

INTRODUCTION

At my age, I am not quite crazy about trying new things. Nowadays, customer reviews can be helpful. I am a true believer in reviews. When you look for a product, a mechanic or even a doctor you can check how many stars they have. My family went down to Florida at the end of last year for a vacation. There is a BBQ restaurant right next to the hotel where we stayed. It has good customer ratings. The description even said that it has the best BBQ in the state of Florida. Impressive! Therefore, I ordered some takeout. Unfortunately, we were quite disappointed. The portions were small. The spoiler was that the pork rib was burned on both sides. I could literally peel off a layer of pure carbon from it! I decided to do something I seldom did – I went back to the restaurant to complain about it. The lady did not even open the box to look at the meat. She apologized repeatedly and gave me a replacement. When I returned to the hotel room my kids asked me how it went. It was a good teaching moment for them. I told them that I just stated the fact gently with respect. The restaurant knew what they had to do to correct their mistake. After I came home from the trip, I wrote a review to express my experience. I titled my sharing: “It didn’t live up to the hype.” I explained that there was no way the restaurant should serve burned food to customers. There are some justice genes inside me that fight for fairness. I am not suggesting that we should sue people for a million dollars over food that was not cooked right. But we should not hesitate to voice our comments based on facts. We all want to get our money’s worth. There is a continuous pursuit in our heart to look for better things out there. We may say to ourselves: “If I have _____ then I will be satisfied.” What will you put in the blank? In John chapter 4, Jesus talked to a woman who was looking for an answer too. Through their conversation Jesus taught us that only He can satisfy the deepest longing of our hearts.

EXPLANATION

1. Water for Survival 賴以為生的水

Our story evolves around water. A woman was seeking water for survival. The story took place in Samaria, which is in between Jerusalem and Galilee. Jesus was traveling with the disciples from Judea up north toward Galilee. They stopped at Sychar of Samaria around noon. The disciples went into the village to buy lunch when Jesus rested by a well. Our Lord was tired, thirsty and hungry. A woman then approached the well to draw water. In the Middle East, people usually got water in the morning or after sunset when it is cooler. The passage tells us that this Samaritan woman had five husbands and she was now living with another man who was not her husband. That would not be a widely-accepted lifestyle in any society. Therefore, the lady chose the best time to come out when she could minimize interaction with people. She wanted to finish the task quickly and go home. However, Jesus stopped the woman and asked her for a drink. She wondered why in the world a Jewish man would ask a Samaritan for water. In that culture, it was rare for a man to talk to an unknown lady. For a Jewish guy to chat with a Samaritan woman was even more unthinkable. Back in 722 BC the northern kingdom of Israel was defeated by Assyria. Some Jews were exiled. The Assyrians also migrated some of its people to the area. The Samaritans were the result of mixed marriages between the two races. The Jews saw the

Samaritans as impure traitors. Therefore, the Jews and the Samaritans did not get along. As we can see in the story, Jesus was not meant to ask for water. Jesus is an expert who used everyday objects to direct His audiences to spiritual matters. For example, He described His relationship with believers as between a shepherd and his sheep. Using an analogy is an effective tool when we share the gospel with others. For instance, you can use parents to represent our Heavenly Father or depict sins as a credit card debt. Back to our story. The woman came to the well to draw water for her survival. But she had some deeper needs. She wanted to be accepted by her neighbors. She did not want to be labeled as a divorcee or even an adulterer. Also, any lady in that era wanted to get married and start a family. A husband could provide financial stability, and a mom was considered blessed by God. Deep down inside, she also had an emotional need for companionship, especially after so many unsuccessful relationships. The marital failure of this lady reminds me of Elizabeth Taylor. Ms. Taylor beat the woman in our story by having seven former husbands and two other engagements that were later called off. Taylor married her first husband when she was only 18, but the relationship only lasted for 8 months. Taylor subsequently married actors, a singer, a politician, and finally a construction worker she met at a substance dependency rehabilitation center. Taylor's longest marriage was just 10 years long. While Taylor and the Samaritan woman were looking for fulfillment in relationship what are you seeking after? You do not have 7 boy-friends or girl-friends. You may have owned all the previous generations of iPhones. You now have an iPhone X but you are still not happy. Perhaps the expectation is from your parents. They invest all their life-savings in hoping that you will become a doctor, an accountant or an engineer. Perhaps the pressure comes from your peers. You are invited to your high school reunion. This classmate is now an entrepreneur, and that one is a director of such and such company, and another one is listed in the who's who hall of fame. You feel like a nobody, and you even feel ashamed to meet them. You work hard all your life but you feel restless. Even Christians may think the same way. You are always looking for Jesus plus something to make you happy. In the U.S. there is a saying that people compare themselves with the Jones. For Chinese folks, they compare themselves with the Chans or the Lees. You are jealous when others have bigger houses and drive nicer cars. Ladies carry a nice purse only to find that other people have more luxurious brands. You worry a lot about your career, health, retirement and kids. If we chase after water for survival, we will definitely feel thirsty again. Paul said in **1 Timothy 6:6-8** – 6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. 8 But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. The key is not how much money or how many toys we have. The core issue is contentment. Paul explained that we have to recognize a few things to stay content. First, we have to understand that all that we have is from God. Second, we should enjoy God's blessings with a grateful heart. Third, we have to realize that our earthly life is only transitional. We should put our focus on things that are eternal. Are you looking for the next new thing on the horizon? It may a new phone, a better job or a new relationship. Whatever it is, this temporary water for survival cannot bring you long-lasting fulfillment. It is because we are created after God's image. There is an eternal need in us that nothing of this world can truly satisfy. That was what Jesus wanted to offer to the woman.

