

THE WELL

a drama in four scenes

Published in a youth leader's magazine in the 70's, "*The Well*" is a re-telling of a story told by John, in his Gospel, chapter 4.

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cast of characters:

Stage Manager (*SM*) who doubles as “Jones” *the bartender*

Mary Shales , *a very poor middle-aged woman, whose life revolves around “The Well”.*

Sally Cummings, *Mary’s friend*

Joe, *a regular at “The Well”*

Dave, *a street preacher*

Secretary to Doctor Hill

Doctor Hill, *“head pastor” of a large traditional Church*

Pastor Sharp, *pastor of a small Pentecostal group*

Sharp’s friend

Stage Manager enters with hammer, nails, and large sign on which are printed the words : **THE WELL**. He nails the sign to pre-arranged boards, then speaks to the audience:

SM: ...and with those hammer blows we open to the neighborhood another one of those public places where people go to drown out their troubles with high-spirited drink, and acquaintances in similar situations. (*people are entering as he speaks*) Spotlight! (*he speaks to spotlight operator*) focus on this lady, here, will you (*indicating Mary*)? Mary Shales is out for another fun Saturday night. Her friend is Sally Cummings. Let’s join them.

Scene 1: at “The Well”

(*general chatter/laughter in background*)

Mary: (*at the juke box*) Which one do you want to hear first tonight?

Sally: Doesn’t matter, I’m sick of ‘em all. Just get some noise goin’.

Mary: (*puts money in, heads for bar*) Let’s get some other things goin’ too. Bud Lite, Mr. Jones.

Jones (SM): Now you take it a little easy tonight, Mary. Don’t want to have to send you home.

Mary: Oh come on, Jones, when’s the last time I overdid it?

Jones: Last night.

Mary: Oh yeah...(she takes drink to table)...Well, let’s start the party, boys!

Joe: Okay, sister, what’s your game?

Mary: (*in her best “uppety” voice*)Uh, why not bridge? (*she laughs*) You know my game, Joe, deal the cards!

Jones (SM): So the cards are dealt, the drinks flow, the music blares. Some time passes, and Mary staggers to the bar...

Mary: Hey Jones! Ish gettin' a lit'l hot in here.

Jones: Same temperature as when you came in, Mary. Maybe it's gettin' a little hot in *here*.
(*he indicates Mary's person*)

Mary: (*responds to Jones' comment, then:*) Ha! Full House! I wish my third husband could see this!

Sally: I thought it was your *fourth* husband that was the card player.

Mary: Oh yeah, but it wush my *third* husband that wush money hungry. Fork it over boys!
(*they do*) That callsh for another drink. (*she goes to bar*)

Jones (SM): Mary, why don't you quit while you're ahead? You know you can't hold this stuff!

Mary: (*drunken but still good-natured*) ah c'mon Jones! I have my *rightsh!* Just one more?

Jones: One more, and that's it!

Mary: (*taking drink to table, drinking as she goes*) Okay, gang, deal 'em again!

Joe: No way! You're too lucky tonight. And I'm broke. (*others concur*)

Mary: (*now a little upset*) Whaddya mean? You afraid of a woman? Shome man you are! (*she is getting louder*) What'd ya come for if it washn't to play poker and loosh money? Jonesh, thish man's dishcriminatin' against me!

(*Here Jones (SM) shakes his head, gets Mary's coat, puts it on her, and guides her to the door as she keeps protesting. Sally understands, and assists Mary through the door to the street*)

Sally: Let's go home, Mary.

(*as they go into the street, they meet Dave, a young street preacher who at the moment is counselling a boy from his Bible. Mary, still very much drunk, begins to ridicule.*)

Mary: Hey look, a real-live preasher! (*to Sally:*) Good-lookin', too.

Sally: Mary, you've got to get home. You're *drunk*.

Mary: Oh come on. I'm jusht havin' a good time.

Mary: Hey look, a real-live preacher! (*to Sally*)
good-lookin', too.

Sally: Mary, let's go home; you're drunk.

Mary: Oh come on, I'm jusht havin' a good time.

Dave: (*suddenly turning from his counselee, who moves on*) It's okay. Did I hear that your name is Mary? I'm Dave. (*extends his hand*)

Mary: You want to shake hands with a drunk? And you even asked about my name! You're the first preacher that's ever done that.

Dave: I see you've had some rough times in religion.

Mary: Yeah, really. I'll never forget the firsht time I went to see a preacher. I'd just been to this huge church meetin' down at the stadium. I did what they said to do. I walked down that long aisle, bowed my head, prayed...

