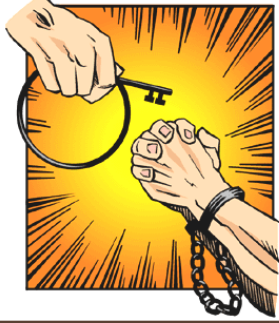


makes you free, you

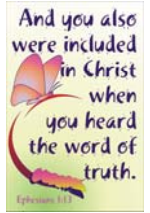
Therefore if the Son



shall be free indeed.

Voice of Freedom

A Ministry of Cedar Valley Community Church



Prison Ministry Good News Letter Volume 7, Issue 7 October 2009

May the Peace and Grace of God be with you all. The moment you are pushed from your mother's womb, the doctor announces to everyone in the room, "It's a boy!" or "It's a girl!" The race is on as the world immediately tries to identify who we are by putting labels on us. That race will continue until the day we die. The world labels us in numerous ways. We are labeled by where we live, our gender, age, cultural background, ethnicity, family history, marital status, how much we weigh, what we look like, how much hair we have, what we eat or drink, whether we've been in prison, and by our mistakes that the world will not let us forget. Will your identity reflect God's good plan for your life or satan's destructive bad plan?

Many of the world's labels do play into who we are, but too often we allow labels to put us in a box and keep us from growing into the person God created us to be. Most labels are things we can't control, yet we allow them to control us.

Our pastor taught from the Bible book of John in chapter four a few months ago, and a lot of my ideas for this article flow from his message. If this passage is familiar to you, I challenge you see it differently from how you may have seen it in the past. God's Word is new every time we read it. What does God want you to see in John 4 today? As you read the verses consider the following questions: How did the woman see herself when she was at home and alone? How did others see her? Did she let other people's labels change the way she felt about herself?

Let's look at the story of a woman who had a lot of labels and felt like she had a lot of strikes against her. "So He came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as He was from His journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink.' (For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) 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.)" (John 4:5-9 ESV)

What identity do you think the woman had of herself? Was it a positive or negative identity? When you look at these verses, what do you see?



She was a woman. At that time being a woman was not a positive label. In that time, cultural background made it necessary for a woman to marry a man for her financial support. Her role was to help the man. If a woman became

widowed and didn't have any sons to take care of her, she could become poor, as many widows did. She knew what society expected and how it limited her options.

She was a Samaritan. They were despised by Jews for intermarrying with other races. The Jews would go out of their way a whole day's journey to avoid Samaria. She knew this label well and was so shocked by the request from Jesus for water that she asked Him out loud, "Why would you ask a Samaritan woman for a drink? You shouldn't even be talking to me!"

She came to the well at an unusual time in the middle of the day. The day began at sunrise, so the sixth hour was around noon when it was getting very hot. This is a clue to some of her feelings of self-identity. Remember this as we read John 4:10-15:

"Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is

saying to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.' The woman said to Him, 'Sir, You have nothing to draw water with, and the

well is deep. Where do You get that living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock.' Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.' The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.'"

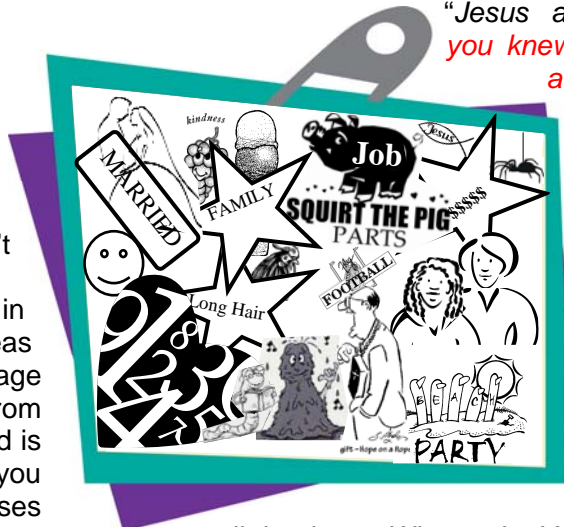
What do you see about Jesus and the woman in these verses?

Jesus was tired, but He took time to talk to the Samaritan woman about changing her life.

The woman had at least one identity she was proud of, her ancestry, the lineage of Jacob. When she asked Jesus why He talked to her, she didn't realize how much greater Jesus was than Jacob.

