

## **New Beginnings**

### **by Chris Famisaran**

Morning, everybody. Happy New Year.

(Congregation Happy New Year)

God is great

(congregation all the time)

all the time

(congregation God is great). Seeing if you would catch up on that one, pick that one up.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, Lord, we thank you for another day of life and Lord now another year, to be able to experience you and what you're going to do for us. We pray that as we open the Word today, Lord, help us learn what you want us to know. And also apply it to our lives. And God, we just thank you for the opportunity to meet together as a family in Jesus name. Amen.

Oh, I hope your new years was quiet last night. Mine wasn't and I know several of our fellow brothers and sisters here seems at about 11:55p. Everybody thought it would be great to light fireworks off. Those of you who have dogs and cats probably had them running around the house. Sigh, but praise God we're here.

I'd like to begin with the story. Don't remember the exact name of the young lady, but let's just call her Dena. She was a teenager. And she had another older brother named Adam, who was in the military and he was serving overseas. And they've grown up the model American family mom, dad, two kids, boy and girl. Parents both hard working father was a foreman for a company and surprisingly, did pretty well. And so needs were well provided for. Eventually her mother got sick, got breast cancer. And as she entered teenage years, she had become a little more responsible and helped care for her mom while her dad was work. Her brother away serving in Afghanistan and Iraq depending on he went on several deployments well. Her mom began to get sicker and sicker, and sicker. Until eventually the final prognosis was she had several months. And sadly, her mother passed away and it was hard for the family. Her brother was able to come back, spend time together, grieve. And then he went back on for to continue to finish out the deployment. About a week before he was supposed to return. He was killed by a roadside car bombing.

The response at home course was difficult. Hard. It came from a town that valued a small town that loved and valued each member for those especially who also served and Dena loved her brother. It broke her heart. Well, she went out with some friends. And when she drove up, her father was looking out the window and as she got out of the car from the young man who was driving her she was walking up she was trying to fix her hair and fix her top. I think he can probably figure out what was going on. When she came in, her father started to scream and berate her. Now, she was simply trying to go out, hang out with friends, done nothing too bad. But it was the final straw that had broken her father's back

because he'd endured the loss of his wife and now his son and now his daughter was acting in a manner that was unbecoming of the family in his eyes.

So he never hit her. She went to her room. She laid down on her bed and she said, You know what? I'm out of here. I'm old enough. So she gathered her things. She opened the window and she left. Her father, meanwhile, was steaming for several hours and he realized what a knucklehead he had been. So he waited until the morning to wake up. He went to her room, he knocked on the door. Nothing. He opened it, and he realize everything was neat, but she wasn't there. He thought that's odd.

Well, time would go on. She would never come home, he filed a missing persons report. Nothing. He could not find her. Meanwhile, Dena. I called some friends and asked, Hey, can I stay with you? She tried to hide from the father because she was so angry. How dare he talked to her that way. So she, she decided she would resolved in her heart that she was never going to go home. And unfortunately, this is a common story of a child running away. Well, you can imagine what can happen there. She met some influential people in her eyes, promising her everything. And yet unfortunately, fell in a negative lifestyle that I don't want to, you know, because kids are here, but you as adults can figure out what happened. And she was stuck in this cycle of substance abuse, other kinds of abuses. And so finally, after a couple of years, she felt like there was no way out, there was no hope she couldn't get away. And finally, after being struck by one of the individuals, she decided, I don't care if it kills me, I will get out. And so she waited a couple of days. And finally, she could get away. She got out. And as she was running away, she came to a road. And there was a car there coming at her and she waved her hands frantically, and the car drove by. This happened several times until finally, there was a car of an older woman. And the younger woman. They asked, "Hey, are you okay?" "Yes, please, I just need a ride anywhere and out of here." They said, "Okay, get in." I mean, who does that? In this day and age, maybe 30-50 years ago would have been a different story. But now you don't do that. And they could obviously see that she was in distress. She had some challenges. She knew they knew she needed help. And by the grace of God, these two individuals out of their own volition, were kind and graceful took her home, they had a spare apartment, and said, Look, just stay here overnight, and in the morning, we'll figure out what to do.

