

**The Power of Your Story**  
**What if Your Story Strikes the Match?**  
**John 4:39-42**

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**Text Introduction:** We are in a series of messages on the Power of Story—not just any story, but the story of God’s activity in our lives. We are examining New Testament stories of individuals sharing their story. We want to specifically see what God would teach us from these stories about sharing our own story. So far, we have considered the story of Nicodemus coming to Jesus at night, the example of John the Baptist, and the example of the very first disciples of Jesus. We have discovered that there is a little bit different principle in each of these Biblical stories. Today, we turn our attention to the story of “The Samaritan Woman at the Well.” I’ve been telling you that you need to tell your story and others need to hear your story. In the story of the Samaritan Woman at the Well, we see a great example of the power of telling our story. We see through this unnamed woman that through her story, many come to believe that Jesus is the Savior of the whole world. Wouldn’t it be something if your story is used in a similar way? Wouldn’t it be something if your story is the story that strikes the match in someone else’s story?

It is going to take a little time this morning, but I want to read the whole story in order to get the background. (Note: This won’t be necessary during the 11:11 service because the text will have been read prior to my beginning to preach.)

**Background Text:** When Jesus knew that the Pharisees heard He was making and baptizing more disciples than John <sup>2</sup> (though Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were), <sup>3</sup> He left Judea and went again to Galilee. <sup>4</sup> He had to travel through Samaria, <sup>5</sup> so He came to a town of Samaria called Sychar near the property that Jacob had given his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup> Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, worn out from His journey, sat down at the well. It was about six in the evening.

<sup>7</sup> A woman of Samaria came to draw water.

“Give Me a drink,” Jesus said to her, <sup>8</sup> for His disciples had gone into town to buy food.

<sup>9</sup> “How is it that You, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?” she asked Him. For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.

<sup>10</sup> Jesus answered, “If you knew the gift of God, and who is saying to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would ask Him, and He would give you living water.”

<sup>11</sup> “Sir,” said the woman, “You don’t even have a bucket, and the well is deep. So where do You get this ‘living water’? <sup>12</sup> You aren’t greater than our father Jacob, are You? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and livestock.”

<sup>13</sup> Jesus said, “Everyone who drinks from this water will get thirsty again. <sup>14</sup> But whoever drinks from the water that I will give him will never get thirsty again—ever! In fact, the water I will give him will become a well of water springing up within him for eternal life.”

<sup>15</sup> “Sir,” the woman said to Him, “give me this water so I won’t get thirsty and come here to draw water.”

<sup>16</sup> “Go call your husband,” He told her, “and come back here.”

<sup>17</sup> “I don’t have a husband,” she answered.

“You have correctly said, ‘I don’t have a husband,’” Jesus said. <sup>18</sup> “For you’ve had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.”

<sup>19</sup> “Sir,” the woman replied, “I see that You are a prophet. <sup>20</sup> Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, yet you Jews say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem.”

<sup>21</sup> Jesus told her, “Believe Me, woman, an hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup> You Samaritans worship what you do not know. We worship what we do know, because salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup> But an hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. Yes, the Father wants such people to worship Him. <sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

<sup>25</sup> The woman said to Him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When He comes, He will explain everything to us.”

<sup>26</sup> “I am He,” Jesus told her, “the One speaking to you.”

### **Introduction:**

Now, there is a lot to this story to unpack. I want to focus on verses 39-42 for our main point of application, but in order to understand that main point of application, there is a demand to understand the background of the woman’s story. The woman’s encounter with Jesus comes on the heels of John 3 and the story of Nicodemus. Nicodemus is a Jewish religious leader who comes seeking conversation with Jesus. This woman is an unnamed Samaritan (outcast) with a terrible religious background and moral background. It is as though the Spirit of God right here in the text is showing us that it does not matter who you are, you need an encounter with Jesus. Regardless of background, we all come to God through Jesus Christ. If Nicodemus’ story shows us that there is no amount of goodness that brings us to God, this woman’s story shows us that there is no amount of badness that keeps us from God.

The woman’s story shows us that coming to God...

### **Requires Honesty**

Because of sin, we all have hurts, habits, and hang-ups (as our Celebrate Recovery Program teaches). We have a sin problem. If we deny that, the Bible says that we are liars. The Apostle Paul gave us perhaps the best words to help us identify with this sin problem. In Romans 7:15, Paul shared his struggle in these words: “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.” (NIV)

God knows about our hurts, habits, and hang-ups. Our first inclination is to hide our hurts, habits, and hang-ups. The woman didn’t know who Jesus was, but she tried to hide hers. She tried to hide them from Jesus. She tried to hide them from others as her going to the well when no one else was around attests. We don’t have to hide. The irony is He already knows, so why do we want to hide?

