

NBC Devotional
September 13, 2023
“What Did She Know? And When Did She Know It?”

I want us to think about a question... In February 2017, Donald Trump’s antagonists asked of him: “What did he know and when did he know it?” The question, of course, was an echo of that asked by Howard Baker in the special Watergate committee, June 29, 1973 – 50 years ago!

We’re not here to discuss politics, but that question is older than politics. It goes back to the days of Jesus: What did she know, and when did she know it? I want to look at that familiar story in John 4 and ask that question. I want to pull out a few verses that indicate what she knew about Jesus and when she knew it.

Reflecting on responding to marketing calls, personally, I usually try to hang up during the pause. That’s when I know that the auto caller is switching to a human or to AI voice. How do you respond to people who are suddenly and unexpectedly just there? That’s what happened to this woman from Samaria. Let’s ask the question from the story of John 4; “What did this woman know about Jesus, and when did she know it?”

A woman from Samaria came to draw water (v.7).

At this point, she knew Jesus only as a stranger, some random person with the caveat – you’re not supposed to be here. I come here at noon specifically to avoid people!

I imagine she was a bit stand-offish – annoyed - like you are with marketing calls.

But somehow, from somewhere, though the text doesn’t say it, let’s imagine that just basic human decency overcame her annoyance, and she agreed to give Jesus a drink. (Like I do when the marketer, a real live person, starts talking. It’s a lot harder to ignore a real person.

I can imagine that as she approaches Jesus and begins lowering her bucket into the well to get the water, she takes a closer look at Jesus. “The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?” (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans)” (v.9).

At this point, she knew Jesus as a Jew.

- Maybe it was something he was wearing
- Perhaps the tassels of his tzitzit hanging exposed
- Maybe she connected Jesus to the disciples whom she had passed on the way out of town.

Regardless, she quit getting the water and quite obviously became suspicious and antagonistic. You can almost hear what she’s thinking, “You Jews think we Samaritans are no better than the dust under your feet until you need something. Now here you are thirsty, with no way to get to the water, and you want my help.” Again, the text doesn’t say it, but I can just imagine that at this point, she regrets giving Jesus a drink. Now what does she give Jesus? - The cold shoulder.

The conversation continues. Seven times we see the phrase “Jesus answered her” or “Jesus said to her.” The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water (v.15). “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet” (v.19).

You can almost hear the hope rising in her soul, even visible on her face and coming out in her voice. Now, she knew him as a prophet. She is surprised and accepting. “Dare I listen to and believe what this man is saying? Yes!” What does she give Jesus now? - A hearing! All along, Jesus does not push her, but he allows her to go through these phases of knowing him, moving to the next phase of knowing when she was ready.

Then, as Jesus speaks patiently with (not at) her, something comes to life in her heart. Without knowing what was happening, she reaches down deep into her memory –

- much deeper than the well where they stood
- her spiritual core
- the echoes of grace that God had planted in her heart when he formed her in the womb
- the “memories” embedded in the fabric of her humanity as created to know God
- the truth learned in the innocence of her childhood,

and she speaks...

“The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.” (v. 24) “Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he” (v.26). “Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?” (v.29) “They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world” (v.42).”

She now knows Jesus as Messiah, as Savior. She is stunned and amazed. What is she willing to give him now - to this man who told her (knew) everything she ever did and yet still loved her? She gives him her trust, her faith, her love, her life! She gives him her witness, her service, her purpose, her destiny!

What did she know, and when did she know it? She knew Jesus and is still getting to know him!

We can view her story in the Macro – as a picture of people coming to know Christ.

- Stranger – stand-offish / annoyed ... gives a drink
- Jew – suspicious / antagonistic ... gives the cold shoulder
- Prophet – surprised / accepting ... gives a hearing
- Messiah/Savior – stunned / amazed ... gives her trust, faith, love, life, witness, service, purpose, destiny

And to those who have made that journey of knowing Christ. Let me give you another way of looking at this story.

I think we can also view this story in the Micro – as a picture of our response when Jesus engages us in unexpected, and often unwelcome, conversations! Marketing calls...

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- Prophet – surprised / accepting ... gives a hearing
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And we can ask ourselves. What did we know about Jesus? When did we know it?

We would do well to remember these 4 stages when we meet new people, as well. Remember, if they seem to you a bit...

- Stand-offish / Annoyed – a stranger or interruption – Give them a cup of kindness.
- Suspicious / Antagonistic – Give them a warm welcome (not a cold shoulder).

Allow yourself to be...

- Surprised / Accepting – this person is a grace-carrier – Give them a hearing

Perhaps then, together, you will be...

- Stunned / Amazed

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