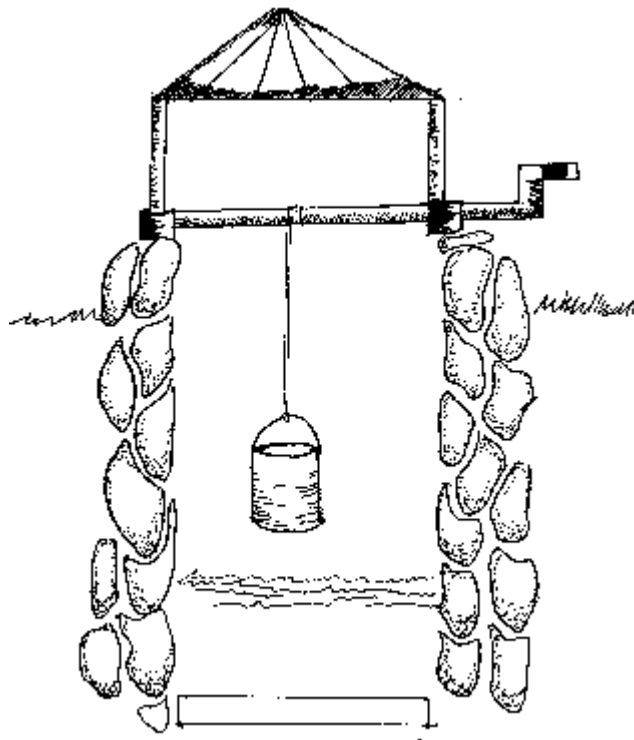


The Well Analogy

This exercise addresses two of the "CLEAR" areas: what you are living for (what your purpose is) and how to clear the way to living more fully.

Imagine a stone well for drawing water, complete with a bucket on a rope that you can lower and raise at will.

1. Just as the well produces water, your "water" is what you give to the world each day. It may be the attention and support you give your family and friends; it may be artwork if you're an artist; it may be education if you're a teacher. Part of this exercise will help you determine what "water" you're giving to the world, and whether or not you should continue giving this particular water. In other words, it's a matter of deciding if this is the best water you can give, the water you're meant to give.



2. Just as the well must be refilled by water seeping into it from the surrounding earth, you can't give without first having received. Sometimes wells run dry; sometimes people run dry. Sometimes contaminated water seeps into wells; other times unhealthy ideas and relationships come into our lives. Part of this exercise is to consider the sources of water

in your life, and the quality of each source. Once you've identified the sources, you may want to set a goal and make a plan to increase the flow of the purer water, and filter or decrease the flow of the more contaminated water.

3. Just as the stones forming the top of the well rest on ones you can't easily see, your more visible attributes *depend* on ones you can't see. For instance, your appearance depends on your habits of hygiene, diet and dress. Your feelings depend on your attitudes, relationships, body chemistry and past history. Your thinking depends on your values. This exercise will help you see how your different attributes rest or depend on each other.

4. Sometimes wells need to be repaired. There might be a small hole in the bucket. The rope might be getting frayed. A stone in the side of the well might have gotten pushed toward the center, causing the bucket to tip out some of the water each time it rises. At the same time, the misplaced stone may be letting some mud into the well, lowering the quality of the available water. Using this exercise you will be able to discover the best ways to fix up your own well, then to decide which repair would best increase the quality (purity) of the water, and also which would increase the quantity (amount) of the water flowing out of you. This is what you can share with others and the world.

5. Most of the time water purity and quantity can be increased by making gradual improvements in the well. In this way, the well can continue to give water uninterrupted. At other times, some major reconstruction needs to take place before a well will function correctly. It may need a rest, during which time the muck that has collected is purged. It may need to have its foundation dug deeper, especially if it continually runs dry. Or it may need to be dismantled and moved stone by stone to a new location. The Well Analogy will help you to decide if you can make the changes in your life gradually or, instead, if it would be better for you to engage in major reconstruction, either now or at some time in the future.

Directions:

1. Visualize yourself as a well. (Note to Texans: a water well, not an oil well!) Picture, hear, and *feel* yourself as a well. Think *and* feel your way through the rest of this exercise. On a sheet of paper, write your answers to the following questions.

- What kinds of "water" flow out of your well? (Acts of kindness, useful ideas, art and beauty, etc.) Look at your life on a daily basis and write down where you spend your time, money and energy. Of these, which do feel is most closely tied to your purpose or mission in life?
- What kinds of waters flow *into* your well? Think about this on a daily basis. What gives you your vitality? What do you value or seek from your interactions?

- What's your foundation, the rock at the bottom? What's your deepest value or commitment?
- Consider your other attributes. If they were stones, how might they be placed on one another? Some categories to consider: memory, habits, intelligence, creativity, will, appearance, language, attitudes, past history, reasoning, body chemistry, and emotions. Which are closer to your foundation? Which are more on the surface?

2. Sketch a well, labeling the stones, the water, the foundation.

3a. Think about the quality of water flowing *into* your well. How might its purity be improved? What could be done to the stones, the foundation, the ground surrounding the well? Read the following list of changes, and then add anything to make it as complete a list as possible.

- Remove sediment that has collected. This includes old "baggage," old ways of thinking, resentments, prejudices, and outdated habits and attitudes.
- Fill in holes between stones that let in muck. Learn ways to filter out useless stuff, maybe by learning habits and skills such as assertiveness, or working on self-esteem.
- Move the well to a different environment.
- If the well is stagnant, purge it, rest and start giving.

b. From your list, choose the action that would have the greatest impact on the quality of water flowing in. Set a goal, and make a plan for the next four months.

4a. Think about the quality of water flowing *out* of you. List ways to improve its purity.

b. Choose the one action that would make the greatest positive impact that's feasible for you in the next four months. Set a goal, and make a plan.

5a. Think about water quantity. What could you do to increase the *amount* of "water" flowing out of you? Read the following, and then make a list of all the things you could do to improve the amount of water you produce.

- Do more hauling with the bucket. (Demand more of yourself.)
- Use a bigger bucket. (Do greater or more important tasks.)
- Repair the bucket. (Resolve minor problems.)
- Move the stone that most interferes with the bucket. (The attribute that's the biggest obstacle.)
- Let more water in. (More ideas, relationships, etc.)
- Replace the rope (Is your support frayed?)
- Grease or improve the hand crank (Are there better ways to motivate yourself—to put more "oomph" in your life?)

- Dig deeper. (Clarify your core values.)

By periodically using this analogy, you can develop insights that will help you focus on key changes you can make to improve yourself. (Suggestion: Put a date on your calendar *now* to review and redo this exercise in four months.)

Your picture of the well may not be completely accurate because of your subjectivity. For example, the stone that you think is your greatest obstacle may not actually be the greatest. There are two ways to get a more objective understanding of yourself. The first way is to observe yourself day-to-day. Is what you called your greatest obstacle the thing that interferes the most, or is there something else? By careful observation you have the chance to correct your image and your understanding of yourself. A second way to get perspective is to ask someone who knows you intimately about different aspects of yourself, for instance what they think your greatest obstacle is. Of course, their views will not be totally objective either, but you may still learn something crucial. If you like, you could even ask your partner or family members to do this exercise and share *some* of their insights with you as a way to build intimacy. (Showing you their well, or sharing everything may be too revealing.) The Sounding Board process offers more tips for getting quality feedback.

This exercise will probably give you ideas for goals to pursue. You can then use the [Dream and Goal Sheet](#) to define each goal and plan.

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