Notice that she was quick to grab an excuse for not coming to the well ever again. She was anxious to do anything to avoid the whispers, looks and condemnations of her neighbors. It seems likely that was why she went to the well at an uncommon time of day. How about you? Are there places, people, or events that you avoid because of how people react to you? Jesus was concerned about more important things than what others thought of the Samaritan woman, or even what she thought of herself. Jesus

OUR IDENTITY: more than a name or number



ICIW LADIES: Worship with the CVCC Team
Friday October 23, 7 - 8:30 p.m.
In the Sacred Place

MT. PLEASANT MEN: Worship with
Heart Surrender Ministry
Wednesday October 21, 6-7 p.m. in the Chapel

let her know that He understood her life when He said to her, *"Go, call your husband, and come here."* The woman answered Him, *"I have no husband."* Jesus said to her, *"You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true."* The woman said to Him, *"Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but You say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship."* Jesus said to her, *"Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."* 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."* Jesus said to her, *"I who speak to you am He."* (John 4:16-26)

What do these words from Jesus tell you about the Samaritan woman?

Probably, the biggest strike against the Samaritan woman is revealed right here – married five times and currently living with a man outside of marriage. That would be enough to get our attention now days, let alone in those times. She was desperately looking for love, and found real love in Jesus the Christ that day when she wasn't even looking for it.

Her age was sure to be working against her. A woman of the time was to depend on her husband or sons to take care of her. Yet it seems like she probably didn't have anybody she could depend on to take care of her.

Jesus wanted her to face the only thing that she was really in control of, her choices. Poor decisions, both in choosing husband after husband and probable mistakes in other areas had changed her life. Jesus reached out to the Samaritan woman right where she was, despite her image. Jesus revealed to her who He really was and what He

could offer her. She needed to be truthful with God and herself.

What about us in our time? **Now is the time to worship God in spirit and in truth. We need to be truthful with God and ourselves about where we are in our life situation.** What areas do we need to be honest in so God can heal us? We need to worship God in our spirits. We can choose to fake the outside stuff to a certain degree. This limits how close God can be to us until we become totally honest with Him.

Genesis 1:26 tells us that we were created in the image of God, to bring glory to His name. The problem is that sin entered into His perfect creation. Our spirit, which was created in His image, was destroyed. We have a Savior who can restore our incorrect labels to the identity God created us to enjoy. **All we have to do is allow Him to transform us from the inside out (Romans 12:2).**

Jesus was constantly trying to make His point to the Pharisees that the outside of man isn't what condemns or saves. It's by what is in our heart. In Christ Jesus our spirits are new creations not limited by physical labels or our poor decisions of the past.

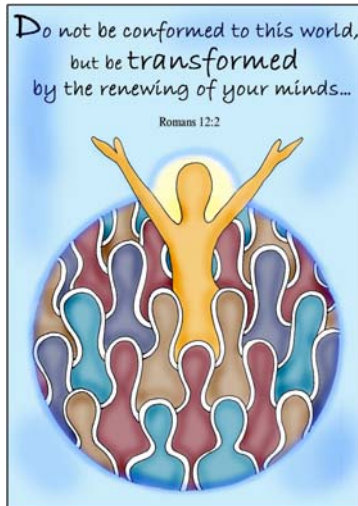
Jesus wanted to transform the Samaritan woman's identity from the one the village had labeled her with into a confident child of God. **Jesus wanted to use her to reach her village for God (John 4:28-30, 39-42).**

What is your identity today? Have you allowed the world's labels to impose on you a negative self-identity? Have you allowed poor decisions on your part to create a negative self-identity? Do you have so many strikes against you that you feel that you were counted out long ago?

Jesus wants to transform your image, your identity, just as He did the Samaritan woman's. He wants to create in you a new individual who will passionately chase after God, who will firmly stand on His Word and who will whole-heartedly allow the Holy Spirit to transform you. (read 2 Corinthians 5:17) You were originally created in His image. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, will you allow Jesus to return you to that image?

It's your decision.

- Danny -



If you are not on our mailing list and would like to be, or if for any reason you would like to be taken off, please send a note to *Voice of Freedom*, Cedar Valley Community Church, 3520 Ansborough Avenue, Waterloo, IA 50701.