



+ **YOU**

Summer 2023
Set Apart: A Life Lived for God

Sermon Title: *Further Up and Further In*

To be used with Session 4: Set Apart in the Way We Live

Scripture: John 4:39-42

Connection with the Study: To complement the Bible study “Set Apart In the Way We Live” this sermon takes the well-known story in John’s gospel account of Jesus’ encounter with the woman at the well and the entire village of Sychar to illustrate how time spent with God is powerful and deepens our relationship with Him.

Introduction: In the final chapter of *The Last Battle*, the seventh and final book of the *Chronicles of Narnia*, “further up and further in” is voiced repeatedly as the characters proceed toward and then into Aslan’s Country. Once inside, Peter, Edmond, and Lucy Pevensie, along with Eustace Clarence Scrubb, Jill Pole, Digory Kirk, and Polly Plummer experience the reality that, as Faun Tumnus put it, “the inside is larger than the outside.”¹

Though we can never adequately describe Heaven while still living on Earth, this description is a wonderful expression of how our understanding of God grows with each moment we spend with Him. This truth was experienced by a troubled woman and then a whole town when they met Jesus as He was traveling from Jerusalem to Galilee. When Jesus and His disciples stopped at Sychar, the woman He encountered at the well was unaware of who He was (John 4:10,25). When the townspeople originally came out to see Him, it was out of curiosity because of what the woman said vv. 28-30).

1. The Power of a Testimony (John 4:39)

Something transformative had happened to this woman and it did more than raise the curiosity of the townsfolk. In Grady Nutts’s, *The Flip Sides of Grady Nutt*, the pastor-turned-comedian talked about the woman at the well when she interacted with the towns people after her encounter with Jesus. He said, “If you can’t hide trouble, you sure can’t hide transformation.” When she said, “He told me everything I ever did,” there was something in her voice and in her demeanor that caused some of them to immediately believe in Jesus.

Like the woman, every person in a congregation who has responded to Jesus’s invitation to receive the living water has a testimony of a changed life. It does not have to be shared as a formal presentation but can be as simple as in the man healed from blindness: “Whether or not

¹ C.S. Lewis, *The Last Battle* (New York: Collier Books, 1956), 180.

he's a sinner, I don't know. One thing I do know: I was blind, and now I can see!" (John 9:25). People who knew us before being transformed by God will recognize the difference.

2. The Hunger to Go Further (John 4:40)

We are familiar with the saying, "the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence." During the 2022 offseason of the NFL, the Denver Broncos made a trade to obtain quarterback Russell Wilson from the Seattle Seahawks. It was their hope that he would lead them to winning seasons since the Seahawks's record during his ten years as quarterback was 105 wins, 55 losses, 1 tie, 8 seasons in the playoffs, and 1 Super Bowl championship.² However, with Wilson now on the team, the Broncos lost two more games than they had the previous year while the Seahawks improved their winning record by two more games without Wilson.

The citizens of Sychar had not met Jesus before and they probably knew little or nothing about Him. But they certainly knew the woman. They saw the victory Jesus brought to her life and they wanted that for themselves. So, they asked Him to stay and He spent two days with them. May we desire as much.

3. The Power of a Personal Relationship (John 4:41-42)

In 1862, President Lincoln's policy regarding black citizenship was still evolving. Since the beginning of the Civil War, Lincoln had rejected allowing African Americans to serve in the Union army. On May 13 of that same year, Robert Smalls, who was working as a slave aboard the Confederate steamer, *CSS Planter*, took command of the ship and, with fifteen other slaves including his wife and two young children, sailed away to meet up with the Union fleet. In August of the same year, the now famous Smalls met with President Lincoln and helped persuade him to allow African Americans to fight for the Union. There was still a long way to go in obtaining equal rights but the face-to-face meeting with Robert Smalls had accomplished more than just his reputation had done.³

As John 4:39 points out, many people believed in Jesus because of the woman's testimony. But when the people of Sychar had two days to meet with and listen to Jesus on a personal basis, more believed and they said, "We have heard for ourselves and know that this really is the Savior of the world." Time with Jesus does that. Our faith is built as we spend more time in our relationship with Him.

Conclusion: There are two key ways in which we can spend intimate time with God: Prayer and the Scriptures. A good night's sleep, a healthy breakfast, and a plan for the day are helpful in our efforts to be productive, but nothing compares to beginning each day by spending time talking to God and reading and meditating on His word. It is not enough, however. We all have moments and minutes during the day when we can spend more time talking to and listening to God and looking for opportunities to minister to others in His name.

² pro-football-reference.com/teams/sea/index.htm

³ smithsonianmag.com/history/men-changed-changing-lincolns-mind-180979230/

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