And there began a journey of a long journey for Dena she decided she wanted to get clean, she wanted to get help. But there was something that as time went by, as she finally had gone through a program, she needed to face her fear. She needed to call her father. And so, Mrs. Collins, the woman who had picked her up, called her dad. Is it Mr. Albert there to say yes, this is Mr. Albert. I have your daughter, would you like to speak to her? Instantly his heart swelled and yet was also fearful. And on the other end of the line, all he could hear was "Daddy." He simply said, "Dena, I love you. And I'm sorry. Please, come home." For Dena had been several years where she'd been longing just to hear her dad's voice and hopefully not being a voice that is condemning, because that was her worst fear. Yet instead of a voice of fear and condemnation, she found brokenness and love. It would be a little bit before she'd be reunited with her dad. But the journey to grace and reconciliation had begun. For Dena she'd experienced several years as an outcast being caught in a life that was debilitating, painful, then it will take a long time for her to heal. She felt ostracized, not being able to reach out to those that she knew she had a new lease a new beginning on life. Amen.

So today, I want to begin a journey. And the next couple of well, at least for this month, and the next month, we're going to, in a way be talking about mission. But I want to start with the story of the

woman at the well. And we're going to kind of look back and reflect on a mission, we're going to talk about vision and, and how we do that, and then also reflect to this one story. Now, every follower of Jesus, we all have a story of how we came to God, right. And all of these stories are going to vary, because we're all not the same. We we probably were raised in different parts of the world, we we came up and let's just say different. Some of us grew up very well, some of us did not grow up as financially affluent. Some of us came from different parts that were very well, it was awesome, and others not so great. Some of us grew up not in the faith, some of us did. And all of this combined, gives us the opportunity to have different viewpoints, different experiences. And as a collective, God has called us together, he is the head, and we as the body to do our part, to share the good news of Jesus Christ. And so I want to begin this year, talking about what God has in mind, at least as a very basic part, what is the church called to do to share Jesus with others, and we'll talk a little bit more intentionally about that next week.

But today, I want to talk about the fact that everybody begins their faith journey somewhere. For some, it may start at the very beginning, because your parents, from the very day you were born, maybe you were here, you were dedicated in the church as a baby, and you grew up in the church. And some you're, you're thinking about joining the church right now. And all of this is good news.

And so we're gonna go to the book of John, let's go to the book of John chapter four, the book of John, chapter four. And it's here that we find that Jesus has an encounter with a woman, a Samaritan woman. And in this case, for this woman, it probably was unexpected, she had no idea that she was going to meet the Son of God, or that her life was going to be profoundly impacted. In fact, one of the things that we have to keep in mind is that God sometimes acts in unexpected moments, is this true in your life? Okay, God, just out of the ordinary, out of somewhere out of the ordinary made something extraordinary. God sometimes acts in unexpected moments. And so the story that we're going to read and study is a woman who she had an idea of who God was, and then her life is changed radically. Okay. So, John, chapter four, are we all there? Now, we're going to read through this story, and some of it I'm going to highlight especially. But let's just kind of look at the whole story. Now, Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John, although in fact, he was not Jesus who baptized but his disciples. So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee. Now, he had to go through some area. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph, and Jacob's well was there. And Jesus tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well and it was about noon.

Now it's interesting. So Jesus is sending out a well and John has been very intentional about including this little nugget here. When you look back on the Old Testament, are there any stories of where people were at the well, and maybe something profound happened at the well? Okay, let's let's name some Moses, right Okay, who did he meet there? The daughters who ended up turning into one of them became what? His wife, right? Anybody else? Maybe meet a potential spouse near a well? How about Jacob, his eyes longed and saw for Rachel. And we also maybe Jacob's dad, also by proxy of his representative, also found who? Rebecca, right. This is not lost on John. And so they're a little bit of a little bit of a reminder for our Jewish believers here who are Jewish Christians who are reading this. And remember, this is the second generation, this is not the first generation of people following Jesus, this is the second generation of believers. And so they're catching up on this, okay? And so it's, it's interesting how, as, as you as we'll read, that these guys meet their spouse as well in a foreign land. Each woman leaves tell the family or the father, and eventually they come to meet the great patriarch, and the

woman marries, falls in love with the person. Okay, now, the Samaritan woman is not going to fall in love with Jesus. Not that way. But in a way, you'll see the connection. Okay.

