

## You Don't Know What You Don't Know

**Opening** – Good morning/evening, my name is Joyce Hondru and I am your guest speaker.

Some of you know me but probably, most of you do not. That might be because my husband and I divide our time between Durango and Pittsburgh, PA. Being skiers, we come here a few months in the winter and then return again in the summer to escape the dreadful Pittsburgh humidity.

I haven't always lived in Pittsburgh. I actually grew up in a small town about an hour south of the city, called Waynesburg. Much like Durango, Waynesburg (and Pittsburgh) are located the very southwest corner of the state, in the tri-state area, (vs. the 4-corners) where PA, Ohio and W. VA connect. When I was young Waynesburg had a population of about 5,000. It was a great place to grow up. As an adult I had a job in town where I paid \$18/month to park. However, after going through a divorce, I needed to make a better living for myself, so I started to interview in Pittsburgh. After my first, 2-hour, interview I gave the parking attendant a \$20 bill, but when he didn't give me any change, I began to realize the difference between a small town and the big city!

But, in any case, I got the job and moved into a small apartment not far from downtown. After I got settled in my job the next thing on my agenda was to find a church. A friend of mine told me she had heard good things about the First Presbyterian Church downtown. While I wasn't Presbyterian, I have always thought that most of the mainstream Christian churches were pretty much the same, theologically, so I decided to check it out.

I discovered that First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh is one of the oldest Protestant entities **west** of the Allegheny Mountains. Roots of Presbyterianism in Pittsburgh go back to **1758** when the British defeated the French at Fort Duquesne at the point of Pittsburgh's three rivers. (Where, much later, Three Rivers Stadium got its name.) Upon this defeat, the name was changed to Fort Pitt, (after William Pitt, the elder, a British statesman) and thus the town became "Pittsburg."



The church itself was incorporated in **1787** when it then bought 2.5 lots of ground -originally used as an Indian burial ground. In **1903**, the cornerstone was laid for the present building, (**shown below**) which was dedicated on **Palm Sunday, April 16, 1905**.



In the next picture you will be able to see some of the church's stained glass windows. 13 windows in the sanctuary were designed and installed by the Tiffany Studios (New York), each being **26 feet high and 7.5 feet wide**. The lower sections contain more earthly type scenes, mostly depicting Christ's ministry on earth. In the upper portions are more heavenly images, with many angels.





Once I started attending, I found out that the senior minister at the time was a Rev. Dr. Bruce Thielman, a captivating speaker, who was later named as one of the top 100 orators of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I also found out that the church had a vibrant young-adult ministry, so I quickly got involved.

While there were several young, professionals in the group, there were two with whom I got quite close. Susan Whitewood and Molly Boyles. Susan was in finance at Mellon Bank, Molly was in IT at PNC Bank and I worked as a financial planner at a business called Pittsburgh Brokerage Services. But, in any case we all worked downtown and at the time we were all single. So, we got together for lunch downtown each week, went to movies, visited Dairy Queen or just hung out.

The young adult pastor, Rev. Art Helin, knew that the three of us got together outside of church meetings so he thought we might be the perfect little group to welcome a new young member of the church. Her name was Cindy. Cindy and her mother had recently moved to condo in Pittsburgh. Cindy's dad was still working in Florida, but would visit every weekend. Still, since Cindy didn't have a job or anything, she was finding it hard to make friends. Thus, Rev. Helin asked the three of us if we could take Cindy under our wing.

Of course. we said yes. Cindy was only 21, younger than the three of us, and she wasn't in business or anything but the four of us meshed instantly. So, the three of us agreed that, since Cindy lived in the city but didn't yet have a car, we would pick her up each Friday and have her join us for our weekly luncheon and try to make her feel welcome. Each week we would drive to some nearby restaurant and, since the four of us didn't want to walk very far, we parked in a handicap spot.

What, what's wrong. You seem appalled. Well, **let me tell you what you don't know**. You see, the reason Cindy and her mother had come to Pittsburgh was in the hope of getting Cindy a heart transplant. Young, beautiful, dark-haired Cindy was dying; she could only walk about 10 – 20 feet without becoming completely exhausted. A heart transplant was her only hope and Pittsburgh was and is one of the best transplant facilities in the world. I mentioned that her father only came on weekends to visit, well, that was because he had to remain in Florida through the week to work in order to maintain his family's health insurance.

