Good evening. My name is Jason – and I have something in common with John the Baptist and Herod the Great – we all share the same middle name. I am called Jason the Mason because I work with stones to build homes for the rich people of the land, for only the rich could afford stone houses. The rest of us lived intense lives [in tents, get it – a little Samaritan humor there – very little humor], because a tent was the cheapest housing and because my father tended sheep, so we moved around a lot. But I am not here to talk about myself. I am here to introduce you to a person whom the Bible does not give a name – only her home town. I am the brother of Abigail – although you probably know her better as the woman at the well. We grew up in Sychar, a small Samaritan village located near Jacob’s Well – a well dug by our Patriarch Jacob. We were proud of our heritage – Samaritans. We were looked down on by the Jews who thought they were better than us – they had their Temple in Jerusalem, and we had ours nearby because they would not allow our ancestors to help rebuild the Temple, nor worship in it afterwards. We were only allowed in the Gentile Court of the Temple. Those uppity Jews would go out of their way to avoid associating with us “half-breeds” as they called us. Ah, but I digress.

When we were growing up, Abi, as we called her, did not seem any different from any of the other girls of our village. We both had lots of friends – Abi had more than me, lots more. I used to tease her about hanging out with the boys so much. I found out later that my friends were not coming over to see me as much as to spend time with Abi. She had long raven-colored hair like most of the other Samaritans – like I did, and mother and father did [although father’s hair had started to get rather thin on top]. To the casual visitor to our town, there was nothing that would make my sister or me stand out in the crowd. But to my eyes, Abi was the prettiest girl around.

Abi knew she could get just about anything she wanted by batting those long eyelashes and saying, “Please?” Father loved us both, but Abi could wrap his heart around her little finger.

As she grew older, she discovered she could do that with most men. Mother and father chose an older man for her first marriage. It was all arranged and the dowry was paid. Abi was fourteen at the time of the wedding – and what a wedding it was. The whole village came out for the celebration which lasted for three days.eca

Joshua, her first husband was rich – at least by the standards of our village. He had a large herd of sheep, as well as camels and goats. Abi and Joshua looked so happy at
the ceremony as they danced and sang. Mother was so busy acting as the hostess that she barely had time to notice the newlyweds.

Following the wedding, Abi moved out of our tent-home and into the house of Joshua. Now I had a lot more room in the tent. I claimed the space that she had reserved for herself in our childhood years. Our home seemed emptier when Abi moved out, though, and I missed some of the friends that used to come over, but stopped when Abi got married.

Life was good for Abigail while it lasted. She began her new life as a wife: a socialite in the community, and the proud young wife of Joshua. Things went well for Abi – at least for a while. She was so beautiful that Joshua loved to show her off as his prized possession. She was the apple of his eye. My parents were pleased that they had arranged for her marriage to someone so wealthy – and handsome. They looked like the ideal couple. My parents watched anxiously for any signs of a grandchild. A year passed and still no child was conceived.

Joshua, who was patient and gentle with Abi at first, also waited with anticipation for a son – especially a son – who would become the heir of all his possessions. When a son was born, there would be great celebration with musicians and dancers and singers. If it was a girl, the celebrators would all go home.

The second anniversary of their wedding came and went – and still no sign of a child. Then Joshua was fatally injured falling over a mountain trying to rescue a sheep that had strayed.

Abigail was devastated by the death of her husband, but with her good looks she would easily find another. But it would not be so easy this time. The first marriage was arranged by her parents – who also paid the dowry for her. This time she would have to find a husband on her own, and pay the dowry herself.

And so her life went with each wedding [a total of five weddings altogether] becoming less and less of a celebration and more of a ritual. When her last husband died, she vowed that she would never marry again. But it was difficult for her to stay away from men. She needed not only someone who would love her, but would also take care of her; for unlike you people today, there was no life insurance, no pension, no social security. And our parents were both now deceased by this time, so she couldn’t go back home.

She was the outcast of Sychar – a pariah among the women who feared that since she had already had five husbands, she might take theirs next. Everywhere she went, the women would talk and point and look and whisper – so much so, that she decided that she would avoid them as much as possible.
Every morning and evening the women of the town would come out to Jacob’s Well with their water pots and taking turns, they would let the rope down with a bucket on it to get their supply of water for their family, and gossip [I mean, share the latest news of the town and surrounding area]. It was a social time for them – discovering who was sick, who was getting married, who was going to have a child, and who had been caught doing what. It was their entertainment. They would discuss the weather and also the latest news of THAT woman – [meaning Abigail].

Abigail was hurt by all the whispering. The only way to avoid hearing it, and seeing the accusing fingers and eyes, was to come when there was no one around – and that was why Abigail usually came at noon – the hottest time of the day when other people were resting from their morning work and eating their lunch. She knew that she would be safe from them if he came at noon. No one would be at the well at that time. I loved my sister, and it hurt me to see her treated like that.

I have to tell you what happened one day as she later related the incident to me. It is just so unbelievable. Let me tell you in her words what happened to her on a day that changed not only her own life, but the whole village of Sychar.

She was waiting until close to noon, the hottest part of the day to go to the well to get some water when there would be no one else there. Gathering the water pot, she made her way to the well. As her eyes peered into the distance, it looked like someone was sitting near the well. She couldn’t make out who it was, but whoever it was needed a drink, or would never have been there at that hour.

As she neared the person, she could see that it was a man – and a Jew, at that. Well, she thought deeply, he would not bother her, look at her, or even speak to her – that’s for sure. She was a Samaritan and a woman – two strikes against her. But as she prepared to lower her pot into the well by way of the pulley and rope, she was startled by the sound of his voice asking for a drink of water. That was unheard of – didn’t he know? What was a Jew doing here in Samaria anyway? They usually traveled the long way around from Galilee to Jerusalem to avoid going through Samaria.

