

Jesus Satisfies the Thirsty Soul

John 4:1-42

Key verse: V14

While retracing the journeys of missionary David Livingstone, my boys and I bisected the Kalahari Desert off road. One morning we were shocked to find a lone man walking in our direction. After waiting three days, his stranded work crew had decided to send their strongest man out on foot. His situation was absolutely hopeless and our odds of meeting in that vast inhospitable oven of sand was miniscule. Their group had exhausted their water supply, forcing them to survive on the bitter drops from wild melons. His first words were a predictable question, "Do you have water?" I apologized that our drinking water was unrefrigerated and offered him an assortment of ice cold soft drinks and fruit juices. With greater urgency, he pleaded for the warm water. We watched with smiles as the man guzzled that life-saving water to his heart's content, and the process was repeated with each of his companions later that morning. We were also able to repair their vehicle and share the Gospel with them.

The account of the woman at the well highlights the appeal of the Gospel to those who most keenly sense their need, the hopeless. Just as the despair grew with each weakening step in the desert of Botswana, some people hopelessly yearn for the living water that springs up into everlasting life. Just as we were in the right place at the right time to save several lives in the heart of the Kalahari, it is the missionary's great joy to take the Gospel to the spiritual deserts of this world. He often stands alone as the only oasis for living water, and it is his great joy to welcome desperate sinners, who like the woman at the well, desire the refreshment and satisfaction of living water.

Jesus told a story of a creditor who forgave two debtors and then asked which debtor would love the creditor the most. Peter replied, "he, to whom he forgave most" (Lk. 7:40-43). I found this to be generally true of African missions. As missionaries in Africa, we provided hope for the hopeless. Africa can be viewed as the well of Samaria in our day. There are many thirsty souls there who seek a well of living water. If we viewed world missions as planting wells of living water in spiritual deserts, we would pray more, go more, give more and reach more because mission is hope for foreigners.

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