Women and men at the well

By Chaplain Sharon J. Reives

I am intrigued that in Jesus' short ministry on Earth, he took the time to address the issue of unhealthy relationships.

We see that demonstrated remarkably well in his encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well. He breaks through all of the social barriers in order to reach her heart. She has been married five times and the man with whom she is now living, she is living with without the benefit of marriage. Her self-esteem is so low, by now, from so many failed marriages, until she no longer requires that the man marries her.

What is the common thread running through all five of these marriages? She was in all of them. Jesus helps her to see the pattern that she has created in her life.

He says to her, in essence, "Come on, you're better than that! And he gives her life back. It is revealed, in her conversation with Jesus, that she has a spiritual side, which has somehow been lost during all of the years she spent in the physical and while jumping from one relationship to the next.

First time, in a very long time, someone addresses her spiritual side, and she talks about worship. Jesus explains to her that "the true worshippers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the spirit and in truth." Jesus is says to her… develop your spirit! Jesus admonishes her to develop her spiritual life. In other words… obey your spiritual thirst!

And so, I too say to women and men who are at the well because of failed relationships or because of any reason… develop your spiritual life. It will take you a long, long, long way.

This story is not about gender. Robin Norwood in her book, Women Who Love Too Much, states "Women are not the only ones who suffer from relationship addiction.

Some men practice this obsession in their relationships with as much fervor as any woman could, and their feelings and behaviors issue from the same kinds of childhood experiences and dynamics."

The problem of relationship addiction is neither a male or female problem; it is simply a human problem.

There is a popular song that is often sung in my church tradition at Women's Day Programs.

Is there any reason why men, who are recovering from unhealthy relationships, cannot take these words, paraphrase them, and apply them to their own lives? It says:

"Like the woman at the well, I was seeking for things that could not satisfy;
And then I heard my Saviour speaking; Draw from My well that never
Shall run dry.
Chorus:
Fill my cup, Lord, I lift it up, Lord!
Come and quench this thirsting of my soul;
Bread of heaven, Feed me till I want no more.
Fill my cup, Fill it up and make me whole!
There are millions in this world who are craving
the pleasure earthly things afford; But none can match the wondrous treasure
That I find in Jesus Christ, my Lord.
So, my brothers, if the things this world gave you leave hungers that won't pass away,
My blessed Lord will come and save you, If you kneel to Him and humbly pray."

Isn't that a wonderful and healing message for men as well? I am convinced that what is taught about healthy relationships in women's lives can be re-applied and transformed to fit men's lives as well. There is a marvelous film titled, "The Joy Luck Club." I think that this film should be issued to every female child upon birth.

But, where is the "Joy Luck Club" for men? Men, too want to leave behind a healthy garden from which their children may pick when it comes to relationships.

In the film, one mother says to her daughter, "Losing him will not matter. It is you who will be found and cherished." Another mother asks her daughter, "What do you want from him? The daughter replies, "Respect, tenderness." The mother tells her, "Then, tell him now, and leave this lopsided house, and do not come back until he gives you those things with both hands open!" Finally, another mother looks at her daughter and says to her, "I will be waiting like a tiger in the bush… ready to leap out and cut your spirit loose!"

Women and men who allow themselves to be treated poorly in relationships do so because of a spiritual deficit.

Jesus offers the woman "living water"… in other words, spiritual water to cleanse and to heal. II Chronicles 7:14 says, "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and will heal their land."

I believe that God shall include in this healing marriages and unhealthy relationships.

The woman at the well came to draw physical water. She left having received spiritual water. Her life was transformed, her spirit renewed. And she shall never thirst again!

To all women and men who are at the well, I say to you, unless the change is spiritual, it will not be permanent.

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From Defense Logistics Agency Public Affairs

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