I wasn't surprised though when I saw your reaction, because, most likely, if you (or I) were sitting in one of those restaurants and saw four healthy-looking, young women parking in a handicapped spot, you would be aghast – **BUT – *you don't know what you don't know.***

Surely this isn't the first time you were misled by what you thought you knew, right? I think we are all guilty at times of believing or judging or speaking out about things when we don't have all the facts. Not only can we look silly but the bible, in **Proverbs 18:2** calls us fools. It says "**A fool finds no pleasure in understanding, but delights in airing his (or her) own opinions.**"

Sort of like this woman:

Show video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fZLeaSWY37I>

**Scripture and application** – There is a story in the Bible about several people **who didn't know what they didn't know**. It comes from the Gospel of **John 4:4-30, 39-42**. It is a story with which you are likely familiar, the story of Jesus and the woman at the well. Let's take a look at it:

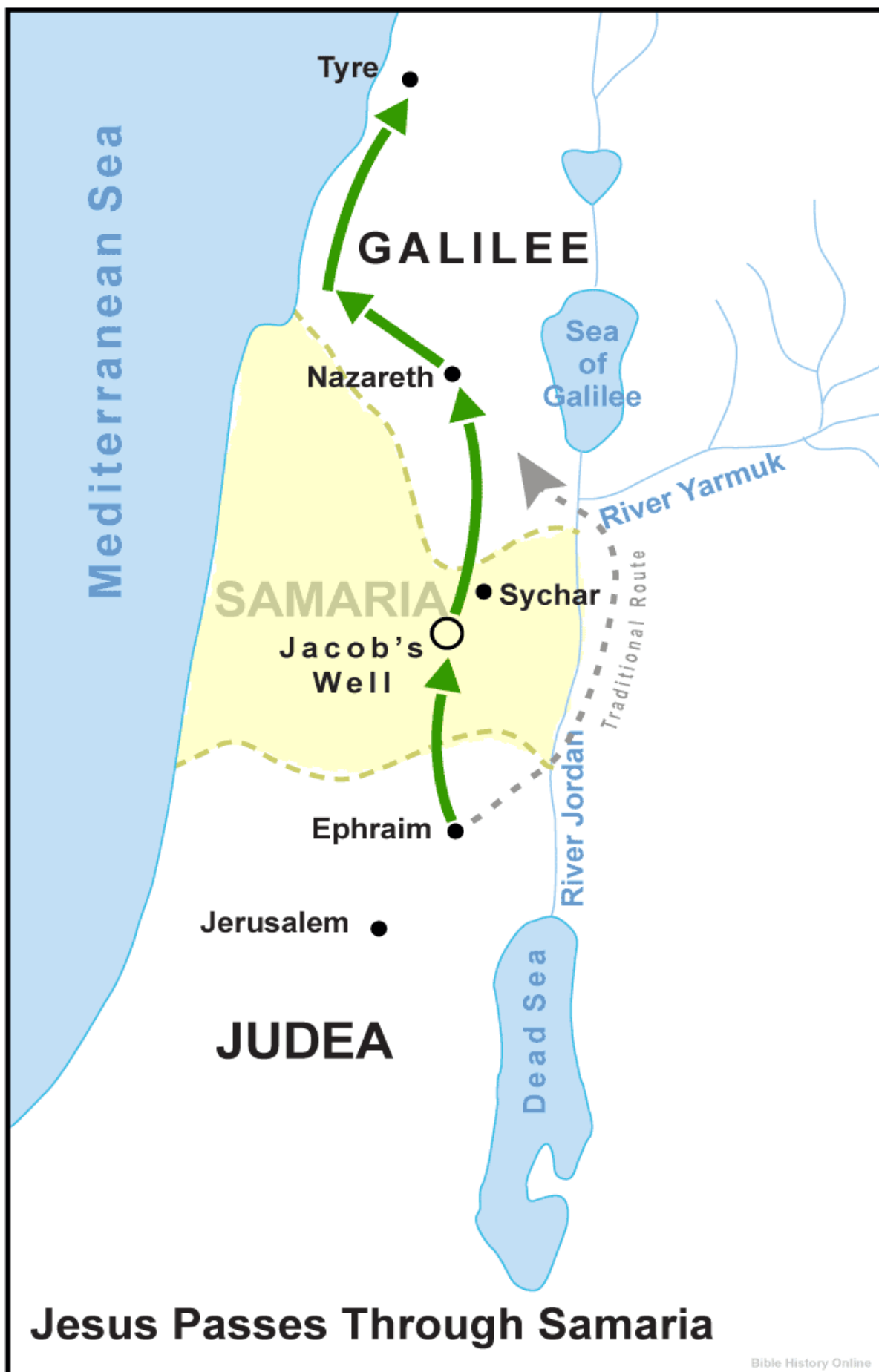
Let's look at verses 4-9 first:

