
Spiritual Formation Part 6

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Barriers to Growing in Christ Part 3

John 4:1-26

GOD AS OUR SAVIOR

John 3-5; 14-15 Barriers??

What God Desires

Verses

Others ↑ ← ← ME → → ↓ Self

Our Environment and Experiences

But, notice how Jesus treats her:

Here is a moral outcast, a thirsty woman in many ways, who comes to draw water after going a half a mile way out of her way around the other, much closer well in the village. She was possibly forced to do so either by reasons of shame or just to avoid the other townspeople. The Jews did the same thing, going way around her and her town. As she came this way, she encountered Jesus, and He said to her, "If you knew about the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me to drink,' you would have asked of him and he would have given you living water." The "gift of God;" Jesus read her heart and what she, as well as we, really thirst for. We all place barriers between us and the springs of living water, which leaves us parched and empty, looking for substitutes for our thirst. Jesus encountered one of those sinners whom He came to call to repentance, a sinner just like us, and gives her love, setting her on the right path. "I did not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners," (Matt 9:13, Mark 2:17, Luke 5:32).

The water Jesus was offering was not the substance of a drink or to quench a physical thirst; rather, it was the refreshment of eternal life. The Holy Spirit imparts to us the new life. This new life impacts us totally, constantly, and continually to usher us into eternity. But, it is still up to us to take that impact and let it come in contact with our application of life to God, ourselves, our environment, and others. This impact from the Spirit nourishes us, invigorates and empowers us to deal with life here and now. His qualities and character become real in us and are modeled as real to others around us. This empowerment bulldozes those barriers and creates the maturity we are called to have. This maturity helps us have joy and contentment, purpose and meaning. It allows

us to know we are deeply loved and makes us able to replicate that love. In that way, we can worship Him in power and adoration, a deeper level that we could not do without that growth.

If you lack peace and joy in your life, it is usually because you lack growth and have forsaken your time in Him for the rough road of following yourself and being lost in life. Your focus is on the physical water and not the living water. This woman's focus was the quenching of her physical thirst, which was lust, until she realized a much greater thirst that needed to be quenched. Her quality of life vastly improved, her seat into eternity was secured, and her entire being was transformed. Her barriers dissolved, and her life became filled with the Spirit, giving her joy and contentment. We have to be willing and able to drink His Living Water. The Spirit gives us the enablement; we have to take His lead and follow through so it touches all aspects of our life and relationships. If not, what good has it done? What kind of peace can you have without His living water?

What are the real reasons you do not spend as much time growing in your faith as you should? We all can come up with a multitude of good excuses, and even more lame ones. But, the end result is what life is all about, who we are in Christ, and the working out of our salvation so it means more than just a "get out of hell" card (Philippians 2). Are your other activities so important? To see if they are, consider this; how important will this activity be five or ten years from now? How important will your time be in Christ five to ten years from now? It would be a good bet that you will not even remember the activity. But, your growth in Him is eternal.

It does not make any difference how good your plans are or how successful you are. It does not matter if you have lost at everything you ever tried in life. It does not matter whatever your age or place in society. The only thing that makes a difference is your identity in Christ because what He has done for you. Only God can make us real and effectual; only He can give us meaning and purpose. He gives us physical life, and offers us eternal life. It is up to us, by faith, to apply His work. What we experience in life, what we go through, what we suffer through, what we give up—all are mere shadows compared to the Eternity to come. What we seem to lose is of no comparison to what we gain in Him!!!! But, the catch is, after it is offered, in order to grow and make it real, we have to put effort into it. Grace is free to us, but a gift of unfathomable cost to our Lord. In order to come closer, the woman took a chance, and an act of faith was exerted that expanded into boldness as she told her neighbors about Him.

Tom Landry, a famous American Football coach, once said, "The job of a coach is to make men do what they don't want to do, in order to achieve what they really want." That is what Jesus does. He puts us through circumstances we do not want to go through; He makes us face things we do not want to face, so that we can achieve what we have wanted with all our hearts all along. To do so requires the growth of faith and trust, so as to cut through those barriers that hinder us and hold us back. And, we must be equippers and encouragers to one another for this! That is what this incident at the well is all about.

