



Chapter Nine

When the Well is Dry



Lyrics

Verse 1

When the well is Dry
After all these years
From the fountain we built
With our blood and tears

Chorus

We've been broken, we've been scarred
We tried to follow, but the way was hard
But Your Word is true, so we trust in You
When the well is dry

Verse 2

When the well is dry
And You're weary and worn
I will quench your soul
You will thirst no more

Chorus

Bridge

We've got this pile of stones
To help us remember
And we'll keep on piling stones
When we see You come through

Chorus

Unraveling Dry Places ~ Receiving Refreshment

Jeremiah 2:13 says, "for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water." The writing of this song has been an example of my striving to hew a cistern for myself. I'm reminded of the story in John 4 where Jesus talks with the woman at the well. I can relate to that woman! I continue to fall into old habits of striving in my own strength, forsaking God and seeking to do what I want to do instead of being obedient to what He created me to do and be. Sometimes I really do think my way is the best way...until everything comes crashing down and I pray for God to rescue me! I think of my sin as the dry well, a hole in the ground that I jump into and build walls up and around that separate me from God. I build the wall with the things I desire; earthly possessions, outward success and pride. I build this image around myself that makes me feel secure and even looks good from the outside. Eventually this false self I've built becomes a prison that keeps me from experiencing the same type of freedom that Jesus offered to the woman at the well.

The song itself was written during one of those times when I was seeking my own way. I wrote the song and thought it was finished. It sat in my stack of songs for about a year until our pastor preached a series called, The Ebenezer Challenge. During the sermon series, we were challenged to create something that represented our spiritual journey, something that would act as an Ebenezer Stone in our lives. An Ebenezer Stone is basically a rock of remembrance (see 1 Samuel 7:12). The Israelites often set up these stones as reminders of what God had done for them. They set them up in places where their children would see them and when they asked what the rocks were for, they would tell them about God and His goodness to them. If you have ever been out hiking you might have seen stacks of rocks, called cairns, which mark the trail. They are rocks stacked to show people the way they should go. I love that Ebenezer Stones are the same concept. They are reminders for us of where we have been that give opportunities for others to see what God has done and encourages others in the way they should go. The Ebenezer Challenge was a challenge to create something that would act as a personal reminder of how God had been working in your life. In turn it would be something that you could intentionally share with others, or display for others to see, so that they might be encouraged in their faith.

I thought about what I would want to create as my Ebenezer Stone during the series, and I kept thinking about this song. I felt like the words I had written weren't true. The first version was basically about suffering through dry seasons, and just plugging away hopelessly until we see God working. When I decided to revisit the song, I knew I needed to seek God for what He had to say about it. I started by doing a search online for all the Bible verses that talk about wells and water... there are a lot! As I began to read the verses and try to make sense of what I was reading, God began to reveal even more scriptures and images that ultimately lead to a very solid truth. Jesus is the Living Water!

The thing I want to remember, the Ebenezer Stone of it all, is this: No matter how hard I may strive to do anything, if it is in my own strength, it is for nothing. It is a dry well that brings no life whatsoever. I can create apart from God. I can strive to do and be many things, but if God is not at the center, all my effort is hopeless. If I am not seeking Him and His plans for my life, that's called forsaking the fountain of living waters and digging wells in desert places that will leave me dry and unsatisfied. But, if I am willing to let go of my ways and follow Him, He will give me Living Water. "But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (John 4:14)

Around the same time that our church was going through The Ebenezer Challenge series, I was also going through a Bible study called, *Discerning the Voice of God* by Priscilla Shirer. In one of the sessions, we talked about John 7:37-39 which says, "...If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believe in him were to receive! As I read this scripture and was reflecting on all the other verses about water and wells, I began to picture the Trinity as a well. Imagine with me that God is the structure of the well (the walls and such), Jesus is the Living Water flowing beneath the well, and the Holy Spirit is the bucket. I also began to think of the body of Christ (the Church) as being stones built together to make up the wall of the well. Sort of like in 1 Peter 2:4-6 (NIV) which says, "As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." It brings it back around to the idea of the Ebenezer Stone. It is a reminder of the significance of community. We are not meant to live our life of faith on our own. Our stories, our Ebenezers, have an impact on others in our community. We impact them, they impact us, and God uses our stories to point us back to Him and His goodness and love for us.

There is so much wrapped into this song and so many lessons I am learning about what it means for Jesus to be the Living Water. As I sat down to rewrite *When the Well is Dry*, something altogether different and unexpected came along with it. A short, poetic, story called, *The Shepherd and the Well*. Please feel free to imagine yourself as the "I" in this story.

The Shepherd & the Well

A Short Story

Here lies the story of two wells...

The first I dug deep, out in the desert place
I filled it with my blood and tears
And yet, when at last I sought to drink –
The well had run dry.

My parched soul wandered, lost in the wilderness.
I sought water to hydrate my weary bones.
Alas, in the distance a great waterfall arose,
Living water pouring out over the bare heights,
And into the valley – a pool.

I ran with strength not of my own.
Invited by a Shepherd saying,
"If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink."
He washed me in the roaring currents
And raised me up – clean.

He led me to the second well,
The walls were built of stone, each one fitting just so.
On every stone were names I did not yet know –
Memories of lives touched by the water within.
"This is my body," said the Shepherd.

I looked closely at the stones.
Each one was a different size and shape.
Some were vibrantly colored, some simple, some intricate.
Every stone told a unique story, and yet –
Each stone was a reflection of the Shepherd standing before me.

I leaned over to look into the well.
I could hear rivers of water flowing far below.
He said, "Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters."
I fell at His feet and cried, "I have nothing to give you for it."
He said, "The price has already been paid!"

He took my hand and placed it on the handle.
"The Spirit will help you," He said.
My hands, weak and cracked began to crank.
Deep within the well I heard the bucket groan
As if words I couldn't speak had reached the waters.

With little effort, for the Shepherd was guiding my hand,
The bucket, overflowing, rose up and out of the well.
"Where is your cup?" Asked the Shepherd.
I offered Him my hands and said, "I have only these."
"Ah, these will do quite nicely," He chuckled.

He took the bucket and began to pour.
The cool, clear water pooled in my dry, cupped hands.
My wounds were healed, yet the scars remained.
Astonished I looked up

"This is my blood," He explained.
Then the Shepherd spoke,
"Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him
Will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him
Will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.
With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation."

At last I raised my hands and drank deep.
The Living Water satisfied my sun-scorched places.
My bones were made strong, my body renewed.
My heart rejoiced as the water from the Good Shepherd
Restored my soul!

The Shepherd led me around to the other side of the well.
He held out a white stone with a new name written on it.
Again I offered Him my empty hands.
He gave me the stone, called me His
And showed me the exact spot where it fit into the wall of the well.

We placed the stone together, His hand guiding mine
And He connected it to the others.
Then the Shepherd said, "Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."
He held my hands and a wellspring of life broke forth!
He filled my cup to overflowing.

As I walked with the Shepherd the stone began to change.
Colors were added, stories were told, creations were made.
With the Spirits help, the images on my stone overflowed onto the others
And theirs overflowed onto mine.
Together we spoke of a Good Shepherd
And of The Well that Will Never Run Dry.



*“Jesus answered her,
If you knew the gift of God,
and who it is that is saying to you
‘Give me a drink,’
you would have asked him,
and he would have given you
living water.”*

John 4:10

