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Now I Know!

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Series: Let God Be God

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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Can you picture it in your mind? A woman whose life had been, at best, a portrait of failure and immorality stood by the side of Jacob's well, at the edge of a city called Sychar. *Next to her sat God.* She didn't recognize Him. We often don't. In this case, she didn't recognize Him because He was clothed in our humanity; He had made Himself of no reputation and had been born in the likeness of man. There He sat. God, in human form, was traveling through the unlikely country of Samaria because there was someone there who needed Him, someone nobody else would even bother with. God went all that distance for one person. He still does.

It was a classic encounter from the standpoint of spiritual truth. God had seated Himself by that historically significant well, and was quietly waiting for that someone who needed Him to arrive. Of course, that someone did. His disciples had been sent on an errand, so there was no one there to interfere with this most unusual confrontation. The one who came was a woman; that was, in Jesus' day, reason enough not even to speak. She was a Samaritan at that; that was reason, in Jesus' day, to ignore her entirely. She was a woman of most questionable reputation. That ought to settle it. Just being seen talking to her could be demeaning to someone who wanted public acceptance.

From man's perspective, here was someone too morally degenerate and too humanly unimportant to waste valuable time with. One of the world's losers. Ah, but from God's perspective, here was someone worth walking for hours into dangerous territory to speak to. No, more than that, from God's perspective, here was someone worth dying for.

God opened the conversation. That, too, was not unusual. He did so by taking the simplest, most common thing available and using it as an object lesson to speak of things eternal. He said to the woman, "*Would you please give me a glass of water?*" An inauspicious beginning, to be sure, for a conversation that

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would ultimately lead to the transformation of so many lives. The woman, of course, was shocked. Not that she was speaking to God; she didn't know that, yet. She was shocked because a Jewish man had spoken to her, a Samaritan woman. She responded accordingly. Jesus answered, "If you only knew who it was you were speaking to, you would have asked Him, and He would have given you Living Water."

Still totally unaware that she was in the presence of God, she reasoned that this man could not possibly do what He claimed He could. For one thing, He didn't have anything to draw water with, and the well was deep, perhaps 100 feet deep. So Jesus had to clarify the difference between the physical and the spiritual, just as He had done with Nicodemus a short time before. With Nick, the illustration He used was birth; with this woman, it was water. But in either case, the situation was the same. The Living Son of God had taken up residence in the body of a man and was using the simplest of physical illustrations to demonstrate the deepest of spiritual truths.

Jesus then tells this confused Samaritan woman that if only she had asked, He would have given her *Living Water*, water that would be *in her* a literal spring, pouring through her spirit day and night, flooding her soul with abundant, exciting, everlasting life. That was His offer.

It is at that point that we continue our story. It is found in John, chapter four,

The woman saith unto Him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.

Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.

The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband:

For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.

The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.

Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.

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Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.

Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.

(John 4:15-26)

The title of today's lesson is: "Now...I Know!"

The outline:

I- Two Simple Facts

II- Four Simple Truths

III- Three Little Words

I- TWO SIMPLE FACTS

This is the second consecutive one-on-one conversation between Jesus and someone with a need. First we listened and we watched as Nicodemus approached Jesus. Now we have listened and watched as Jesus approached a strange Samaritan woman. Thus far, through both confrontations, two simple facts emerge:

Fact 1- Sin is a universal reality. Nicodemus was a good man, a religious man, a socially acceptable man. He never missed church. In all likelihood, he taught in the synagogue. He was respected in the community and was considered to be successful in every facet of life. If you had a religious question, you would have gone to this man for the answer. In our society, you would have likened him to the pillar of the local church; the chairman of the board, head of the nominating committee, and the largest contributor to the building fund. He was Mr. Spiritual.

