



Weekly Resources for Schools

PHASE: PRIMARY

HOW DO WE KNOW WE ARE LOVED?



KEY CONCEPT/MESSAGE:

The story in the New Testament of the Woman at the Well describes an encounter between Jesus and a Samaritan woman. Not accepted within her own community, the woman is moved when she finds she is fully known, welcomed and loved by Jesus. This story is one example, among many in the Gospels, of Jesus inviting and loving all. How do we know we are loved? How can we help others know they are loved and known too?

‘There is only one happiness in life – to love and be loved’

George Sand

BIBLE STORY OF THE WEEK:

Woman at the Well (John 4: 1-26)

Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” John 4: 13-14 (NIV)



Gathering

Close your eyes and think about a moment you felt really loved. Where were you? What happened? What led to you having this feeling?

Think about a moment where you have felt the opposite – perhaps you felt a little bit left out, unwelcome or unloved.

Today, we are going to explore an encounter in the Bible between Jesus and a woman at a well. It will help us to think about how we know we are loved, and also how we can help others feel known, accepted and loved.

Important Safeguarding Note for teachers:

It is really important in an act of worship about *knowing you are loved* to be clear about what healthy expressions of love look like.

For some children, sadly, love can be experienced or expressed in an inappropriate or harmful way. For others, they may not know or believe they are loved. We need to be alert to any signs of neglect or abuse that children might be experiencing or witnessing.

It is possible that within the context of a conversation about how we know and experience love, a child might start to disclose ways in which they have not been loved well. It is important for all children to know they are worthy of love, shown in healthy, appropriate ways.

If you suspect that a child might be at risk of harm in any way, you must report this according to your school's safeguarding arrangements.

Engagement

You will need a glass (ideally a tall, high ball one), a jug of water and something to catch overflowing water. Start with the glass three-quarters full.

Watch the animated version Woman at the Well (John 4: 1-26): either <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Vf3rqnoG5c> or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pNxNWv6KZ7s>.

In this story, we meet a woman at a well whose name we're not told. To understand this story a little bit more, there are a few things we need to know about her (as you say each of these, tip a little water out until the glass is empty at the end):

- People didn't want to talk to her because of some mistakes she had made in the past. *She was lonely, as others in her community didn't welcome her.*
- Water was usually collected from the well at the cooler parts of the day, in the morning and evening. This woman probably went at midday to avoid others. *People were often mean to her and made her feel unloved.*
- She was a Samaritan - Jewish people at that time believed Samaritans should be avoided. *She was often ignored.*



Because of all of these things, the woman came to the well each day feeling empty (show the empty glass) – unloved, unknown and unwelcome.

This day, though, was different. This day, she met Jesus by the well, sitting there in the midday sun. For her, this encounter was full of surprises! (After mentioning each of these, fill the glass by a quarter):

- Jesus looked and spoke to her; nobody usually speaks to her! *She felt acknowledged.*
- This Jewish person was speaking to her – a Samaritan! *She felt welcomed.*
- Jesus knew the woman – who she was, all that she had been through, her past experiences and choices. *She felt known and accepted.*

Little by little, during the conversation at the well, the woman started to feel more whole (show the glass of water $\frac{3}{4}$ full). She felt welcomed, loved, accepted. But Jesus said something else when looking at the water in the well.

(Show on board) Jesus said to her, “Whoever drinks this water will be thirsty again. Whoever drinks the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give them will become a well of life that lasts forever.”

Jesus realised that this woman was looking for something deeper than water from the well this day. She was looking to be loved – not the soppy sort – but to experience kindness, acceptance, friendship and the feeling of being known. Jesus was offering her this ‘living water’ – the feeling and knowledge that whatever happened in life, He loved her and that love would never stop. This love is like a never-ending stream of water – one that continues and will never end (*pour water into the glass until it is full to the brim or overflowing*).

The never-ending love of God is something which is really important to Christians, and many try to follow the example of Jesus to help others feel know, welcomed and loved.

Response

Sit quietly, be still and think about all you have heard in this act of worship. I wonder what words or images have made you think today?

I wonder what you might do after watching and listening today?

I invite you to join with me in a prayer. For Christians, prayer is just talking to God, who they know listens and hears their prayers. If you agree with what I have said, then please join me in saying, ‘Amen’.

