

# HEALING WORSHIP

## *Healing Deep Hurts*

**John 4:4-26**

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One evening I was asked to give a devotion for worship leaders at a church. I thought of a verse about worship I had memorized. The verse says,

*God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth* (Jn. 4:24).

Pondering the verse, I wondered who Jesus said this to?" I opened my Bible, scanned the text and found Jesus talking to a troubled Samaritan woman. It struck me that this text on worship wasn't given to the disciples; it wasn't taught to the crowds; it was spoken to a hurting woman.

I pondered why Jesus said that and what he meant in saying it. I discovered that Jesus was focused on healing her. Her life was ravaged by an insatiable thirst. Jesus offered her water that would quench it. Not understanding it, she asked for the water, so Jesus told her to call her husband. In that way Jesus exposed her thirst, for she had married and divorce five men and was living with a sixth. When Jesus confronted her with this, she thought Jesus was a prophet, so she changed the subject. She asked about worship. She assumed that worship is what is important to God. She didn't realize that God had Jesus there for her healing.

In some ways we're a lot like that lady. If we are hurting, we go to a doctor, a therapist, or visit a counselor. If we have a question about worship, we then go to a pastor or someone we think is spiritual. It doesn't occur to us that God cares about our pain and is ready to do something about it. But God does care and Christ offered this woman *living water*.

*Living water* is not a teaching. It's a flow. It's a flow of divine love that quenches our thirst. It so fills us, that it forms within us a spring that not only satisfies us but bubbles

out to serve the thirst of others. Living water is the flow of divine love that healed the deep hurts of the Samaritan woman.

These past three weeks we've discussed Jesus's encounter with this Samaritan woman. In the process, we're reflecting on three things Jesus did to heal her. First, Jesus **initiated the healing** in a *healing encounter*. The woman's healing began when she realized that God was visiting her in Jesus. Have you been recognizing God's visits? Second, Jesus gave the woman *living water*, **the substance of healing**, that addresses our insatiable thirst. Third, Jesus acted to **secure the healing** through *healing worship*.

Frequently, when I teach confirmation, a student will attempt to lead me off the subject with a series of questions. The individual will try to control the agenda and class time. Having attempted to do the same when I was a young student, I'm aware of what is happening. Occasionally, I allow myself to go down those rabbit trails because something significant can be discovered along the way. Similarly, Jesus's response to the woman's question on worship did not represent for him a change in subject; rather it was simply another approach to her healing. You see *true worship does two things*. **First, it attacks the source of our hurt**; and **second, it establishes a connection with the source of our healing**. True worship attacks the source of our hurt by correcting our vision. True worship confronts us with reality, with truth.

Last week, I shared about the insatiable thirst I had as a student and young pastor, expressed in an inordinate drive for achievement and affirmation. I shared how God satisfied my thirst, but I told you only part of the story. The breakthrough moment was a conversation I had with the Lord where he exposed my thirst for love and his great love for me. I saw Christ in my mind stretching out his nail-scarred hands, and asking me, "*How much more could I love you?*" I shared how the Spirit told me that God was not as interested in my service as my companionship. God wanted me close. However, I didn't tell you what God did next.

I wondered why I had trouble feeling loved and important. I questioned why I was so insecure and fragile. Why was I saddled with such a thirst? God showed me the ugly vision I had acquired from hurtful words and actions during my childhood. Pictures formed in my mind. I began to see the faces of different people in my life who contributed to my feelings of stupidity, worthlessness and revulsion. I remembered some of their words and actions. I remembered how I felt. Sitting in my office, I realized that Satan had plastered me with a false identity. I had believed him. I had believed malicious lies. Some of the hurt came from people who never intended to harm me. Perhaps I misread their actions. That's easy to do as an adult. How much easier to do that as a child! As the Lord showed me each person and their action, I confessed My resentment. I forgave them and asked God to bless their lives. By the time I finished praying, my heart was filled with love. Even more, my self-image changed dramatically. Looking at self, I admired the work of God (can you do that?), and I worshiped God.

In those moments I was responding to God's truth. "*Worshiping in truth*" is activity that responds to God's actions. **True worship recognizes what God has made in creation**

**and what God values and remakes in the cross of Christ.** It was the truth of the cross that revealed God's love for me; and it was the cross that allowed me to confess my guilt, let go of it, and begin to forgive others. It was the cross that showed me my value. Responding to that truth corrected my vision. The only natural response to such good news is worship.

My healing continued long after those moments because God through Scriptures and Christian believers unveiled my identity as God's child, Christ's ambassador, God's saint, a holy one. These are the things I am. My vision is being corrected as I receive and honor this truth! I dare not diminish my value. To do so is to mock my maker. I dare not put myself down. To do so is to call Christ a fool in dying for me! I dare not diminish myself or anyone else. *True Worship* confronts us with the real truth. Our insecurities, our worries, our fears, all come from deception. Our guilt is rooted in a deceptive vision of a God who does not forgive. True worship corrects our vision and opens us--no, it does more!--it secures our healing.

However, there is a second aspect of *True Worship*. It is not only the embrace and belief of God's truth, it is also the interface of our spirits with God's spirit. ***"God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and truth."***

Living Water is not a flood that cures us. It is a flow that feeds and renews us. Much of our healing requires day after day of tasting divine love. This continuous flow flushes away the obstacles that hinder us in embracing and knowing God's invigorating love. It cleanses us from the impure attitudes that cause us to treat people as objects to be manipulated for our benefit. It feeds us with the energy for patience and peace, gentleness and hope, faithfulness and self-control. It eats away all the layers of fear that make us defensive, guarded and isolated in this world so that even the big secrets, the secrets sins are exposed, uprooted, forgiven and forgotten. Living Water comes with great flow as we worship in spirit and interface with God's Spirit.

There are three contexts where I witnessed my spirit interfacing with God's Spirit. *The first comes in private devotion or worship.* As I pray, read Scripture, devote myself to the Lord and serve him, frequently I taste God's love. One day, I was alone washing dishes and was unaware that I was singing a hymn. Suddenly, as I heard the words I was singing, I stopped and said, *"I love you, Jesus."* At that moment, I felt the love of God wrap my body in warmth. There wasn't an inch of me missed. It was my personal version of what Jesus felt and heard at the Jordan River and the Mount of Transfiguration. A voice said, ***"This is my beloved Son with whom I am pleased."*** That affirmation is our birthright in Christ and comes from time to time as we connect with God. That's worship in the spirit. It's a deep and loving connection with God.

The second context for interfacing with God's spirit is small groups. As we trust God's presence and share with one another, God unveils his love to us through other group members. Being a Christian without participating in a small group is like forcing God's living water to flow through pin holes. The early church met in home groups every day. The early Methodists met in home groups every week and that's primarily how and why

these folks grew so much and had such an impact. Christians, who are not in a small group, may walk with Christ, but they do so on their hands. Their legs are missing. Their legs are back in the small group that God intended for them. Life's hard enough without handicapping yourself.

Finally, we can interface with God's Spirit as we celebrate His love with others in public worship. There's something about celebration. It's the only appropriate response to God's love. We aren't living in reality unless we are celebrating. Celebration secures God's water line to your life. It is the moment in your life that you are doing the most appropriate thing. It is the moment in your life that you actually are on the same wave length as heaven. Healing worship? Yah!

I can't emphasize enough that God is focused on healing you. You've been wounded. Satan has hurt you, attacked your identity and deceived you. His traumatic work has left you thirsty. God is visiting you. Will you drink the *living water* and join the celebration?