Now, who are the Samaritans by the way, Jesus going through Samaria... Was that common? No, Jesus, being a good Jew is not being a good Jew. Why would he go through Samaria? Because if you were a good Jew in their eyes, you would avoid Samaria? Well, the Samaritans were a group of people who lived obviously in Samaria, in area that was north of Jerusalem. Um, but they were considered half Jews and half Gentiles. So, you know, maybe I'm not trying to make fun of but let's just maybe they they were not even though they worship the same God, they were not accepted into the family. Because years before, I believe it was a 721 BC the Assyrians captured the northern kingdom of Israel. And they left behind the ones that behind basically intermarried with the Assyrians. And so these people, they were neither fully Hebrew nor fully Gentiles and the Samaritans had their own view of the first five books Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. And they use this, the scriptures as their own view of worship. And so, Jesus, the Jews, Samaritans, they did not, you know, deal with one another. Well, Jesus dealt with them fine, but the Jews and Samaritans, they didn't like each other. In fact, I mean, you look at the story of the Good Samaritan, right? Nobody the guy, the lawyer didn't even want to admit that the Good Samaritan was the good dude in the whole story and actually helped.

So she has an idea of who God is. So Jesus, meeting the Samaritan woman at the well is also a theme found in the Old Testament. But it Jesus should not be there and more than that, he shouldn't even be talking to her because men and women unless you were married, you did not talk to one another. And as we'll find, as we read, she came to the well about noon, women generally did not come during the middle of the day. Okay, so Jesus is breaking all cultural barriers right here, all cultural norms. He's a Jew, in a Samaritan place, talking to a Samaritan woman. And he says, Hey, will you give me a drink of water?

By the way, and in other translations, it says, you know, it was about the sixth hour. Anything related to the cross on there? Okay, I'll leave that little nugget for you. When you read the read the read Jesus last hours last days of his life, maybe see if there's a connection there.

He asked her, "Will you give me a drink?" So his disciples had gotten to town to get food. And they left Jesus there by the well by himself. And so the Samaritan woman, by the way, let's just when when Jesus talks to people, he also in the book of John, he uses riddles instead of parables. And so Jesus is asking questions. So let's focus here now on John four, seven through 14. He says, Well, you give me a drink? And the Samaritan woman said to him, you're a Jew. I'm a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for what a drink for Jews did not associate with Samaritans? Jesus said, 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 what? Living Water? Okay? Those of you who maybe know the answer, what's Jesus referring to here in this living water? Okay, could also look at as the Holy Spirit now Jesus will talk more about that in John seven. But here Jesus is broadening her perspective. So she says, Sir, you have nothing to draw within the well as deep so she's thinking literal... Jesus thinking from a trying to use an analogy, where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father, Jacob? Okay, so she knows who Jacob is. She knows who Abraham is. Who gave us the well and drank from it himself as it also his son's and livestock. And Jesus responded with everyone who drinks this water will be what? thirsty again. Okay, so Jesus is pointing out the obvious look, you can drink from this well, but what he's really saying is I'm offering something even better than this literal water. And so he says, Indeed, the water I give them will become in them. a

spring of water welling up into what? Eternal life. And so Jesus is explaining to her, Hey, what I have to offer is better than anything, any kind of Evian or Arrowhead that you could experience. Okay? I have the power, the words that I have and the power of the Holy Spirit can change your life. And so he continues, or she continues, she says, Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty have to keep coming here to draw water. Obviously, you know, look, if you have to never go back and get water. That'd be super convenient, right?