God is willing to confront you. This isn't a sign of His condemnation; this is a sign of His compassion. God loves us just the way we are but He also loves us too much to leave us the way we are. We don't like to be confronted with our sin, but confrontation is a sign of His love. He confronts us in a variety of ways. God uses His Word, His Spirit, and sometimes His people to confront. Maybe you are being confronted by God today. If so, don't resist, respond.

Don't let past failures get in your way. Great failures become great followers if there is great forgiveness separating the two.

### **Requires that Jesus is the Source of Hope**

Our hope to recover from the hurts, habits, and hang-ups of life is in Jesus. This is the message of Jesus to the woman and to us. The woman was searching for God. She knew about religious worship of her day. But, Jesus says that she could worship in spirit and truth.

Our hope is in Christ. Our hope is not in the church, programs, support groups, or counselors. Those things might help and should help, but only if they point to the real hope—Christ. In Christ, there is hope because we can begin again.

### **Responds by Sharing our Story to Help others**

Once, having experienced the life-giving message of forgiveness and hope in Christ, we are to share our story so that others will know. That's what this woman does.

**Text:** <sup>28</sup> Then the woman left her water jar, went into town, and told the men, <sup>29</sup> "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did! Could this be the Messiah?" <sup>30</sup> They left the town and made their way to Him.

<sup>39</sup> Now many Samaritans from that town believed in Him because of what the woman said when she testified, "He told me everything I ever did." <sup>40</sup> Therefore, when the Samaritans came to Him, they asked Him to stay with them, and He stayed there two days. <sup>41</sup> Many more believed because of what He said. <sup>42</sup> And they told the woman, "We no longer believe because of what you said, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this really is the Savior of the world."

What a great progression! The woman gets a story. She shares that story. Others, according to the text, believe just because of her story. But, it doesn't stop there. Then, they invite Jesus for more, and others believe now, not as the result of the woman's story, but because they now have their own story. Again, I ask, "What if your story strikes the match?"

### **Why is Her Story so effective?**

#### **1. Her story was not perfect.**

Most people's stories aren't perfect, so they resonate when they hear the grace of God working through imperfections.

#### **2. Her story was relational, not religious.**

Have you discovered that people don't like religion? The woman's story was more about relationship than it was about religion.

#### **3. She was changed.**

I'm not making this up. There is evidence in the story that the woman was changed. She was the only one at the well. That means that she specifically went when she knew no one would be there. She knew that everyone knew her story. But, having met Jesus, she goes to the men of the town and tells her story.

#### 4. **God's power was at work.**

I will be honest. I never saw the connection between Jesus' words about the harvest until this week. This is His work. This is His food. What is? His work, his food, is to connect people to Himself.

#### **Our stories reveal that hope is plentiful, and the harvest is promised to be plentiful!**

The woman on the video that you saw earlier is a friend of mine. (11:11 last week) Her name is Cindy Blanchard. Cindy came to our church in New Iberia after having been introduced to Jesus by a friend. Cindy's story was far from perfect. In her twenties, she had an abortion. The guilt and betrayal left from that experience sent her into a further downward spiral ultimately leading her to be involved in a homosexual relationship for twenty years. God miraculously freed her from those temptations as He also freed her from the guilt and the shame brought about by sinful choices. Early on after her coming to our church, she shared with me these past sins. She asked me if she would ever have to talk about those things with others. I told her, "No," especially if she didn't want to talk about those things. In other words, I was trying to tell her that forgiveness was not contingent upon her publicly revealing those past sins. She seemed to like that response, and immediately began a glorious, Spirit-directed process of transformation, that is as complete as any I have ever seen. So much so, that as time went on, I really never even thought about her past. One day she called me. She said, "In case you get some phone calls today, I just wanted to tell you that last night at the women's ministry meeting, one thing led to the other and I shared my story." I said, "Hey, Cindy, that's great!" She said, "I don't think you understand—I shared my *whooooole* story." I hadn't really understood. I had forgotten, remember. Now, fully understanding what she was telling me, I said, "Well, how did it go?" I never will forget her response. She said, "It went great. Everyone was so loving." As a pastor, you hope that would have been the case, but you never fully know these kinds of things until they happen. Since then, God has used Cindy's story in a variety of ways—radio, school assemblies, working as Executive Director of a Crisis Pregnancy Center.

See—we need to tell our stories, and others need to hear our stories. And, it might be that our story is just the story that strikes the match for someone else's story. Thus, begging the question, what if that story does not get told?