

## The Woman At The Well: “The Cracked Pot”

-Today we are going to start our lesson off with a short story about some watering pots. There are places in our world today where people have to take their own watering pots to a community well to gather their water for the day. This story is about two particular pots that an elderly lady took everyday to the community well. As you listen, see if you can identify with one of the pots from this story.

-An elderly Chinese woman had two large pots, each hung on the ends of a pole on which she carried across her neck as she traveled to the well to gather water for the day. One of the pots had a crack in it while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water. At the end of the long walk from the well to the house, the cracked pot arrived only half full. For a full two years this went on daily, with the woman bringing home only one and a half pots of water. Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments. But the cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection, and miserable that it could only do half of what it had been made to do. After two years of what it perceived to be bitter failure, it spoke to the woman one day by the stream. “I am ashamed of myself, because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your house.” The old woman smiled, “Did you notice that there are flowers on your side of the path, but not on the other pot’s side? That’s because I have always known about your flaw, so I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back, you water them. For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate the table. Without you being just the way you are, there would not be this beauty to grace the house.” The cracked pot then realized that out of its brokenness came beauty.

-How many of you feel like a “cracked pot”? (...)

-Let’s take a moment and ask ourselves, have we ever felt like we don’t have much to offer like this cracked pot did? (...)

-Have any of you felt that due to age or physical limitations that you can’t offer as much as someone else may who is younger or healthier?

-Have you ever wanted to help someone financially but because of your own financial limitations you couldn’t, but someone else was because they had it? Did it make you feel inadequate? (...)

-Maybe you have felt you were not “cracked up” to be relevant in today’s culture or talented enough? (...)

-Here is a tough one - maybe you have had some things happen to you in the past that broke your spirit, possibly lowered your self-esteem and caused you to struggle with a lack of confidence. Have you ever compared yourself with someone else who *seems* to be more solid and together than you are? (...)

-If you are like most people, we have all had times of feeling inadequate and unworthy just like this cracked pot.

-Today we are going to look at a woman’s story in the Bible that may have felt that way too, but we are going to see how Jesus turned this “cracked pot” into a water

fountain for others. Beauty came from her ashes and beauty can come from ours as well.

**-It all begins when Jesus was in Judea and knew His Father (God) was calling Him to start bringing the good news to the Gentiles of the world.**

**-Does anyone know who the Gentiles are? (Anyone who is not a Jew.)**

**-So, Jesus followed God's calling and started traveling from Judea to Galilee to start His ministry with the Gentiles. But the interesting fact is He decided to go against all convention of that time and go through the very despised region of Samaria to get to Galilee. It was a shortcut but the Jews hated the Samaritans so much so that they would go a longer roundabout way to get to Galilee just to avoid them.**

**-The Samaritans were a race of people that the Jews utterly despised as having no claim on their God. But Jesus had no racial or ethnic barriers. Jesus purposefully chose to go straight through it for He knew of a needy soul that desperately needed His help, a "cracked pot" that needed to know its purpose.**

**-Let's begin the story by reading our first verse on our Verse Sheet aloud and together:** (John 4:5-8 "So He (Jesus) came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, *tired as He was from the journey*, sat down by the well. It was about *noon*. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Will you give me a drink?' (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)"

**-What time of day was it? (Noon)**

**-Do you think this was the hottest time of day to draw water? (...)**

**-In that culture, women would usually gather water from the well in the cool of the morning, using it as a social time to gather news and gossip, before heading home to work.**

**-By noon, when this lady arrived, most people were taking siestas because of the heat of the day.**

**-Does anyone know why this Samaritan woman would choose to take that time of day to go to the well, when no one was around? (She was an outcast among her own people. She had been married 5 times and was now living with a man who was not her husband. This way she could avoid the stares, gossip and condemnation from others.)**

**-I want to explain something here. It was not unusual for women of this time to have been married several times. Five marriages did not make her a sinner. In that culture famine, disease, warfare and injury caused the death of many of these ladies' husbands. A widow either became a beggar, a prostitute, or another man's wife.**

