

# Along the track

## Finding the Well

Out the back of the old house where I spent my early childhood, there was a well. It supplied all our water. I remember it always being very cold, very 'fresh' and invigorating. I have no idea why! We always kept an eye on it. It was a precious resource. Two tanks kept it pretty full for most of the year but, by the end of summer, it was getting very close to empty so, when it started to run dry, we had to be careful, we had to change our ways.

When the new house was built on the paddock next door and the old house was moved away, the well was still in action, still needed. That 'new' house has been sold a couple of times and extensively renovated and the well seems to have disappeared. The latest owners have searched for it and they have contacted me a number of times to find out where it was located. But it has gone.

Wells are important. How many times have you been asked to contribute to the building of a well in villages across the globe? If you haven't, find out where you can! Wells are not just a source of precious water but they become places to gather, places where conversations take place, places where a community can prosper and grow. They are literally life-giving and life changing.

Wells find an important place in the scriptures, not surprisingly in the hot dry climate of Israel - wells are sources of life, not just because of the water but they were social gathering places for the locals and travellers stopped to water themselves and their stock. The young women of the village had the daily chore of drawing water from wells to supply the family household, usually in the evenings (Genesis 24:11). Abraham's servant stopped at a well and met Rebekah there, Jacob met Rachel at a well where she came to water her father Laban's flock of sheep. Moses, too, met his future wife, Zipporah, at a well when she came with her sisters to water their father's flock. There are two famous stories that describe Jesus meeting two women at the well, the Samaritan woman and later the *Syrophoenician Woman* (John 4). Both encounters are life changing. Rather than being treated as outcasts or people that would normally be ignored, Jesus talks with them and they are both feisty women. They won't take no for an answer and it is obvious that Jesus is impressed. And so are they.

Theologian John Shea once suggested that Jesus was crucified because "he made God as accessible as the village well."

Where has the well gone at our old home and why did the new owner go in search of it? A metaphor for life perhaps – we all go in search of them. Sometimes we find one for a while, sometimes they dry up – they were not what was needed. Where are our wells now, the places where we find the waters of life, like in ancient times where we find the blessings God has for us? Where are the places where our roots find nourishment, what it is that gives us life and life's purpose? What is it that gives us independence in a world where we so often find we're dependent on so many things?

Finding the well is not so much about finding a place but rather it is about exploring life's possibilities, with openness of mind and heart to God's love. Finding the well may not always mean finding immediate happiness. Times of unhappiness, discontent and even anxiety can be the vulnerable periods when we are called to change, to reconsider, to take a leap of faith.

Finding the well can be about recalling peak experiences in our past and identifying the grace filled moments of our life, or it may ask us to think about our dreams of a future we would prefer, one which may offer us an opportunity for growth, a new direction perhaps. Finding the well is made easier when we do not focus on self but more on others, when we are prepared to be open and welcoming, when we listen for understanding, when we seek to build bridges, when we seek healing and connection. Finding the well is easier when we are accompanied by others.

Wells remind us that you and I have a soul, a spiritual fire within. Paradoxically, we need the waters from the well to keep that fire alive!

Regards  
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