2. Water for Revival 更新生命的水

The Samaritan woman wanted water for survival. But Jesus told her that He had something far better for her. He will give the water for revival to those who come to Him. The lady was

confused. Jesus was thirsty and asked her for water. But then He told her that he had a superior water. She was skeptical because Jesus did not have any tool to draw water from the well. She was thinking physical water but Jesus was talking about spiritual water. Jesus told the woman that this water He gave would quench people's thirst forever. Now Jesus got her attention. She thought, with this magical water she would never have to come out to get water again. She could save some walking to and from the well, prevent the mid-day heat, and most importantly minimize contact with people. What Jesus wanted to give to her was eternal life. Later in John chapter 6, Jesus used food to illustrate the same truth. After the miracle of the five loaves and two fish, the crowd was following Jesus because they thought that from now on they could enjoy unlimited free buffet. Jesus asked them not just to go after the food that feeds their stomachs, but to look for the food that feeds their souls. The crowd responded: "Sure! Please give me this food." Jesus pointed them to the only source of eternal food in [John 6:35](#) – ... "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty." Physical food can only satisfy us for a few hours. Only spiritual food can fulfill our deepest need. Then Jesus went on to say that people had to "eat" Him to obtain eternal life. His audiences found that idea offensive, because they thought Jesus was asking them to consume His physical body. Eventually, many people rejected Jesus. In comparison, the Samaritan woman did not stop pursuing even though she could not make sense of Jesus' teaching. But what if Jesus could meet the ultimate thirst in her heart? If physical water and six relationships could not bring her lasting fulfillment, then what better solution could this Jewish man provide? She went back to the village to share about her encounter with Jesus. She said in [verse 29](#): "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" The Samaritans had a different version of Christ, or Messiah than the Jews. Whereas the Jews were looking for a deliverer, the Samaritans expected their Messiah to come as a teacher to reveal God's truth to them. The woman wondered if Jesus was the Messiah, since He seemed to have supernatural knowledge about her private life. The townsfolk did not reject the lady's comment outright by saying: "Nah. What does a woman like you know?" Instead, they went to see Jesus immediately to check things out for themselves. Then they urged Jesus to stay for another two days so that they could listen to His teachings. Just like the woman did, many of those people believed in Jesus. Listen to their remark in [verse 42](#): They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world." Notice the sequence of events here. The people heard the woman's testimony. They came to Jesus to further explore the truth. They then put their trust in Jesus' words and acknowledged that He was the Savior. The woman, and many of her neighbors received the water for revival. This is not a typical conversion story. The woman did not confess her sins and Jesus did not verbally extend His forgiveness either. We cannot pinpoint at what stage the lady was saved. However, we see her attitude changed from doubting Jesus, to welcome the water for revival Jesus offered. She also overcame the fear of ridicule and disbelief from the villagers but eagerly introduced Jesus to them. Brothers and sisters: do we have the same enthusiasm to tell others about our faith? Do we want our friends and family members, classmates and colleagues to have the same joy that we have in Christ? We do not need to be a Bible scholar before we can share the gospel with others. We testify about our personal experience just like the woman did. By the way, it does not have to be something dramatic like walking out alive from a serious car crash or miraculous disappearance of a tumor. Perhaps you used to live with bitterness for your past, burdens of today and anxiety about the future. But now you find peace, joy and hope in the Lord. Dear friends: the testimonies from Christians are just appetizers to your pursuit of faith. Any

subjective experience has to be verified by objective truth. Ultimately, you have to spend time to understand the gospel from the Bible. That is how I always encourage seeker friends. Do not just trust my words, but study the Bible for yourself and ask any question you have in mind about the Christian faith. I am sure that if people will take time to explore the truth with a humble and objective spirit, they will find God.

CONCLUSION

Only Jesus can satisfy the deepest longing of our hearts. You have been telling yourself the whole life: “If I have _____ then I will be satisfied.” What exactly are you looking for? Some of you may say: “I don’t have time to think about that. I have work to do and mouths to feed.” Some other may reply: “I’m too busy. I have assignments due every week or project deadline to meet.” Whether you are aware or not, you are always searching for an answer. Last week I read a sermon written by Pastor Tim Keller. He is the senior pastor of a church in New York. He stated that things of this world can only disappoint us. We may end up with one of the four possible reactions if we pursue after the things of this life. First, you blame the things because they do not live up to your expectation, and you feel that you are being cheated. Second, you blame yourself for being so dumb. Third, you conclude that life is unfair to you, and so you become cynical. Fourth, you realize that since nothing in this life can bring you true satisfaction then there must be something long-lasting and worthy that is beyond this world. My friend: Jesus is the only answer. You have been going after water for survival. Only Jesus can give you water for revival. Brothers and sisters: the answer is not Jesus plus something else. Only Jesus can satisfy our hearts. What we need is not more things, but a genuine and eternal relationship with God.