*4Now he (Jesus) **had to** go through Samaria. 5So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, (Si car) near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 6Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, **tired as he was** from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.*

*7When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?"8(His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)*

*9The Samaritan woman said to him, "**You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman.** How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)*

OK, few things. First vs. 4 says that Jesus **HAD** to go through Samaria. Why? Why did he HAVE to – not only was there another way around, but most Jews in Jesus' time took the other way around because they didn't want to come in contact with the Samaritans, whom they believed to be "unclean" as they intermarried with people other than Jews. In fact, in verse 9 it mentions the fact that Jews do not associate with Samaritans.





In addition, while this scripture doesn't directly spell it out (probably because John the author of this gospel doesn't think it is necessary), but Jewish men didn't speak to women either – at least not without a male relative being present. In fact, Jewish society at the time was so patriarchal that the Jewish men had a prayer of thanksgiving that said, "Praised be to God that he has not created me a woman."

So, when she says, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman, how can you ask me for a drink", she was quite possibly leery of what this man is after. Thus, it is obvious that Jesus didn't "have" to go through Samaria for any reason other reason than **"he knew something that others didn't know."**

Now, the other thing we need to look at is why this woman is there alone, at noon. Most women would come to collect water either in early morning or late afternoon, when it was cool. Certainly not at high-noon! And, they wouldn't come alone, they would come with other women, as this was their time to socialize.

So, most people of that time, if they saw a woman alone, in the middle of the day, collecting water they would, most likely, judge her as an outcast; someone perhaps of loose morals, that the other women of the town had snubbed because of the type of woman that she was.

Think about it though. Try to put yourself in the shoes of this woman? How sad and isolated she must have felt. No friends, (no husband, as we'll soon find out). She obviously lived alone, came to the well alone, ate her meals alone, watched TVs by herself.... But seriously, imagine everyone in your neighborhood, or at your work place, or all the parents at your child's school having a party and you are not invited. In fact, you aren't invited not just because they don't like you, but because they don't think you are good enough to even associate with them. Being isolated and alone is tough. Being isolated, alone and judged can be devastating. Look at what is happening to some of our young people because of the hurtfulness of social media.

### **Here is an interesting story:**

During the early days of Operation Enduring Freedom (2001 – 2014) one of the US generals serving there in Afghanistan, General Hollanek, in a gesture of kindness, built water wells in one of the little villages so that the woman of that village would not have to walk so far to get their water. Each time though that the general returned to this village he would find the wells destroyed. He assumed the culprit to be the Taliban. Interestingly though a war correspondent, named Kim Baker, discovered the truth regarding the well's destruction. The women of the village, the ones the general was trying to help, were the ones responsible for sabotaging the wells. But why?

In our modern, convenience-oriented world having running water in our homes, (or certainly having a nearby well from which to get water) is a luxury few of us would dismiss. However, collecting water from the river, although burdensome, was a very important time of socializing for these women. They easily gave up convenience and luxury in order to have their time together to laugh, share, catch up and gossip, because women need the fellowship of other women.

Keep in mind, we aren't talking about women from Jesus' time we are talking about women from this century!!

**Our women did not go to the well alone because she wanted to!**

OK, let's continue on with today's scripture:

*9The Samaritan woman said to him, "**You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman.** How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)*

***10*** Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

***11*** "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? ***12*** Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?"

<sup>13</sup> Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup> 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."