And then Jesus gets a little personal. So it says, Hey, Go call your husband, and come back. Probably says, I have no husband. And then Jesus responds, yeah, you're right, when you say you have no husband. And the fact is that you have how many husbands ? 5. And the man you have now is not your husband, what you have said, just said is quite true. And she says, Sir, I can see that you're a prophet. So now her eyes are opening. This isn't just somebody randomly sitting by the well. Could this be? Could this be the one that is spoken of? Could this be the Messiah? So she says our ancestors worshiped on the mountains But you Jews claim that you that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem. So you can kind of see already the divide here as well, when she says you Jews. So it's almost like she's pointing a finger saying, you guys. But now Jesus is going to flip that whole narrative upside down. Okay. As we look here, in verse 21. Jesus is expanding the paradigm and he says woman, and when he says woman, he's not like a woman. It's it's a term of endearment of respect. He says, Believe me a time is coming for you when you worship the Father, neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know we worship what we do know for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and now has come. It's not future Jesus is now saying the present tense has come when the true worshipers will worship the Father, in spirit, and in truth. For they are the kind of worshipers the father's seeks goddess spirit, in his worshipers must worship in the Spirit. And in truth. Here, Jesus is starting to open up the paradigm and see that no longer are you going to have to go to the temple and sacrifice. But you're going to worship through the Spirit.

Opening up to the idea that salvation is not just for the Jews, it's not going to be for the Samaritans. It is for everybody. The true worshipers of God. When we look through the Bible, we find that even people or even outside we, there's stories that validate this where they don't know exactly who they're worshipping. But when you hear their stories, you realize that God is making an imprint. They've never heard of Matthew or Exodus. But they got God had been able to reach out to them in a way that they could understand. Signifying that with God, all things are possible. Okay. And so the woman, verse 25, she says, I know that the Messiah called Christ is coming. And so she, the beautiful thing is, she knew who Christ was, and she was waiting for the Messiah to come. And when he comes, he will explain everything to us. And here, Jesus loads this bombshell on to her, he says, I, the one speaking to you, I am he.

Can you imagine being this woman here, where she's just thinking, she's having a normal conversation. And all of a sudden, her whole world is now going to get flipped upside down, where she was just going to get water. In here she meets a man. And now is explaining wonderful truths. That God desires us to worship in spirit, and in truth. But she also knows that God knows who she really is. Let's just kind of highlight a few things. So just then his disciples returned, and were surprised to find in talking with the woman, but no one asked, Hey, what do you want? Or why are you talking with her? And here in verse 20, then leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, come see a man who told me everything I ever did, could this be the Messiah? Interesting to know that one of the first evangelists was a woman goes to her hometown and tells her people, Hey, this guy knows who I

am, he was able to explain everything about me. It was her testimony that drew the people as we will add you as you will read later on, that draws them to finally believe in who Jesus is.

And so the disciples meanwhile, they're urging Jesus to eat Hey, Rabbi, please, you know, eat something. Jesus responds, I have food to eat that you know nothing about and some of them are scratching their heads. Who brought him food or their again, Jesus using riddles. And Jesus says My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me to finish the work. And he goes on he talks about is it still four months until harvest? I tell you open your eyes and look at the fields that are ripe for harvest every now the one even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvest the crop free total life, said the sower and the Reaper may be glad together thus the same one souls and other reaps is true I sent you to reap but you have not worked for others have done the hard work and yet you have reaped the benefits of their labor. Jesus is implying the fact that look, it's time I am here to share the Good News. The harvest is ready, but we need to have people do we want to be a people who was ready and dedicated to answer the call to share the Good News of Jesus with others, that others may know who Jesus is, and find hope, salvation and blessing in the Lord.

I think the world is in need of the Good news, amen. Because most of the news that I hear very rarely is a good. In fact, all this headlines. Pick your log and headlines, generally not good. And this all ties together of how Jesus meets this woman. She shares who he is, she goes, and now we're going to find that she brings people back. But in the midst of this Jesus's sharing with the people who are already in the faith and already in the church, being reminded to because he's talking to the second, this is talking to the second generation. Look, we need to be ready. Are you ready to share the good news?