**-The first five times she did it right by marrying them. But sharing her bed with the sixth man without marriage was a sin and frowned upon.**

**-But our Lord already knew this in His divine wisdom and still wanted to speak to her. No matter how tired He was from the journey, He wanted to interact with this precious soul!**

**-Think about this for a moment, He is never too tired to intervene on our behalf or our loved ones behalf! Psalm 121:4 says “He never sleeps, He never slumbers”.**

**-Let’s look at the rest of the story to see what the Lord wanted to share with this precious “cracked pot”.**

**-Let’s read together our next verse together, #2 on our Verse Sheet:** (John 4:9 “The Samaritan woman said to Him, ‘You are a Jew and I am a *Samaritan* woman. How can you ask me for a drink?’ (For Jews do not associate with the Samaritans.)”

**-Why do you think she is shocked that He would speak to her?** (In their culture the Jews weren’t suppose to speak to Samaritans, much less to a woman who was considered property at that time, without her husband present. They were the lowliest of the lows, especially this Samaritan woman. And rabbis (who Jesus was considered one of) had no business speaking to shady ladies such as this according to the religious laws and customs of that time.)

**-Let’s ask ourselves a question, Was Jesus willing to toss out all the cultural norms of religion of that day to touch this soul? (Yes!)**

**-Are we? (...)** Is there someone who may be of another religion or situation in life that we may need to consider reaching out to, so they may know the love of Jesus through us? (...)

**-Funny thing is, she had such a low self-esteem from so much hurt in her past and rejection that she didn’t believe anyone like Jesus would even acknowledge her existence as a person, much less speak to her.**

**-We need to ask ourselves, Can we be the hands and feet of Jesus to someone like that today?(...)**

**-This Samaritan lady is a broken vessel and we are going to watch how Jesus pours into her to give her new life and purpose.**

**-Let’s read our next verse together, #3 on our Verse Sheet:** (John 4:10 “Jesus answered her, ‘*If you knew* the gift of God and Who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water.’”)

**-The Lord continues to stir this heart that needed Him. He is trying to slowly help break down her walls and help her understand Who she is talking to and what He can do for her if she would but ask.**

**-We are not that much different from her at times in our own lives.**

**-When we are broken, doesn’t the Lord keep calling us to Him to get a drink from His precious fountain of hope, love and peace through spending time in His Word and with Him in those times? (...)**

**-Do we remember Who He is and what He is capable of doing if we would but ask? (...)**

**-Sometimes it can be very hard when we are hurting like this woman.**

**-Too many times we do what this poor woman does in our next verse. Let’s read it together, #4 on our Verse Sheet:** (John 4:11-12 “‘Sir,’ the woman said, ‘You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can You get this living water? Are

You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock?”)

**-What is she focusing on?** (The situation, the circumstance.)

**-When we are broken, do we tend to focus on that too, the situation, the circumstance?** (...)

**-But, just as we will see Him patiently draw her to Him, He does that for us as well. Helping us to focus on Him and what He has to offer and not our situations.**

**-Let's read our next verse together, #5 on our Verse Sheet to see what He says:**

(John 4:13-14 “Jesus answered, ‘Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but *whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.*”)

**-Jesus is saying that the wells of this world, the waters that promise satisfaction in earthly things or relationships, are not able to quench the souls and longings of mankind. It is only His offering of His own life, the living water, when our souls will truly be fully satisfied.**

**-Do you think this woman is having a hard time understanding what He is talking about?** (...)

**-When you read God's Words, do you sometimes have a hard time understanding what He is saying?** (...)

**-That is okay, because just like He helps this woman come to a conclusion, He does that for us too if we will but patiently wait for Him.**

**-Let's read what she has to say in #6 on our Verse Sheet:** (John 4:15 “The woman said to Him, ‘Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.’”)

**-What is she continuing to focus on?** (Her physical need.)

**-Now, let's not judge too quickly and call her shallow! When we are broken, a lot of times we are anxious for God to fix the physical or emotional needs that brought us to that brokenness.**

**-We tend to overlook that God wants to bring us to oneness with Him in it.**

**-But, again, in our next verse He starts bringing her home to understanding. Let's read #7 together on our Verse Sheet:** (John 4:16-18 “He told her, ‘Go, call your husband and come back.’ ‘I have no husband,’ she replied. Jesus said to her, ‘You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.’”)