Dear God,

Thank you for knowing us, welcoming us and loving us.

We think of those who feel unloved or left out.

Please show us if any of our family, friends or school community are feeling this way, and help us to show them love and kindness as Jesus did at the well.

Amen.

Sending

Water played a big part in the story of the Woman at the Well. I wonder if, in the week ahead, you can think about two questions every time you use running water. ‘How do I know I am loved?’ and ‘How can I help others feel loved?’

Go in peace to share God’s love and kindness with all you meet.



SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

(practical ways to help us explore faith and develop spiritually at home together)

EXPERIENCES that can help us ENCOUNTER:

Listen to the song 'I'll Stand by You' by The Pretenders

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bLpmj059JfA>), and reflect on the lyrics.

How could you see yourself in the song – who is standing by you? Who could you stand with?

Read [All are welcome here](#) by Alexandra Penfold and Suzanne Kaufman. Reflect on how you as a class could welcome all and ensure all feel a part of, and loved within, the school community. Perhaps the class could create their own thoughtful poem in the style of this book?



ACTIVITIES that can develop PRACTICES-HABITS:

Use the **EXAMEN** prayer to reflect on love. It has 5 steps, so you might like to count them on your fingers.

1. GIVE THANKS for the times you have felt loved this week.
2. ASK FOR HELP to help others feel accepted, known and loved.
3. REFLECT on your day and think about the things you have done which have helped others feel welcomed and loved ☺, and the times you may have missed opportunities to do so ☹.
4. SAY SORRY for the times you may have made someone feel like an outsider – not welcomed or loved.
5. DECIDE how you will help others to know they are known and loved by you tomorrow.

To discover more about using the Ignatian Examen with children, listen to this [podcast](#).

Running water

The story of the Woman at the Well uses water as a symbol for love. Perhaps this week, every time you use running water (to wash your hands, to make a drink, to brush your teeth etc.), you could reflect on this story and consider how you are loved, accepted and known (as per the 'sending' aspect of the collective worship plan).



CONVERSATIONS which CONNECT COMMUNITIES

The story of the Woman at the Well, as explored in our Faith at Home Primary video, draws attention to three themes.



First, the woman arrived at the well feeling unloved, unwanted and unwelcome. Others in her town didn't want to associate with or know her. In her encounter at the well, she finds that she is known and loved by Jesus; she has been looking for, and finds, this 'living water' of love that God can provide. Many Christians believe that Jesus' words 'living water' refers to the unending and life-giving love of God.

How do you know that you are loved? Who stands by you in your life? Whose love do you know is unconditional?

Second, Jesus actively sought out someone whose experiences in life left them feeling unworthy of love. Through past mistakes, the woman was avoided by those in her community and felt lonely. Jesus reached out to her, letting her know that she was dear to him.

How can we look for and support those in our communities who feel unknown, unloved and unwelcome at this time?

Thirdly, throughout the Gospels, Jesus is described as challenging ideas about 'us' and 'them' – such as the 'Jewish people' and 'Samaritans' – where people are not loved because they are seen as different. In this story, Jesus reaches out to the woman where others might have decided not to.

How might our community be better at including all and helping all feel loved and welcomed?



INVITATIONAL

Everyone is welcome to take part in collective worship, as much or as little as they or their parents and carers are comfortable with. This means we use invitational language and consider carefully our choice of words and songs. Children are invited to pray but are not compelled or expected to do so; they always have a choice. We invite them to pray or reflect in whatever way they would usually as a family, if that is part of their home experience.

INCLUSIVE

Acts of worship need to be inclusive of all. Therefore, we choose topics and ideas that are shared by different faiths and worldviews. When we present Christian teaching, we make it clear that this is 'what Christians believe', saying things like:

'I wonder why this story might be important to Christians?'

'The story today comes from the Bible (the holy book of Christians), which teaches that ...'

Our worship should be accessible for children and young people with a range of different backgrounds, and so we take care that activities do not require expensive resources. We also offer a variety of activities, so that children and young people with differing needs can all find something they can engage with.

INSPIRING

We aim for our acts of worship to inspire those engaging with them. How might it engage their emotions, enabling a sense of peace, comfort, hope or motivation? How might it inspire them into action, into thinking differently and considering their behaviour or actions? How might it inspire them to reflect on their faith or beliefs, and on the faith or beliefs of others?