And so just as a highlight, verses 39, through 42, many of the Samaritans believe the woman and everybody knew who she was, okay? It was not lost on them. But because of her testimony, she was able to bring everybody out. And Jesus didn't just go out and meet and greet and say, hi, because how long did he stay with them? Three days, three days that he could spend time getting to know, in sharing wonderful, awesome things that they can take with them to help build up their faith that they too could also go out, they could all have a new beginning in life.

Now, what does this all mean, for us? Well, I think there's a couple lessons that we can learn from this story. And especially for the Samaritan woman, there are three things that we can take away. And I wish I was smart enough to say that this is my ideas. And unfortunately, it's not. My good friend, Peter shared these with me, and I'm just stealing the moment to share them with you because they're too good.

One lesson that we can take is that Jesus provided a sense of belonging for the Samaritan woman. Because she had an identity, a reputation. Was it a great reputation? No. Jesus gave her a place to belong. And I think we sometimes take that for granted. Now some of us would prefer to stay home and be inside, right. And to some degree, I am like that, I mean, I love everybody. But I also need to have my alone time. I think that the last few years have highlighted the fact that we want to belong together. That's why you're all here. Otherwise, you could be staying home and maybe watching us here on YouTube. But know, you've found that it is valuable enough that you want to be here to be with your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, but also to come and worship God, because this is your home.

The second thing that we can take from this is that Jesus restored her dignity, her self worth. It's here that she suddenly realizes that she has value. She means something. She's not just well, let's just name her. Let's just name her. What do you want to call her? Help me out. Anybody have a name? Rita? Okay.

So Rita has value self worth. She has a past. But now, she has hope she has a future. She's found redemption. How many of us have made mistakes in the past that maybe we're still struggling over right now because it's hard for us to let it go because it was a horrible thing. There is redemption and hope and self worth in Jesus.

And the final thing, the third thing that we can take from this story is that she found purpose. Because now she discovered that, Hey, I found something great. I have found redemption. And now I want to share it with everybody. God gives us purpose for our life. It's not that just we follow God. But we have a purpose to understand who God is to have the same values of God of Jesus, but also passing those values on to others in the good news in the hope of Jesus Christ and also God's return. So belonging self worth and purpose. And I take comfort in this story because it is Jesus who has all power and authority and strength to overcome the world.

Seemingly a little innocuous story is actually mind boggling amount of awesomeness. My wife just cringed at that. And I've okay, what I mean say is that God is able to do amazing things in unexpected ways. When was the last time God unexpectedly showed up in your life? Maybe it was when you first met God, or maybe it's been a couple of years in your faith journey kind of gets a little tired, and maybe you've plateaued. But God doesn't want us to stay plateaued. God wants us to rise. And even when we may be falling dip, God is there to bring us back up to find self worth, to find purpose, and a sense of belonging.

So this week, as you reflect, okay, when you first met, Jesus was at a time of rejoicing, or uncertainty. And in that journey, okay, as you reflect back since then, what are some of the highlights in your walk with Jesus? I want you to think back and remember, what are some of the highlights maybe was your baptism or maybe you helped lead somebody to Christ and they got baptized, whatever it may be, think back and reflect on those things.

And so as you reflect, I also want to challenge you this week. So every day this week in your daily prayer, I want you to give something give God give to God, something that you are struggling with, or are challenged by, we all have challenges. We all have things that that hold us up. And much like the woman at the well she had her burdens. And yet when she met Jesus, those burdens, were finally shackled. And I want you to have that same experience in this week of every day, whether it's in your morning prayer evening prayers, sometime pray and give that burden that that grief, whatever it is to God, and may you be freed by its weight, amen. So may the Lord bless you lead and guide you may you find belonging may you find self worth and may you find your purpose.

Father in heaven, thank you for the beautiful story of the woman at the well as we begin this, this series on mission and, and going out into the world and how we can do so. Lord, open our hearts and our minds and may you bless 2022 Here at Downey church, with baptisms with growth. And above all, Lord, may we be united and committed to you and until that day that you return give us wisdom, strength and courage. And Lord may we love and empathize as you did. Thank you for your great sacrifice. We love you and worship you All Glory to you in Jesus name. Amen.

Grace and peace everybody.