

An encounter with Jesus is life changing.

Today people need to have an encounter with Jesus. Just knowing religious stuff and practicing religious stuff does not change a person. Everybody has religion but that has not changed the human heart. If practising religious stuff had any effect then our world would be a different place. Religious observations and traditions have not changed our society. So what and who makes the difference in our lives?

John 4: 1-25 The Samaritans were very religious people but they had nothing to do with the Jews. There was a divide. Jesus decides He must go through Samaria. This story cuts through all barriers of race and prejudice that we as a society are facing right now. Jesus decided to put an end to the divide that existed between these two races.

1. When you have an encounter with Jesus your racist, prejudiced ideas fall away... and you become more accepting like Jesus.

The Jews hated the Samaritans and considered them as reprobates because they only took the 5 books of the law and even that they mixed it up with paganism and erected their own temple on Mt Gerizim. They were not liked at all. Yet Jesus goes to the very heart of this place to put an end to this division. He takes the 70 mile shorter journey as opposed to going around Samaria which would have taken twice the time.

Vs 6 - Jesus is tired and sits by the well of Jacob. A Samaritan woman comes to draw water. Jesus initiates a conversation - shocking! The woman questions Jesus on the racial hatred that existed between Jews and Samaritans but Jesus gives her a beautiful answer.

John 4:7-10 RSV *There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."*

Jesus moves away from the barriers that separated a Jewish man talking to a woman let alone a Samaritan woman. Jesus was a Rabbi and according to their instructions they could not be seen talking publicly to women.

Jesus reads her heart and comes straight to the point. He wants this woman to have a genuine encounter with the truth about who he really was.

Jesus was talking about a spiritual realm whilst the woman was operating in a physical realm - Jesus was talking about spiritual living water and the woman physical water and somehow Jesus had to bring her to a place where she could open her heart to understand that what Jesus was offering was something more eternal that would satisfy her deepest needs like rejection, immorality, being an outcast and looked down upon.

2. An encounter with Jesus always transforms the heart.

Jesus always looks at your heart because if your heart is pure then what comes out of you will be pure that's why Proverbs talks much about the heart: guard your heart for everything you do flows from it.

Prov 4:23, Matthew says blessed are the pure in heart.

Vs 10 Jesus says: if only you knew the gift of God and it is that is asking you for a drink, you would have asked and he would have given it to you.

The woman responds in the natural quite rightly, no rope, deep well etc so where will you get this living water from?

Jesus offers the living water, she is confused but after listening to Jesus she is willing to take a chance on his offer and she asks for living water.

Even today Jesus offers this living water freely to all who thirst to be filled but the offer has to be accepted. He who hungers and thirsts for righteousness shall be filled (Matt5:6). How we wish our youth of today would have a drink of this living water. That people lost in sin have a drink of this living water that satisfies their weary souls. How we wish that people would have a genuine encounter with the giver of eternal life!

This is the mission of the church, which is to enable people to have an encounter with Jesus, to bring people to a place where they hear the gospel, feel convicted in their heart about the life transforming power of Jesus and give him a chance to change their lives.

This woman was willing but did not understand how. She wanted her years of having to come to this well which was on the outskirts of Samaria to draw water to end. I think she was tired and fed up and wanted something new.

Jesus offers her living water that will become in her a living fountain of water (that sounded good) springing up into everlasting life. That means far more than just everlasting life. It means refreshing, invigorating, exciting life; life that has the qualities of love and joy and peace about it. She was willing to take that offer.

How many of us today are willing to take up the offer that Jesus gives even if we do not fully understand it?

Jesus before he gives her the gift of eternal life looks at her heart and addresses the issues of her heart with regards to the 5 husbands and the one she is living with now is outside wedlock because Jesus wants to completely heal her and make her whole. (soul ties, scarring, disappointments).

3. An encounter with Jesus leads you to repentance.

The gospel tells us that the steps to redemption are twofold: confess with mouth and belief

in your heart: confession & Repentance is a human act; belief and regeneration is a divine act.

Until we admit our need of the Saviour there is no salvation through regeneration. Jesus knew that she must come to that place of confessing and believing, so he proceeds to deal with the hindrance.

This is what Jesus does when a sinner comes to Him - not only does Jesus offer the free gift of eternal life but total healing and wholeness. When Jesus addresses her issue about her husbands it opens her eyes to see more of who she is dealing with and she perceives Jesus to be a prophet and Jesus cuts through traditional beliefs and misinformation with regards to worship.

Jesus points out that worship is not based on who you are or where it is done but it's purely from your spirit. So it does not matter where you are when you come to worship God because the only way you are accepted is when you come to worship truthfully and in Spirit, why? because the primary activity of the spirit is union with God.

4. An encounter with Jesus transforms your spirit man.

It is the only part of man that can directly be united with God. *1Cor 6:17 But anyone who is joined with the Lord is one with him in spirit.*

It does not talk about being joined in the soul or the body but the spirit. We have union and communion with God with our spirit. Gods desire is that mans spirit directs his soul (will, intellect, emotions) and the soul directs the body (which is world conscious) This is why we advocate speaking in tongues because your spirit man is communicating with God.

The highest activity of mans spirit is worship... Thats why... Jesus said to her:

John 4:21-24 RSV "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

Jesus made it clear that true worship must be an activity of our spirits. Praise gives us access to Gods presence (use our souls to do this) but when in Gods presence it is through worship that we enjoy true spiritual union with Him.

5. When you have an encounter with Jesus you will talk about it - you cannot stop talking about Jesus.

This woman the moment she encounters the Messiah Jesus she goes off to her village and declares the wonderful things that she had experienced and invites the town to come to Jesus.

Jesus declares Himself as the Messiah (V29) *So the woman left her water jar, and went away*

into the city, and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?"

Undoubtedly this is the work of the Spirit of God, working through this reborn woman. Her words fall with unusual power upon the crowd and they respond by coming to Jesus. They never responded to her before, but now they do, because God is working in her. She immediately becomes an evangelist; she has to tell what happened to her. People will know when you have encountered Jesus because God's power will be at work in you.

It is the Holy Spirit's job to produce Christ like character in you.

The Bible says, "As the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like him and reflect his glory even more." (2 Corinthians 3:18 NLT) This process of changing us to be more like Jesus is called sanctification.

You cannot reproduce the character of Jesus in your own strength. Only the Holy Spirit has the power to make the changes God wants to make in our lives. The Bible says, Philippians 2:13 NLT "God is working in you, giving you the desire to obey him and the power to do what pleases him."

Your testimony is powerful. There are many waiting to hear of your encounter with Jesus - so don't stop talking about Jesus.

Today you too can encounter this amazing Jesus who gives everyone who comes to Him to be His child. **John 1:12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.**