He only had one problem. It was called sin. No, he hadn't robbed a bank, wasn't unfaithful, wasn't an extortioner, hadn't even gotten a speeding ticket for going too fast on his donkey, or running a stop sign on his camel. He didn't cheat on his taxes, rarely lied to his wife, and seldom lost his temper. He was

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the epitome of the morally upright man. He was so spiritually sensitive that, risking his own reputation, he came to Jesus one night and acknowledged that Jesus was, indeed, a teacher come from God. Nicodemus was a good man. But Nicodemus had never dealt with the sin question. He had assumed that because he was religiously acceptable, he was spiritually whole. Jesus lovingly looked him in the eye, and without so much as acknowledging the man's credentials, the Master simply addressed the issue of life. "You must be born again, Nicodemus. *You must be born from above.*"

The issue wasn't how good Nicodemus was; the issue was that he was separated from a Holy God. He had been born a sinner, and as a sinner, he had sinned. Not great big, unacceptable sins, mind you. But because he was a sinner, he had sinned. And those sins had separated him from God.

The scene changes. Jesus goes through Samaria. He meets this Samaritan woman at the well in Sychar. Everything about her is different from Nicodemus. She was not a Jew. She was not schooled at all in religious matters. She was not the picture of morality, instead she was a perfect picture of fallen man. She had been married so many times, she had the ceremony memorized. And she had finally given up on matrimony and settled for an immoral relationship outside of marriage. She was at the opposite end of the spiritual spectrum, but her problem was identical. Sin. More visible sins, mind you, more socially unacceptable sins; but to God they were still sin, and she was, like Nicodemus, still a sinner.

Does that phrase offend you? Please don't let it. It is not a condemnation of man; it is a commentary on man. It's just the plain, simple truth. Sin separates man from God, and nothing but a miracle can bridge the chasm that exists and reconcile the two. So in these two stories we have two people from the two extremes of life, morally. Yet both were lost, and desperately in need of help. Sin is universal. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. All. Even you. Even me. All.

Fact 2- God's love is beyond our understanding. The fact that we are sinners shouldn't overwhelm us; the fact that a Holy God would care enough about us to leave heaven and come to earth, to lay aside His robes of righteousness and take upon Himself the form of a servant, in order to experience our humanity, and

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then, in the greatest act of love ever demonstrated, to literally take on Himself our sins, that we might take for ourselves His righteousness, Beloved, that is love. You may not be able to explain it, but you have to be able to marvel at it. And while on this earth, God, dwelling in human form, etched once and for all on the scrolls of eternity a pattern depicting how He would behave whenever we would allow Him to be Himself in us. He walked all the way through the Samaritan countryside to tell one insignificant, immoral woman about the love of God. No, I know you cannot grasp it, but please accept it. It is the greatest single miracle that man can ever have the privilege of witnessing... the love of God. It is a greater miracle than space technology, a greater miracle than the recovering of sight to the blind, a greater miracle than all the intricacies of nature itself, as amazing as they are... the love of God. Simple? No doubt about it. And yet, as we discovered in our last study, the sheer simplicity of it multiplies the miracle of it...the love of God.

II- FOUR SIMPLE TRUTHS

So there are two absolutes that must stand on their own before any Scriptural story can be applied to our lives. The first is the *universality of sin*. The second is the miracle of *the love of God*. One requires the other. Without a knowledge of sin, you will never appreciate God's love. Without a knowledge of God's love, you will never be freed from sin. They are the alpha and omega of the gospel. Never forget either.

With those basic facts in mind, we venture now into this passageway marked John, chapter 4, for a more detailed look at this incident, recorded so carefully and so intricately on the pages of the Holy Word of God. Literally dozens of truths clamor for our attention. We will focus on only four. They are equally evident and equally vital in our quest to understand the mind of God.

Truth 1- Your life is an open book to God (verses 17-18).

Nothing you have ever done is hidden. Nothing you have ever thought is secret. The Psalmist wrote "Oh Lord, you know everything there is to know about me. You know when I sit down, and you know when I stand up. You know every thought I have ever thought." Everything. Before God can get your attention or mine, He must somehow impress upon us that we aren't what we pretend to be; we aren't even what others think us to be. We

are what God knows us to be.