<sup>15</sup> The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

**Note, she did not want to keep coming to the well alone. It was not a pleasant experience.**

<sup>16</sup> He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."

<sup>17</sup> "I have no husband," she replied.

Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. <sup>18</sup> The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

<sup>19</sup> "Sir," the woman said, (quickly changing the subject) "I can see that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup> Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

So - the five-husband thing. While none of us know for certain what this woman's story is but surely, if this woman had been widowed five times that would not keep the other women in town from associating with her, that would not have caused her to change the subject. In fact, they would likely embrace her in her sorrow. So, I suggest that something else is going on here. Perhaps she has left five husbands or five husbands have left her, or she was never really married to these five men but she had known them, in the biblical sense.

All we know for sure is that Jesus knows her past but sees past her past. The past that she thinks is hidden and, obviously, would like to keep hidden. BUT even though Jesus sees her past, He doesn't judge her. Jesus (of all people) could have condemned her, he could have embarrassed her, he could have waged a "shame on you" finger at her or, even worse, he could have simply dismissed her. But – *Jesus knew things others didn't know*

**He continues:**

<sup>21</sup> "Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup> You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup> Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. <sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

<sup>25</sup> The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

<sup>26</sup> Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he."

<sup>27</sup> Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?"

Even the disciples seem a little judgmental here, right? When they see Jesus talking to and taking a drink from this particular Samaritan woman. But we don't find any of them inching closer to their leader to get to the heart of the issues but rather they appear to be wondering why Jesus is so blatantly discarding the Jewish law. BUT – *they didn't know what they didn't know.*



<sup>28</sup> Then, **leaving her water jar**, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, <sup>29</sup> “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?” <sup>30</sup> They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

<sup>39</sup> Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I ever did.” <sup>40</sup> So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. <sup>41</sup> And because of his words many more became believers.

<sup>42</sup> They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.”

**Wow! Have you or I ever said to someone, you have to meet Jesus – He is awesome!**

**The others THOUGHT they knew:**

The self-righteous, judgmental, close-knit women of the community, saw someone beneath them, the often confused disciples [to steal a phrase from Pastor Jeff] saw someone who might call into question the character of their leader and, quite possibly, the men of her community saw someone unworthy to marry but “easy” to spend time with.

But Jesus saw this woman, not as she initially appears, but rather as someone lost and alone. Instead of scorning her, he reveals himself to her. He met her where she was, shamefully getting water from a well and gave her the living water of eternal life. Jesus saw someone who could spread the gospel message in her community not because she was some theologian, or well-respected member of the community but because she was open to His message and the joy and redemption it brought.

**That is why He **HAD** to go to Samaria.**

Remember what Jesus says to the Pharisees (in Matthew 9:10-11) when they asked his disciples why he was eating with the tax collectors and other “sinners”? It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.

Jesus saves this woman from a life of humiliation and public disgrace and, in turn, **“Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in Him because of the woman’s testimony.”**

***Jesus knew what they didn’t know and Jesus knows what we don’t know.***

Our church’s moto is **“Be Jesus Christ to the World”**. It’s a great moto but when we judge others, or situations, by what we think we know we clearly aren’t being like Jesus. We are being self-righteous, thinking we know better or, perhaps, thinking we are better.

**Taylor Swift has a song called *Mean*. Some of the lyrics go like this:**

You, with your words like knives  
And swords and weapons that you use against me  
You, have knocked me off my feet again,  
Got me feeling like a nothing...  
You can take me down  
With just one single blow

*But you don't know what you don't know*

**So, then how do we apply these principles? How do we keep from being Mean?  
How are we to really “Be Jesus Christ to the World”?**

Well, it all starts with grace. I mean, isn't this what God does for us, He gives us grace. He doesn't judge us like others may judge us, He sees beyond the surface and gives us grace. In fact, **Isaiah 30:18** tells us that “...the Lord longs to be gracious to you, he rises to show you compassion” not judgement or ridicule as some might believe, but grace and compassion. Isn't that what Jesus gave to the woman at the well – grace and compassion?