Dave: (*nods knowingly*) Why don't we sit down here?

Mary: You know, you're nice. I mean really different...

Dave: Thanks. Now, continue your story.

Mary: Shtory? Oh yeah. Well, I goesh to this church uptown, after the stadium meeting, to follow up, you know?

(*black out*)

Scene 2: Doctor Hill's Office

(a flashback)

Mary: *(enters speaking to secretary)* H-hello, I'd like to speak with the man in charge.

Secretary: The man in...Oh, you must mean the head pastor, Dr. Hill?

Mary: I guess so.

Secretary: *(goes to pastor's office)* Jerry, there's a woman to see you.

Dr. Hill: Who is it?

Secretary: I don't know; she walked in off the street and said she wanted to talk "to the man in charge." *(they both chuckle)*

Dr. Hill : *(a little bothered by it all)* Okay, send her in.

Secretary: You may go in now.

Mary: Thank you. *(she enters)*

Dr. Hill: *(professionally)* Hello, I'm Dr. Hill; I'm head pastor here; what can I do for you?

Mary: *(very nervous, intimidated)* Well, uh, I'd, uh, kinda like to be a member here. I saw your sign, that said "everybody welcome," and thought this would be as good a place as any.*(she attempts a laugh , which is not reciprocated)*

Dr. Hill: *(combining amusement with disgust)* Tell me, why are you out church shopping to begin with?

Mary: *(a little excited but still worried about his gruffness)* Well, last night I was at this big meeting down at the Stadium. After the preacher preached and called everybody down front, I felt inside like somethin' was changing, you know? I had this great feeling. Now I just want to join a church.

Dr. Hill: Uh-huh. Well, I don't want to be rude, but you know you could get a "good feeling" by taking a hot shower.

Mary: Huh?

Dr. Hill: *(rising)* What I mean is, a person can't just go to a "meeting", get a good "feeling", and consider himself a Christian. There's just more to the Church than that.

Mary: Oh? What?

Dr. Hill: Oh, there's *hundreds* of things. For example, what is your stand on transubstantiation? What are your millennial views? Are you a "predestinarian" or do you favor "free will" ? What about baptismal regeneration? I mean, you just can't come in off the street feeling good, and expect a pastor to open the doors of the Church to you.

Mary: I can't?

Dr. Hill: You obviously don't understand. I'm trying to tell you, there's more to Christian teaching than, "Jesus come into my heart." *(mocking tone)*

Mary: *(stunned, but rising)* Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't know. *(she begins to walk out)*

Dr. Hill *(suddenly the comforter)* Well, it's understandable. Don't feel bad about yourself. Now, I have here *(reaches inside desk drawer)* a listing of our main doctrines, with short explanations of each. It's about 35 pages long. You read it, and if you're still interested, come back, and sign up with the secretary for a catechism class. Now, after about two years of weekly classes, we can talk about membership again.

Mary: Two years?

Dr. Hill: About.

Mary: Well, thanks.

Dr. Hill: Oh, no problem. We're here to help people.

Secretary: *(as Mary is slowly walking off stage)* Oh, Jerry, the lawyer has called again. You know that apartment complex we own over on High St.? There's about three tenants he says we've got to run out of there. They're *consistently* a week late with the rent.

Dr. Hill: *(barely audible now as Mary is already gone and the scene is changing)* Hey, we've got to do what we've got to do.

(blackout, as we return to SCENE 1)

Mary: So I say to myself, to *(she coughs here)* with religion. Just a bunch of phonies.

Dave: So you dropped religion from then on?

Mary: Should have. But I'm pretty soft. And I wanted to give the religion folks a fair chance to prove themselves. A few weeks later I was on my way to the store when I sees this big notice. This church in Rose Park is goin' to have a big-name preacher. Miracles, music, and a friendly welcome to everybody. Maybe I just like excitement; or maybe it was the "friendly welcome" part. But I went. Well, it was exciting! And after the meeting...*(blackout)*

Scene 3: Rose Park Church

(a flashback)

(It is the end of the service. People are milling around. We see Mary looking for the pastor, then finding him.)

Pastor Sharp: *(He is gushy, wordy, and very distant. He is shaking hands with others while talking with Mary. He is also making dinner arrangements throughout this whole exchange).*

Yes, I'm pastor here. Good to have you. Glory! *(ad lib)*

Mary: I'm sorry to bother you, but...

Sharp: Oh! Absolutely no trouble at all, little lady, what's on your mind?