This woman heard the Word of God and was ready to take the benefits of God. She liked the idea of never getting hungry or thirsty again. Most of us like the idea of getting in on God's goodness. But she hadn't faced the issue. She was not who she pretended to be, and God knew it. So He asked her to do something she could not do. He asked her to go get her husband. What we will see in a moment, was that Jesus' answer to her reply was what triggered her faith. She would later exclaim, "*Come see a man who told me all I ever did.*" Jesus knew she didn't have a husband, and He knew all about her other relationships. And now she knew that He knew. That was the basis on which He built a platform to lead her into the sunlight.

Truth 2- Partial confessions of sins are not enough (verse 17).

She was willing to admit she didn't have a husband, if that were enough to get her some of that H₂O with the lifetime guarantee. What she wasn't prepared for was that God wasn't so interested in her husband as He was in her heart. At some point, she had to see that her problem was not *circumstantial*, but *spiritual*. She had consistently violated the plan of God for marriage because she did not have the mind of God. She could have married the man she was living with and still been hopelessly lost. You don't fool God by admitting to some lesser sins while asking for a full pardon. He wants you to face the issue of sin head on, and to acknowledge the depth of those sins, and what those sins cost the Son of God.

Fact 3- Where you go to church is not the issue (verses 20-24).

Finally awakening to the fact that this one who so boldly spoke to her of water and wells and husbands and wives was more than a casual visitor, she remarked "*Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet*" (the same kind of conclusion that Nicodemus had come to), and she went on to do what so many do when the heat of reality begins to cause the substance of sin to come to a boil and run over onto the stove of conviction. She raised the denominational smokescreen.

"Our fathers worshipped here; your fathers worshipped there...who do you suppose has the right answers?"

"I was raised a Baptist, and you're a Presbyterian," she might well have said, "Who's right about baptism? Who's right

about the doctrine of election?” Or she might as well have asked, “Who’s right in their form of worship, the Episcopalians? Or the Assembly of God?” Or she might have wailed into Jesus’ ear, “I like the churches with the big buildings, but my third husband was a deacon in one of those ‘give-it-all-to-missions’ mentality churches. Who’s right?”

Jesus might as well have answered, “I don’t care whether you worship here or there, *where* you worship is not the issue. *How* you worship is not even the issue. *Who you worship is the issue.* God is a Spirit, and those who worship Him must do so with their spirits. That requires the Holy Spirit. He comes in when Jesus comes in, and once you have Him, where you worship, and how is the icing on the cake. You’re worrying about what kind of gas to use, and you don’t even have a car. In one fell swoop, Jesus took all of our self-serving exclusivism and our narrow concepts that limit the Body of Christ to a group or a denomination or a creed, and set them ablaze with the Words of Truth. You won’t get to heaven because you belong to what you consider to be “the” church, or any church or all the churches in the world. You will get to heaven when God’s Spirit invades your spirit at your invitation, and you are able to worship Him for who He is...Living Truth.

Truth 4- To know about Jesus is not the same as knowing Jesus (verse 25).

Once Jesus got the denominational dilemma out of the way, our searching Samaritan tried one more ploy to avoid the real issue. She said, “I’ve heard that the Messiah is coming, and *when He comes*, He will tell us everything.” In other words, she had done her homework. She knew all about the Coming One. At least she knew enough about him to talk about him intelligently. The trouble was, she *didn’t know Him*. God Himself was standing right in front of her, offering her the only thing that would ever save her from an eternity of darkness, and she was trying to impress Him with her theology. Needless to say, God was not impressed. The Pharisees had a similar problem. They knew virtually all there was to know *about* God. In fact, that was part of their problem. They were so entranced with their knowledge, that they missed the King of Glory!

You can know enough about Jesus to teach Sunday School, and *not know Him*. You can know enough about Jesus to teach

seminary, and *not know Him*. You can be an intellectual giant and a theological genius, and yet be totally devoid of spiritual power. Like a huge transformer that stands by the side of the road, impressing the world with its sheer awesomeness, but has never been connected to the source of its power, you can *appear to be an authority* on Jesus Christ and be totally powerless.

III- THREE LITTLE WORDS

That brings us to the conclusion of the story, and that brings us to the reason for the story. It brings us to what led to the issuing forth of those three little words that change the course of a man or woman's life.

