

Called to Evangelize

Bible Background • John 1:37-51, 4:25-42

Printed Text • John 4:25-42 | Devotional Reading • John 1:37-51

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will IDENTIFY the barriers Jesus crossed in speaking with the Samaritan woman, SENSE the wonder the Samaritan woman felt in her meeting with Jesus, and SHARE with others the transforming power of God at work in their lives.

In Focus

Thirty-year-old Retha, pregnant and unmarried, sat in her kitchen, staring blankly into her cup of coffee. Ever since her abdomen had started rounding obviously, her neighbors and friends avoided her. So, she was quite surprised when she heard a knock on her door. Retha found herself face-to-face with two elderly women she had never seen before. “Hi, I’m Artice, and this is Peggy. We’re from the senior adult Sunday School class of True Rock Church. We’ve come to bring you some things for your baby,” said Artice. “Our pastor asked us to scout out the neighborhood to see who we can help. When we saw you walking and looking sad the other day, we decided that you might be one we would help. So, here we are,” said Peggy.

Retha could hardly believe her eyes and ears. After sharing a cup of coffee and conversation with the ladies, Peggy spoke up first. “We have some good news for you. We came to tell you that Jesus loves you and we would like for you to go to church with us.” But how could Jesus love me? Retha wondered. Wasn’t He going to look down on her just like her family did? Still, they had been nice to her and even offered to come by to take her to church on Sunday. Retha’s decision to go to church that week would change her life. Eventually, she would know for herself that Jesus is alive and she too would want to share the Good News of Him with others.

No one is too much of an outcast of society that Jesus cannot reach them and make their lives new. How has your witness helped someone to feel that they were welcomed?

Keep in Mind

“Many Samaritans from the village believed in Jesus because the woman had said, ‘He told me everything I ever did!’” (John 4:39, NLT)

Words You Should Know

A. Marvelled (John 4:27) *thaumazo* (Gk.) — To wonder or admire

B. Testified (v. 39) *martureo* (Gk.) — To be an earnest witness, telling the truth about what is known

Say It Correctly

Sychar. sih-CAR.

Gerizim. GAIR-ih-zeem.

KJV

John 4:25 The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.

26 Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.

27 And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?

28 The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men,

29 Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?

30 Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.

31 In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat.

32 But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.

33 Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat?

34 Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

35 Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.

36 And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.

37 And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.

38 I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.

39 And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.

40 So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days.

41 And many more believed because of his own word;

42 And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

NLT

John 4:25 The woman said, "I know the Messiah is coming—the one who is called Christ. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

26 Then Jesus told her, "I AM the Messiah!"

27 Just then his disciples came back. They were shocked to find him talking to a woman, but none of them had the nerve to ask, "What do you want with her?" or "Why are you talking to her?"

28 The woman left her water jar beside the well and ran back to the village, telling everyone,

29 "Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did! Could he possibly be the Messiah?"

30 So the people came streaming from the village to see him.

31 Meanwhile, the disciples were urging Jesus, "Rabbi, eat something."

32 But Jesus replied, "I have a kind of food you know nothing about."

33 "Did someone bring him food while we were gone?" the disciples asked each other.

34 Then Jesus explained: "My nourishment comes from doing the will of God, who sent me, and from finishing his work.

35 You know the saying, 'Four months between planting and harvest.' But I say, wake up and look around. The fields are already ripe for harvest.

36 The harvesters are paid good wages, and the fruit they harvest is people brought to eternal life. What joy awaits both the planter and the harvester alike!

37 You know the saying, 'One plants and another harvests.' And it's true.

38 I sent you to harvest where you didn't plant; others had already done the work, and now you will get to gather the harvest."

39 Many Samaritans from the village believed in Jesus because the woman had said, “He told me everything I ever did!”

40 When they came out to see him, they begged him to stay in their village. So he stayed for two days,

41 long enough for many more to hear his message and believe.

42 Then they said to the woman, “Now we believe, not just because of what you told us, but because we have heard him ourselves. Now we know that he is indeed the Savior of the world.”

The People, Places, and Times

Jacob’s Well. There is a present-day well near Sychar, which Samaritans believed was built by Jacob. A narrow opening four feet long led from the floor of the vault into the well which was dug through limestone. The ground mentioned by John had been purchased by Jacob (Genesis 33:19). The area was later wrested by force from the Amorites (Genesis 38:22). The well is near the base of Mount Gerizim, which was as holy to the Samaritans as Mt. Zion was to the Jews. Many religious differences like this led to disdain between Jews and Samaritans.