The point I am trying to make is that all of us set up so many barriers and walls in front of our growth in Christ they cause us to hold back or stagnate from receiving and living the best He has for us. For a professional football player, the barrier is the willingness to play as a team for a unified goal. Seems simple, but a professional player and coach told me once this is very hard, because everyone on a team is out for only their own personal interests; getting them to play tighter as a team is the job of a coach—and a very difficult one at that. They do not want to do that, as it may bench some, reduce play, increase play, or follow plays they do not like to do. The players at that level are so good, any team has the potential to beat any other team regardless of past wins or losses. The star players bring in the fans and sell tickets, but they do not win the games. Only when a team coalesces and starts to have a unified vision and the togetherness to follow the best play plans, will it succeed. This is also true for the Christian and the Church. We have to be willing to play His way, as He is our Coach. We cannot afford to be in Christianity for self interests; to grow, and in order to play effectively and powerfully, we have to make His interests ours.

The choice is ours, to make it simple or complicated, to be hurt or to be happy. By simply following 1 Corinthians 12 - 13 and Galatians 5:22-23, you will be able to cross those barriers to discipleship and Christian growth. Your relationships will vastly improve because you will be acting as God calls you to, and people normally respond in kind to being treated in kind. The choice requires your faith in action and your growth in Him. It requires us all to recognize what Christ has done for us so our fears and letdowns do not become either our gods or our focus in life. He is the Focus, He is our God (Philippians 1:6; 2: 11; 3:10).

The key to the success of finding and crossing those barriers is simple; it is obedience, the willingness to serve God over our needs, even before we know what the call may be, and taking this mindset into life and to others! To grow even further, we can be more contemplative in His Word and in prayer. God's will for our life is for us to totally surrender and trust in His power and authority, and to abide in Him. He will shape our destiny if we allow it. He will teach us His ways if we will walk in His ways. Trust yourself to our LORD and receive His call in order to build yourself as well as others up!

In Matthew 13:23, we see two key words that strike at the foundation of our complacency, *Hears... and Does*. He calls us to wake up and do something with our faith, not to just sit in a pew and complain, or lay on a couch as life drifts by. A call is pronounced. An action must take place to secure that His precepts will cause an impact; we cannot just hear; we have to obey. Obedience is not in words, but in deeds that demonstrate our words through practice and action (James 1:22-25)! This is not about our salvation; it is about our worth and our impact. Our salvation by faith alone may secure us, but for what impact if we do nothing with it? When we read and/or hear the Word of God, as His elect, we will have the desire and heed the call to put it into action.

Yes, there will be times we do not feel like it. Life is tough; it is full of setbacks and hurts that seem to cripple us. So, do we go on permanent disability, unable to

hurdle barriers that are really simple to climb? Did you know all it takes to tie down a horse is a simple leather strap? Did you know a horse could easily break it, like we can break a kite string? A horse does not do that because he thinks he is unable to do so! You are able to cross any barrier to grow in deeper worship and faith in Christ, because He is there with His healing power. When we ignore Him, we just end up stagnate in life, continuing in our hurting. Yes, we will struggle and hurt; we will need times to recover; but, we must make the determination to recover, and not remain disabled from abiding in Him. Obedience will override our feelings so that we will remain steadfast and secure (1 Thessalonians 2:23).

Discovery Questions

Read John 4:1-26 and make some observations:

1. How are prejudices a barrier to Christ?
2. What do you think about how Jesus treats the Woman?
3. What are the barriers that you would face in order to accept who Christ is?
4. Maybe barriers are not a problem, but what perceptions and presumptions do you have that keep you from further growth in your sanctification?
5. What holds you back?
 - a. Traditions?
 - b. Presumptions?
 - c. Time?
 - d. Commitment?
 - e. Understanding how important this is?
 - f. Trusting in His provision?
6. What will it take for you to make a further commitment to pursue your faith and spiritual growth in a richer and deeper way? How can that help fuel you to further persevere in your spiritual gifts, relationships, opportunities, and purpose or call?
7. Can you benchmark some goals? That is draw up a spiritual action plan, like a business plan is essential to establish vision and build a business, so is establishing a plan to build your faith.
 - a. What is this plans goal?
 - b. How will you accomplish this goal?
 - c. Who will help you be accountable?

8. What can you do to see that these goals turn to reality and not trash?

- Perhaps you can read through the Bible, all it takes is 12 to 15 minutes a day, see our Bible Reading Plans: [Bible Reading Plans](#)
- Perhaps you can commit to draw closer and deeper to our Lord, here is an article to help you: [Drawing near to the heart of God](#)

So, carefully consider any barriers in your thinking that block you from this core truth and reality of life: *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.* If you remain stuck, afraid to venture further in your faith and walk with Christ, you must seek why. Christ can make the difference for you; allow Him to do so. This can only happen with a heart that has been changed to a willingness to move ahead from where you are now.

Do not forsake your living water, your "gift of God."

Make sure you carefully check out the: [Barriers to Discipleship Chart](#)

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