Engage! Encourage! Equip!
By Betty Marshner

Enjoy!
Although it is clear this woman does not understand, Jesus gently enlightens her by teaching her about the spiritual thirst that only He can quench and, even though she is asking about temporal thirst, she wants this clear, refreshing drink. How is that evident in verse 15?

Jesus then encourages her by giving her a simple, yet very complex, command. What is that in verse 16?

Jesus knows her situation, but in this simple question He is doing much: He reveals to her the knowledge of Who He is. As He elicits out of her the truth of her condition, He also reveals Who He really is. As He exposes her sinful life, she can do little. She looks down and scuffs the dirt with her toes in the gritty, powdery Samarian clay. Seeing the small puffs of dirty clay play around her feet, with a downcast spirit she replies, “I have no husband.”

As our Servant Savior Jesus exposes the sin in our lives, we too can do little but look down, scuff our feet in the dirty filth of our sin and feel the grit. It covers not only our feet, but also settles on our entire being. The Ten Commandments, written on those tablets of stone long ago, show us our guilt and shame. While Jesus continues to equip her, He reveals to her His knowledge of her entire life.

Celebrating this year the 500th anniversary of the the Reformation and the diamond anniversary of LWML, we note that very cornerstone of our Lutheran doctrine comes to play here. This woman does nothing to receive this gift of salvation. It comes to her at this moment in the form of the God Man Christ, her Redeemer.

We do nothing as well; we do not deserve the gift of salvation. God gives it to us through Christ and His sacrifice on the cross. We do nothing; it is simply there. We can, however, reject this gift, just as the woman at the well could have run away to find her latest partner, therefore rejecting Christ. We cannot even reach out by our power to receive this gift of salvation.


When this Samaritan woman admits that she knows a Messiah is coming who will explain everything, what statement does Jesus make that amazes her? See verse 26.

That the Savior of the world would take a moment to meet this lowly woman — engage her, equip her with the knowledge of her sin, reveal His true identity, encourage her in her newfound faith — shows true servanthood. He does the same through His Word and Sacraments for us who feel this inadequacy. He uses these four E’s in our lives as we attend worship weekly and study His Word on a daily basis. We receive encouragement as we take and eat His true body and drink His true blood in the Holy Sacrament. We confess we are by nature sinful and unclean and deserve eternal punishment. We look down at the grit and filth in our lives. Then, as we look up, we hear the priceless words of absolution: “Your sins are forgiven.” What a weight drops from our shoulders. What joy! Read verses 28–30. What does this woman do which shows her enjoyment at meeting her Lord and Savior?

When we encounter our Lord and Savior, we, as this woman, cannot help but tell others of the joy we find in our salvation. It is then we find working for our Lord a divine opportunity of service.

Spend several minutes sharing ways in which your congregation and LWML unit will use these four E’s this year to reach out and serve.

Closing

The Lord’s Prayer. Sing or say together “Lord, Help Us Walk Your Servant Way” (LSB #857) or “Almighty Father, Bless the Word” (LSB #923; LW #216; TLH #52).

Betty Marschner is active in her local, zone, and district LWML. As a retired wife of a North Dakota farmer/rancher, Betty is enjoying a new venture of service, that of writing Bible studies and devotions.

This life-saving gift of faith comes through the work of the Holy Spirit.