Jesus knew something about Paul too, that most people didn't know. Paul, as you may remember was a very prominent, well-educated Jewish leader who took it upon himself to persecute the new followers of Christ after Jesus died. He thought these Christians were anti-Jewish and were going to corrupt the Jewish faith and turn the world away from God. **But Paul didn't know what he didn't know.**

So, while on his way to Damascus to seek out more Christians for persecutions, Christ appears to him and ends up making him one of the most out-spoken, unapologetic leaders of the early church and allowed more of his letters to appear in the New Testament than any other author. Paul, who once persecuted followers of Jesus, ended up leading people to Christ, just like the woman at the well. Two people who you and I might have seen as the most unlikely people to bring others to faith, Christ saw something much, much more, because **he knew what they didn't know.**

Paul talks about the grace he received in writing to the believers at the church in Corinth **(1 Corinthians 15:9-10)**

**9** For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. **10** But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

In her song, *Wide Eyed*, Nichole Nordeman says:

“When I met her in a bookstore,  
She was browsing on the third floor through a yoga magazine  
And she told me in her past life she was some plantation slave’s wife  
She had to figure out what that might mean

“She believes the healing powers of her crystals  
Can bring balance and new purpose to her life  
Sounds nice

“She left me wide eyed in disbelief and disillusion  
I was tongue tied, drawn by my conclusions  
So I turned and walked away  
And laughed at what she had to say  
Then casually dismissed her as a fraud  
I forgot she was created in the image of my God.”

### **So here is the question - How can you offer grace?**

When might you have an opportunity to look beneath the surface and find compassion vs. judgement?

#### **Kathleen's story:**

For example, what if you happened to see a crazed woman flying down the street, honking her horn, and passing people, as my daughter-in-law was doing not too long ago, you think to yourself, since you are near a hospital, that maybe she is driving irradicably because she thinks her husband is having a heart attack. And maybe, just maybe, you don't honk your horn back or flip her the bird, (as one young man did) you offer up a little prayer.

#### **The Catholic Priest story:**

Or maybe when you see some long-haired motorcycling riding guy hanging out around the Catholic Church in your neighborhood, you don't question his motives, as I did. You think instead, perhaps he's the new priest, which he was.

**Any time you start to judge a situation you really know nothing about –  
acknowledge that there is a good chance *you don't know what you don't know?***



When we offer grace, when we try to see others as Christ might see them, we begin to understand the amazing grace that God has offered us.

And one other way to **Be Jesus Christ to the World** is to **BE Happy**, as described by one of my favorite Pittsburgh natives, Mr. Rogers, who said it takes three things to be happy – **Be Kind, Be Kind, Be Kind.**

### **Alistair Begg:**

**Let me close with a story I heard on the radio.** It was told by Alistair Begg, the Scottish born minister who is the senior pastor of **Cleveland's Parkside Church**. The teenage son of one of mothers in the church became quite ill. The mother and all three of her sons were very devout followers of Jesus and attended Alistair's church regularly. The father, however, was an atheist and never graced the church with his presence. As the boy grew more gravely ill and it appeared that he might die, Alistair pleaded with God to save him and thus reveal His divine healing power. But, to Alistair's great disappointment and confusion, the boy died.

Alistair became rather angry with God. How could He let this young boy die? Didn't God want the father to come to faith? But later, Alistair had to confess, *he didn't know what he didn't know.*

You see, several weeks later the father asked to meet with Pastor Begg. And, the father asked him if he was correct about something. The father said, do you mean to tell me that my wife and my other two boys will see my son again in heaven but because I don't believe in Jesus I won't. "Yes", Alistair said, "they will spend eternity together." With that the father got down on his knees and accepted Christ as his Lord and Savior. You see, *God knew what Alistair didn't know.*

### **CINDY:**

Oh, and my young friend Cindy. They found a match for her and she got the long-awaited heart transplant. However, her weak body rejected the new heart and within a few days of the transplant Cindy died. Why did Cindy have to die? I don't know. But I trust in a *God who knows what I don't know.*

Let's pray...

May we leave this place and truly "Be Jesus Christ to the World", may we show grace in all things and, may we be like both Paul and the woman at the well and bring others to *the one who knows what we don't know.*

Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. **(2 Peter 1:2)**

*Amen!*

**Possible songs:**

Grace, Grace, God's Grace...

Your Grace is Enough