

spine. She had been born a perfectly healthy baby, but one day her father lost his temper and beat her so badly that she received irreparable brain damage: a young life ruined by sin. Even for us, sin has spoiled and savaged our lives. Our minds think impure thoughts. We tell lies and gossip or swear. We learn to cheat, deceive, steal. We find it easy to do wrong but so hard to do right. Saying 'nobody is perfect' does not excuse us.

The woman by the well was conscious of her sin. Christ, however, came to deal with it. She was intrigued by Christ – after all He had offered true pleasure, true life and the true God. Who would not be interested? Christ had said '... but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.' It was then that Christ touched the nerve of the problem. He said, 'Go, call your husband.' Christ wanted her to admit her sin. She had to confess all to Him. That was the beginning of a new life for her.

We can never come to know God in a personal way until we admit that we

have done wrong. Jesus said, 'I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.'

His greatest work was not healing the sick or even changing lives, but dying to deal with all wrong. God's anger against sin was directed at Christ. He was the substitute. On the cross our sin was laid on Him and He took our punishment. The hell which we deserve He endured.

**Because He bore our sin, God can truly forgive us.** While on the cross, Jesus cried, 'I thirst.' He thirsted physically so that the spiritual thirst of men and women could be quenched.

It was not easy for the woman to tell Christ about her life. It never is. But the Bible says it is only when we confess we are sinners in need of Christ, that He can, and will, forgive.

Not only did Christ die, but three days later He triumphed over the grave by rising from the dead. He desires to come and live in our lives, to cleanse and control them. As Christ takes up residence in the hearts of those who trust Him, it is as if a fountain of life springs up within.

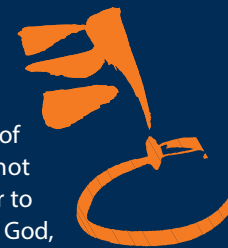
## RESPONSE

The woman left her water pot at the well and ran to the men telling them to 'Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did.' She went to the very people amongst whom she had sinned, and brought them to Christ.

Becoming a real Christian involves changing sides. It is the start of a new life. Instead of living for things that quickly pass away, you start to live for Christ. Your values change. It is never easy to be a real Christian in a hostile world. But Christ gives the joy and peace which come from knowing that sin is forgiven; then the power of His risen presence enables you to overcome difficulties. True life and purpose come from having a relationship with God which lasts – through life, through death and for ever in Heaven.

Why not ask Christ to forgive you now – give you a new start with Him?

If you know that God has been speaking to you, and you are aware of your need of Him, why not use the following prayer to express your feelings to God, putting your trust in Him?



**Dear God, I confess that I have sinned in thought, word and deed. I want to turn from my sin. I believe that Christ died for me and rose from the dead. Please forgive me and take control of my life. I want to serve you as best I can. Thank you for hearing this prayer. I ask it in the name of Jesus. Amen**



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Written by Roger Carswell

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by Roger Carswell

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# KEY TO LIFE

**A** POLICEMAN curiously watched a drunk looking for something under a street light. He asked the drunkard what he was looking for.

‘My wallet,’ he replied. They looked together, but with no success.

‘Down that road,’ replied the man, pointing into the distance.

‘Then why weren’t you looking down there?’ ‘Because there aren’t any street lights there. I’d never find it!’

Many people are searching for something but don’t look in the right place. For instance, think of the biggest search of all – that of trying to find God.

Have you ever wished you could really know God? Have you ever thought that God is seeking for you?

There was once a woman whose life was in a mess. She had had five husbands, and now was living with another man. Yet Jesus met with her. Very lovingly He dealt with her. You can read her story in the Bible in John’s Gospel chapter four. There we read that ‘Jesus needed to go through Samaria.’ Christ wanted to meet her to

change her life, just as today He is willing to ‘go out of His way’ to meet us. God cares for each individual.



**Have you ever thought that God is seeking for you?**

### DISILLUSIONED BY LIFE

The Samaritan woman was so ashamed of her past that she went to draw water from the well at midday when nobody would be around to see her. Christ knew all about her. It is impossible to deceive God. The religious person is not good enough to impress God, the rebel is not clever enough to hide anything from Him.

A group of mischievous students once stuck parts of different insects together and gave the completed ‘bug’ to the famous Professor of Zoology – Prof Agassiz. ‘Can you identify this?’ they asked. He studied the creature and then, looking up, he said,

‘Yes. It’s a humbug!’ Neither can we deceive God.

In our better moments we realise we cannot even fool ourselves.

How sad that Tony Hancock, who had entertained millions, committed suicide in Australia leaving a note saying, ‘True happiness is impossible to obtain.’ The road to happiness is not paved with fun, fame and fortune. Others find religion has no reality. They become disillusioned by the Church and wonder where real purpose in life is to be found.

Yet Christ came to offer true life. He said, ‘I have come that they might have life, and life to the full.’ Jesus sat next to a disillusioned woman and offered a new kind of life to her. This would be like a fountain that would never run dry. Do you have this life?

### DISAPPOINTED BY PLEASURE

She was disillusioned by life because she was disappointed by pleasure. No doubt, when she was a teenager she had dreamed of her ideal husband. At last she met him. They married. Perhaps they were happy for a time, but slowly things turned sour. They parted. They were divorced. Sadness turned to joy when she met another man. This time things looked so promising, but her

happiness was short lived. Then there was husband number three ... and four ... and five ... When the sixth man came along she thought, ‘Why marry?’ So they lived together.

So often people have sought pleasure but found pain.

The actor Peter Sellers said of his life, ‘The realisation is less than the expectation. I tell you straight, all I am trying to do is get through the day. And when I cry, I cry for yesterday.’

Jesus, however, offers true pleasure. To the real Christian, knowing God as a personal Friend and Saviour is a pleasure beyond compare.

### DISTANT FROM GOD

The woman was disillusioned and disappointed because she was distant from God. She could talk about religion. But a religious debate does not mean that a person has a relationship with God. Do you ever feel that God is far from you? You may not even want to know Him – but that is a sign you are far from Him.

Do you ever wish that you could talk with God? We were made to have fellowship with God. But our wrong-

doing has separated us from Him. Sin is like a barrier between us and God and we are powerless to remove it. Yet God has made the first move. He sent His Son to earth to rescue us. Christ can bring us back to God.

Slowly, as Jesus talked with the woman at the well, she realised that Christ was not just a Jew, or a prophet, but that He was the promised Messiah, the Christ who had come to redeem lost mankind. He offered the woman the true God.

Jesus said, ‘I have come to seek and to save those who are lost.’ He came to link us up to God. Rather than being distant, God can live within a person to control their thoughts, words and deeds. Life will then have meaning and purpose, whatever the future may hold.

### DISTORTED BY SIN

The woman was distant from God because she was marred by sin. Sin distorts every area of our life.

I remember visiting a special needs school in North Wales where I met a pretty thirteen year old girl. She was blind, deaf and mute and had just had an operation to straighten her crooked