Mary: *(She is a bit off balance, watching this man's antics)* Thanks. I mean, good. Well, what I wanted to say is...well, I've had some pretty bad experiences with religion, and...

Sharp: I understand you perfectly. *(He looks at watch and beyond her. Signals to friend that he will soon be free.)* Haven't we all! *(He laughs)*

Mary: Sir, am I keeping you?

Sharp: Ma'am, when the Lord's work is at hand, I've got all the time I need. *(again looks at watch and signals friend)*

Mary: *(looking to his friend, then back to him)* Yeah, well, anyway...The last time I had a run-in with a preacher, I decided never to go to church again. But tonight, well, I kinda got that "feeling" again, you know?

Sharp: Right! Glory! That's where it's at, honey!

Mary: *(growing even more nervous)* Well, I was wondering, what would it take to become a member here?

Sharp: *(smile vanishes as he examines her drab clothing)* Uh huh. Tell me, dear, where do you live?

Mary: On Bank St., down by the river. Why?

Sharp: Hmmm, that would present a problem. It's a long way out here, you know. I'll tell you what might be good for you though. Right on Bank St. there's several little store-front

churches, where you might feel a little more...comfortable, at home, you know. Of course now, I'm just thinking of you. *(looks at watch)*

Mary: Are you saying I might not be too welcome here?

Sharp: *(with false piety)* Oh glory! *(looks to heaven, raises hand)* No! Why you're welcome to attend here anytime you want. It's just that there's more involved when you're talkin' about church membership.

Mary: I've heard that somewhere before. Well, you're friends are waiting. Have a nice night out. *(she exits, he shrugs and goes with his friends. We hear faintly their conversation)*

Friend: So how'd the meeting go?

Sharp: Pretty good! But we're still havin' trouble gettin' people to join the church!
(blackout, and back to SCENE 1)

Mary: So about then I quit this religion bit altogether.

Dave: That was a good decision.

Mary: Huh?

Dave: Oh yeah. Religion's not my thing either, Mary. Jesus didn't come to bring us a religion. He came to bring us Himself. And you know, He wanted to be accepted, just like you do. The Bible says that those who accept Him are added by GOD to HIS church.

Mary: "His" church? You mean the place where you preach?

Dave: *(laughing)* No, no. When Jesus gets inside two people, and they get together, *that's* "His Church."

Mary: Really!

Dave: Really. It's that simple. And better yet, Mary. Jesus wants *you* in that church.

Mary: It's hard to believe, listenin' to those preachers.

Dave: Then listen to Jesus. He said, Everyone that's tired, come and I'll give you rest. Do you think He left you out?

Mary: *(sobbing)* I'm gettin' that feelin' again.

Dave: It's not the feeling that's important, although that's gonna be there. What's important is the *faith* that's rising inside of you because of the *Word of God* that you've been hearing. Mary, do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?

Mary: Oh, I do, I do. *(she completely breaks down)*

Scene 4, at "The Well"

(It is as at the beginning. Music, rowdy. The new Mary enters. She is greeted by adlibbed astonishment, along with the following:)

Joe: What happened to *you*?

Mary: I met a man.

Joe: That's nothin' new for Mary! *(general laughter)*

Mary: I met a man who loves me!

Joe: Marriage?

Mary: Just wait. Now, this man, he really understood my problems. And he had a solution. He introduced me to his friend.

Sally: Oh, there's one for me too? *(again general laughter)*

Mary: Silly girl, you were there. I'm talkin' about how Dave introduced me to Jesus. *(general*

shock) You guys really need to give this Jesus a try. Look at me. I'm HAPPY! And I haven't touched a drop for days!

Joe: I'm listenin' . If it'd work for you, it'll work for anyone. Preach it, girl.

Mary: (*opens her Bible*) Well it says here in John (*she ad libs a salvation message softly while SM gives his last speech, lights down except on him.*)

SM: (*appears during Mary's speech with sign reading OUT OF BUSINESS. He nails this over the first one*) And with *those* hammer blows we *close* to the neighborhood "The Well." Seems people in this community are going elsewhere for high spirits and satisfaction these days. Now let's focus on you. (*spotlight does so, roaming the whole audience*) When's the last time you enjoyed a good Saturday night? Or any night for that matter? Had trouble lately with "religion"? Why not do what this community did? Confess your sins to Christ, receive His forgiveness, and begin life anew. The cast stands ready to help you in your decision for Christ. Thanks. (*he exits*)