**-Why do you think Jesus brought all of this out into the open?** (He knew she needed to acknowledge her sin first before she could ever understand the need for His saving grace. True repentance comes from knowing where you are at and what He has done for us.)

**-When we are broken, He wants us to see where that may have come from. It could be from someone else's sin or it could be our own. It could just be circumstances of life. But just like this woman, He doesn't leave us there. He guides us to Him and His need for His grace, mercy, forgiveness and strength.**

**-Let's read our next verse to see Him do this, #8 (John 4:25-26 "The woman said, 'I know that Messiah' (called Christ) 'is coming. When He comes, He will explain everything to us.' Then Jesus declared, 'I, the One speaking to you – I am He.'")**

**-How did He tell her? (He just said it, I am He!)**

**-When we read God's Word (The Bible) how often do you think Christ is telling us that He is the Messiah, the One able to lift us from our brokenness into a life complete and whole with Him? A life with forgiveness, purpose and meaning? (All the time. It is written all the way from Genesis to Revelations.)**

**-As the story continues in John 4, this woman does accept Him as her Lord and Savior. She not only believes, but she runs to tell all those in her town about Him and shares her testimony. This broken vessel begins to water the path for others to find beauty in our Lord.**

**-Let's read our last verse together to see how this woman, who was a broken pot, poured out the love that Jesus showed to her by sharing it with others in her town. Let's see what happened, #9 on our Verse Sheet: (John 4:39 "Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in Him because of the woman's testimony...")**

**-So how many believed? (Many.)**

**-Because of what? (Her testimony.)**

**-Do you believe that you have a testimony too? (...)**

**-Everyone in here has some kind of testimony, either one that has walked with the Lord throughout their life or one that has walked without Him.**

**-Let me ask a question, can it seem hard to share your testimony when others may not be asking about it or seem to care to know? (...)**

**-The truth is that our whole lives are a testimony, how we speak, how we live, how we act and how we walk out our faith in our daily living. People are watching us whether they are doing it on purpose or don't even realize they are doing it.**

**-Each of us is sharing our testimony with the world all around us and what we say and do tells others about our faith in Christ. It is our life's story and our testimony, whether spoken or unspoken.**

**-But, if we do get an opportunity to verbally share our testimony like this woman did, share it boldly and lovingly. Encouraging the listener all along the way about how much God loves them and wants to give them His grace, mercy and faithfulness so they may live a life of peace, joy and comfort. Offer to pray for them too. You never know how God will use them as He did this woman at the well.**

**-When we go back to our original Chinese Proverb at the beginning of this lesson and think of all the flowers the broken pot produced, it reminds me of all the souls that this "Samaritan pot" produced because she shared her story with others. She watered the town with her testimony.**

**-Let's remember that even when we feel like broken vessels, He spends time with us to heal us, just as He did with her, and through that gives us a purpose to water all the souls that He brings around us day by day with the same grace, love and mercy that He showed us. So, let's get busy watering today with our love!**

**“THE WOMAN AT THE WELL: THE CROCKED POT” VERSE SHEET**

1. John 4:5-8 “So He (Jesus) came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, *tired as He was from the journey*, sat down by the well. It was about *noon*. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, ‘Will you give me a drink?’ (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)”
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3. John 4:10 “Jesus answered her, ‘*If you knew the gift of God and Who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water.*’”
4. John 4:11-12 “‘Sir,’ the woman said, ‘You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can You get this living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock?’”
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7. John 4:16-18 “He told her, ‘Go, call your husband and come back.’ ‘I have no husband,’ she replied. Jesus said to her, ‘You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.’”
8. John 4:25-26 “The woman said, ‘I know that Messiah’ (called Christ) ‘is coming. When He comes, He will explain everything to us.’ Then Jesus declared, ‘I, the One speaking to you – I am He.’”
9. John 4:39 “Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in Him because of the woman’s testimony...”