When the Jewish men prayed, they thanked God that they were not born a Samaritan or a woman. But Abigail was both. And she was considered THAT kind of woman. Fortunately this man, whoever he was, didn’t know her or her background, or how the women of the village talked about her, so she felt safe carrying on a conversation with him – or at least responding to his request.

He was alone and simply asked her for a drink of water. That may not seem like too much to ask when you are thirsty, but for Abigail, what she heard was unheard of. He was speaking to HER! Did he not know that the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans – especially Samaritan women? They were the lowest of the low – and she was below that because of her status in the village.

She was a non-Jew and a non-male. Who cares about her? Jesus cared, He cared so much that he spoke to her directly – maybe even touching her sleeve as he spoke to her. Oh, it gives
me the shivers just to think of it! Jesus was reaching out to someone who was in all ways a social reject. And he didn’t command her; he asked her politely; the start of a lengthy conversation.

Abigail wasn’t expecting him, but clearly, Jesus was expecting her. Jesus not only asked her for a drink, but asked to share her water pot – germ city. Clearly he did not allow anything as trivial as religious tradition get in the way of her journey toward faith.

Abu thought she was merely walking toward a well to get some water. Now Jesus offers her something to quench her obvious thirst. But here, she knew that she had the upper hand. She had a water pot with which she could get some water from and well and he had nothing – at least as far as she could see.

What was he offering her? What was this Living Water? Certainly nothing from THIS well. Water from the well was dead water – rain water, mostly. Far from pure and refreshing, it was more suited to sheep than people. Well water was common water, everyday stuff, but Living water? That was some kind of mystery to her.

Abigail was also polite, but gutsy – and observant, too. She knew he had nothing to draw with – no bucket, barrel, or bowl – and they both knew it. She knew her history, too.

“Are you greater than our father Jacob who gave us the well?” It was the standard argument: “If it was good enough for Jacob and his children and sheep, it should be good enough for the likes of you.” My sister was skeptical, intelligent, and irrepressible.

But Jesus wasn’t done. “Everyone who drinks from this well will get thirsty again.” After all, wasn’t she back because she had gotten thirsty again? Have you ever drank from a pipe coming out of the side of a hill? The water is cold, fresh, and thirst-quenching. But the water that Jesus was talking about was even more delicious – an endless supply of holy cleansing water awaited her. Well, Abigail was never one to pass up an opportunity like this.

She told him, “That sounds like something I want. I am tired of coming to this well day after day, facing the ridicule of the women of the town, simply to satisfy a thirst that won’t go away.” Jesus knew that she was parched in both body and spirit. The first thirst was easily solved by a dip from the well. The other thirst she had, needed to be brought out in the open before it could be quenched.

Jesus told her, “Go get your husband and come back.” Jesus wasn’t being rude. It was the custom of our day. Women – good girls, that is – didn’t speak alone with a man in a public place. By asking her to call her husband to join them, Jesus was honoring her, saying in essence, “I know you are not a harlot.” By inviting her back, he was assuring her of his interest in her welfare.

No, she wasn’t a harlot, Nor was she married, at the moment. So she told him, “I have no husband.” She wondered, “Does he know? Will he assume the worst about me?”
Jesus affirmed the accuracy of her statement that she had no husband. Abigail breathed a sigh of relief. But then Jesus continued, “The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the one you are living with is not your husband.”

Her heart sank. “He knows!” How had she survived the loss of five husbands? Clearly she was not a young woman, nor had life been kind to her. Five times hope was born in her heart, only to be crushed again and again, sending her on the search for someone to love her, support her, comfort her, and protect her.

Five husbands was one thing. Excessive, but not illegal. But living with a sixth man who was not her husband, well, that was wrong.

Abi recognized that this man had to be a prophet. She wasn’t trying to be funny. She was merely trying to divert attention from the sin that had just been uncovered.

To divert attention even further from herself, she began to debate Jesus about where the right place to worship was. Jesus would have none of that. He told her that the time would come when it wouldn’t matter where people worshipped.

My sister was no dummy when it came to understanding prophecy. She knew that when the Messiah was coming, he would explain everything to them. Then Jesus said that he was the one she was waiting for – the Messiah. And she believed. She BELIEVED!!! Having made such a leap of faith, she abandoned her search for plain water. She left her water jar. Filled with Living Water, she sought other thirsty souls, eager to offer them a drink too.

I saw her running into town, and ran toward her, fearful of what had happened. She kept yelling to all who would listen, “Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did.”

Why did the people of Sychar listen to her, a woman with a shady lifestyle? Simple! She had seen the Christ. I could see right away that something had happened to her while she was going to get water. So we all ran to the well to meet this man who could transform my sister. If he could do it for Abigail, he could do it for ANYONE – including ME.

Her neighbors, who knew her best [except for me], were utterly convinced that she had encountered the Messiah. Now they wanted to meet the man himself.

Revival came to our town simply because my sister, Abigail, went one day at noon to get water, and received living water instead. If she were here today, she would offer you some of this living water too. It changed all of us. Thank God! Would YOU like some of this Living Water? It is still available today – and you don’t have to travel to Sychar, to Jacob’s Well to taste it. Jesus still offers it to all who are willing to recognize their need, confess their sin, and receive it today. I, Jason the Mason drank it. Abigail, the “woman at the well” drank from this living water. And it is still flowing for thirsty souls today. Praise God! Praise God!!! Amen.