

Human beings share certain basic needs. We all have physical needs, emotional needs, and most importantly spiritual needs. When those needs are not met, we naturally try to find ways to satisfy them. Sometimes we search in healthy places. But sometimes, in our desperation, we look in the wrong places and make choices that ultimately harm us.

Today we encounter someone whose needs intersect in a powerful way: the Samaritan woman at the well.

First, she has a physical need. She needs water, and so she comes to the well to draw it. But the time she chooses is strange. She comes at noon, the hottest part of the day. In the Middle East, that is when the sun is blazing and the heat can be almost unbearable. The sensible thing would be to come early in the morning, when the air is cool. This is when the other women of the town gather to draw water for the day. But she doesn't come then. Because she also has emotional needs—needs that are not being met. Like every human being, she longs for belonging, acceptance, and community. But because of her life situation, she is an outcast in her own town. She has been judged and rejected. People whisper about her. They avoid her. They speak about her within earshot.

The humiliation would be too much to bear if she came when everyone else was there. So she chooses the heat of noon instead of the pain of rejection. The suffering of the sun is easier than the suffering of being ridiculed and ignored.

The Gospel reveals even more about her life. She has been searching for love in the wrong places. She has had several relationships that have clearly failed. Perhaps they were unstable, perhaps abusive, perhaps simply empty. Whatever the details, the pattern is clear: she keeps reaching out for love but never seems to find the kind that truly fulfills.

The need for love is a deeply human need. When our need for love, acceptance, and belonging is denied, we often reach out in unhealthy ways. We search for something—anything—that might fill the emptiness.

Then something unexpected happens. When she arrives at the well, she meets Jesus. Jesus is a Jew speaking to a Samaritan. Jews and Samaritans avoided one another. Jesus is a man speaking publicly to a woman, something that was socially unacceptable in that culture.

Jesus begins simply. He asks her for a drink. For perhaps the first time in a long time, someone speaks to her. Someone acknowledges her. Someone treats her as a person rather than as a scandal.

She responds with curiosity, even surprise. Then the conversation begins to move deeper. Jesus speaks about “living water.” At first she thinks he is speaking about physical water—water that will save her the daily trip to the well.

But Jesus is leading her further. He gently reveals that he knows her life and her past. He knows her wounds, her broken relationships, and her search for love. And yet he does not reject her. That is the turning point. This man standing before her sees everything about her—and still speaks to her with dignity. He understands her in a way no one else ever has. Instead of condemning her, he offers her something new: a deeper way to satisfy the thirst of her soul.

In that moment, the miracle happens. She encounters God. The Samaritan woman discovers that the deepest thirst of her heart is not really about water, or even human relationships. Her deepest thirst is for God.

One writer, Suzanne Tanzi, reflected on visiting this very place—Jacob’s Well. She wrote:

“This woman was hiding herself by being at the well at midday, when it would be deserted. Yet how she celebrated upon being discovered! She went to proclaim the truth in the town where she was previously living in shame—even forgetting her water jar at the well, as if earthly concerns had given way to the joy of being known and loved by Jesus.”[1]

She leaves her water jar behind. The very reason she came to the well is suddenly forgotten. Because she has discovered something greater. The woman who came in shame now runs back to the town proclaiming what she has found. The one who avoided people now invites them to come and see the Messiah. She is no longer hiding.

We all have needs—physical needs, emotional needs, and spiritual needs. And sometimes we try to fill the deeper hunger of our hearts with things that cannot truly satisfy us. But our greatest need is our need for God.

Like the Samaritan woman, we may sometimes hide from God—out of fear, embarrassment, pride, or shame. Yet the beautiful truth of this Gospel is that Jesus meets us precisely where we are. At our wells. In our loneliness. In our brokenness.

Our need for God is the most important need we have. Jesus knows this, and he wants to satisfy that need right now, in the best way possible, by offering himself to us. Jesus is here. He is present, and he wants to encounter you personally. Whatever burdens you carry, whatever thirst you feel in your heart, bring it to him.

And allow him to give you the only water that truly satisfies—the living water of God’s love and mercy.

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1. Suzanne Tanzi, "Abandoning Our Masks," in *The Magnificat Lenten Companion: Lent 2026*, ed. Rev. Philip Nolan, O.P. (New York: Magnificat, 2026), 33.