or two, glaring at her, hating her. Now multiply this by 5. No wonder this woman was like a porcupine to Jesus! And who understood that pain? Who would take that from her? A good person would pity her. A righteous person would condemn. But only Jesus, beautiful Jesus, could help her. That is why Jesus directly touched this issue.

Jesus said, **“You are right...”** and **“What you have just said is quite true.”** Jesus took her side. Jesus defended her; perhaps the only one who ever did that. Jesus' love embraced this wounded woman. He shed his blood to heal her wounds, to forgive her sins, to restore her humanity.

When I had entered UIC, I tried to stop smoking weed and dropping LSD so I could focus on school, which also meant I had to stop living together with my older girlfriend. As a rebellious and clueless teenager, I was master of my world. But what a mirage it was! I couldn't stop. Then Jesus met me. Through two years of Bible study, he helped me realize my problem was living without direction and calling. He told me, **“I am the way, and the truth and the life”** through a message at the 1997 ISBC. It struck me deeply. On the way home, I tearfully repented every sin one by one. Through the years, Jesus has visited me again and again when inner agonies and sins have plagued me. When I was teaching the Bible at UIC, God brought many girl students. I taught them as best I could, trying to keep my heart. One time Pastor Ron took me and another brother aside and

## “I AM HE”

counseled us intensely regarding lust. I hadn't done anything wrong, but his words were like Jesus' words to me at that time. Something changed in my heart attitude.

One thing that plagues my heart these days is my poor fathering of four active young boys. They are so wonderful, but I lose my patience so easily. I get angry with them when they cry and complain, because I have many other things to do. Then I condemn myself for being a terrible father. But since Amy got sick, I've been trying to change. What I need is to come to Jesus. Jesus understands, and has been so patient with me so many years. May he take this from me.

What is Jesus asking us to face? What does he want to relieve? Sometimes a past life or current event agonizes our heart, and no one understands. Or a huge mistake in the past, and still feel the repercussions and feel like a victim. Jesus wants to help us. Let's listen to beautiful, wonderful Jesus, who challenged this woman to face her deep issue, instead of ignoring it. Let's listen to Jesus' words of acceptance to this woman that relieved her agony. He is the only one who can do it, because he alone is our Savior. Praise you Jesus.

**Third, “You will worship the Father in Spirit and truth.” (19-26)** After having her thirst exposed and directed to Jesus, and then her painful life problem addressed, the woman realized that Jesus is no ordinary person. Her focus is on him. She realized Jesus is from God. How can she respond except by worship? But that leads to another problem; whose worship method and location? She says, **“Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem”**(19). Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said that the most segregated time in the USA is 11AM Sunday morning. Perhaps this was the root of this woman's problems; her worship left her void and empty. She wanted a Father, but found only an idol. So she sought other things to meet that need. Her father and his religion couldn't help her. She needed a Messiah.

Jesus shows that worship is about the Father, his desires, and his way of salvation. Look at verses 21,-24. **““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.’”** Jesus points us back to God, and calls him the Father. Worshiping him requires that we know him. We

## “I AM HE”

cannot know based on our forefathers. Sin of the forefathers separate us from God. We need the way of salvation, reconciliation with God. This way of salvation is from the Jews; this way of salvation is Jesus, the Messiah.

This woman's worship problem is no different from any of us. Some of us come from a rigid form of worship, like hers; others didn't even know what worship was until Bible study. But we learn that to worship God we must worship in the Spirit and in truth. If we do not know God as Father, we are worshiping like the Samaritans; what we do not know. Who can know the Father? John 1:18 reads, **“No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.”** Only Jesus knows the Father. And God sent him to reveal the Father to each of us. No one outside the family can call God Father. But Jesus, God's way of salvation, gives the right to all who believe in him to become children of God. Then we too may know the Father and worship him. His Spirit makes his home with us. His love enables us to come into the light, living by the truth. This is what Jesus believed the woman was going to do. That is why Jesus had to go through Samaria; because God was seeking his lost daughter, this woman! What a surprise! But she needed salvation from the Jews; she needed the Messiah.

Let's read verses 25-26 together. **“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’”** She came to know herself; what she really needed was a relationship with the Father, on his terms, through his Messiah. She was seeking the Messiah. Jesus' words, **“I am he,”** meant everything to this woman. Her thirst was quenched; her agony lifted; her relationship with God established. Her life was transformed. She left her water jar and became Jesus' marketing agent in her town. She was just a Samaritan woman; what could she possibly say about Jesus? Nothing more than what she knew: **“Come see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah (29)?”** She believed that Jesus is the Son of God, and by believing she found life in Jesus' name.

I know someone who had always wanted her father's love and approval as a child, but he was stern and disapproving instead. When she brought home a B, his only question was, “Why not an A?” This thirst for a father's love drove her into wild living, and the arms of many men. But she was never satisfied until Jesus met her. Through his words she found life satisfaction, and calling to serve college students with the gospel. Her soul is satisfied in Jesus. Instead of seeking boy's

## **“I AM HE”**

love, she loves her four boys. Her father also was changed. Another young woman came to the US as a teen. Although her family was religious, she was thirsty for something. She studied to be a doctor, then a dentist. She partied at clubs, and lost her purity with a handsome man. Although he wanted to marry her, she wasn't happy, with no calling in life. Jesus met her through Romans Bible study, and called her to serve his people. She became a Bible teacher with a calling to raise disciples. Her soul is satisfied.

Like these women, there are many people in our country, community, homes, jobs, who need to hear Jesus' words. We may not have any idea what to say; but Jesus knows. He is Messiah; let's trust him. Jesus is the Son of God, and everyone who receives him and believes in him will have eternal life in his name (20:31). Jesus is the one who can give life; abundant life that satisfies. Jesus understands and is the solution to our inner agonies and sin problems. Jesus restores our relationship with our Father God. What we really need is Jesus! Where can we get Jesus? That is the best news of all. He has come to us; initiated with us. We need only let him in; receive his words.