The story goes on, in verses 27 to 38, to tell of the disciples' arrival on the scene. You guessed it, they showed no interest in the woman's soul. They just couldn't understand why the Master was wasting His time talking to her. They no doubt assumed her to be a pest and assumed Jesus to be too kind to ignore her. It never entered their minds that Jesus had trekked those long miles through Samaria *just so He could meet this woman with the pathetic past*.

But this woman was deeply moved by her confrontation with Jesus. So overwhelmed was she, that she left her waterpots where they were and ran into the city, and said to the men of the city: "Come see a man who told me all things that I ever did. Is not this the Christ?" So there was an exodus out of the city as those curious men ran to see for themselves just who this prophet with so much insight might be. And where, you might ask, were Jesus' trusted aides? Well, verses 31 to 34 indicate that they were begging the Master to eat His Big Mac before it got cold. Jesus replied, "I have food to eat that you know not of." He was speaking, of course, of spiritual food, but once again, this tunnel-visioned team of His couldn't get the pieces in place, so they began to question whether or not there was a Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet in Sychar that they didn't know about. Poor souls. They were still a long way from understanding. But look at the grand finale of the story. It is what we are looking for. Verse 39 raises the curtain on the final act of this, one of the most vital encounters in history.

And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.

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So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days.

And many more believed because of his own word;

And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

(John 4:39-42)

Now, we believe! Not because of what has happened to you. We have heard Him ourselves, and now we know this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world. Now, we know.

They had been filled with curiosity because of what the woman had said. *They became filled with life because of what Jesus said.* Once they met Him for themselves, they no longer had to go around quoting what somebody else said about this carpenter from Nazareth. Now...they knew! They knew what? They knew He was God. They knew He was their Savior. Now they knew.

Do you know Jesus? Has there ever come a time when you have personally invited Jesus Christ to come into your life, to deal with the sin in your life, and make you whole? Has there ever been a time when you have recognized that your life is an open book to God, and that the issue is not where you worship or what you have done. The issue is *who you worship, and what He has done.* Do you know so much about Jesus, that it never dawns on you that you do not really know Jesus? Are you like Nicodemus? Moral? Religious? But empty? Or are you like this woman? Immoral? Irreligious? But still empty? These men had heard about Jesus and were informed. But beloved, when they met Jesus they were *transformed.* That is the difference between life and death.

Your loving God knows just where you will be when you are finally ready to meet Him. All the way into your Samaria He comes. Patiently, by the well of life, He waits. Lovingly, He approaches you. "Beloved, are you thirsty? Does your soul long to be satisfied? Ask me, and I will fill your cup with living water. I will plant within your heart an everlasting spring, a fountain that flows through your spirit with the water of life, and you *will never thirst again.*"

I know what thoughts go racing through your mind at a time

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like this. I know because they have been recorded in Scripture. You think, “I’m not so bad that I need a Savior.” Oh, Beloved, that gentle friend called Jesus who sits beside you at the well of life *knows your heart*. Your life is an open book to God. Don’t believe the devil’s lie. Sin is universal. You, too, must be born again.

Or you may be thinking, “but I’m not as big a sinner as so-and-so is.” Oh, my child, that’s not the issue. You’re not as holy as God is...*that’s the issue*. So He wants to enter your life and give you His life.

Maybe you’re thinking, “But I don’t go to this church.” Again may I remind you that God does not live in this building or any other building. God is Spirit. And you need His Spirit to worship Him in truth. Where you worship Him is not the issue; if you worship Him is.

Or finally, you may be thinking, “But I have known *about* Jesus for years! So did this woman. So did Nicodemus. But *do you KNOW Him?* Or like these men of Sychar, have you spent your life listening to what someone else has said about Jesus? Isn’t it time for you to, like those men, meet Jesus for yourself.

With outstretched arms, He beckons to you right now. He wants to fill your cup with life. He wants to give you *living water*. Won’t you ask Him to do that right now? It will be forever Easter. And you will be able forever to say...

“Once I knew about Him...but now I *know* Him.

Now I know! He is the Christ. And he is my Savior. Now I know!”

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