The Woman at the Well. The little we know about the Samaritan woman at the well is gleaned from Scripture. She comes to draw water from the well at noon, even though most women came in the morning and socialized. Jesus gives us a personal detail that perhaps explains this behavior. She has had five husbands and is currently living with a sixth man. Although the woman was possibly widowed more than once, she has likely been divorced at some point. The stigma for divorce, especially for the woman, was high in Jesus’ time, and likely the woman draws water at an odd time to avoid the judgment and gossip of the other women of the town.

Background

In John 4, Jesus and His disciples left Judea to return to Galilee. The route led them directly through Samaria. Although Jews and Samaritans both descended from ancient Israel, their religious practices and beliefs were slightly different, and there was long-standing hostility between them. While His disciples went into the city to buy food, Jesus rested by the well in the heat of the day. While Jesus rested, a Samaritan woman came to the well to draw water. Due to the social customs, the woman did not expect Jesus to speak to her. He asked her to draw physical water for Him and promised that He could provide her with living or spiritual water. There at the well, they shared a theological conversation. As the conversation progressed, she realized that Jesus was no ordinary Jewish man. Just before the disciples returned, Jesus revealed Himself to be Israel’s long-awaited Messiah.

Have you ever had a life-altering spiritual experience at an unexpected time or in an unexpected place?

At-A-Glance

1. “I Am” (John 4:25-30)
2. Gathering Fruit for Eternal Life (vv. 31-38)
3. Because of the Woman’s Testimony (vv. 39-42)

In Depth

1. “I Am” (John 4:25-30) A common phrase Jesus uses in the Gospel of John is “I am He.” The phrase reveals Jesus to be the great “I Am.” Although Jesus’ disciples struggle throughout the Gospel of John to understand who Jesus is, the Samaritan woman does not struggle to believe that He is the Messiah. When the disciples return from the city, the woman leaves her water jug at the well and runs to tell the good news of the man who had “told her everything [she] had ever done.” Although the disciples were surprised to find Jesus speaking

publicly with a Samaritan woman, none of them said anything to discourage the conversation. When the woman reported her experience with Jesus in the city, the Samaritans went out to meet Him. Why do you think the Samaritan woman was so receptive to the idea that Jesus was the Messiah?

2. Gathering Fruit for Eternal Life (vv. 31-38) While the woman was in the city sharing her testimony, the disciples encouraged Jesus to eat, but they received an unexpected response. Like the woman to whom Jesus had offered living water, Jesus told the disciples that they did not know about the food He had. Mirroring the woman's confusion about living water, the disciples wondered who might have brought Jesus something to eat. However, Jesus explained that His "food" was the work God sent Him to do. He told the disciples that the fields were ripe for harvesting. Harkening back to the long legacy of Hebrew Bible prophets and teachers, Jesus told the disciples that they entered into the labor which others had already begun. Likewise, when we share the story of Jesus and His love, we stand on the shoulders of those who have labored to spread the good news.

When was the last time you let someone know about God's indescribable love for them?

3. Because of the Woman's Testimony (vv. 39-42) What impact could your simple testimony have on the people around you? The testimony of the Samaritan woman Jesus met at the well was simple. She believed that Jesus was the Messiah because He had told her everything she had ever done. The woman believed in Jesus because she felt seen by Jesus. For the Samaritans, her honest and straightforward testimony was sufficient. They believed in Jesus because of what she had told them about Him. The group Jesus met that day invited Him to stay with them and He agreed to do so for two days. Upon interacting with Him, even more people believed. They told the woman that they no longer believed because of her words alone. They now believed in Jesus because they had encounters with Him.

Will you walk with a friend, neighbor, or family member as they have personal experiences with Jesus?

Search the Scriptures

1. What evidence did Jesus present that convinced the Samaritan woman that He was the Messiah?
2. What experiences did Jesus have in Samaria that made Him convinced that the fields were ripe for a spiritual harvest?

Discuss the Meaning

1. In what way does Jesus treat the Samaritan woman as a worthy evangelist?
2. How does Jesus' interaction with the Samaritan woman transform the way we understand the roles that women might play in Christian ministry?

Liberating Lesson

Globally, ethnic and cultural groups struggle to relate to each other. Cultural misunderstandings can lead to violence including the abuse of women and children. This passage points us to an alternative model for living. It encourages us to build relationships even when cultural norms discourage us from doing so. It reveals that even when we feel alone, we stand on the shoulders of ancestors who have done the labor that we are now continuing. It reminds us that as followers of Jesus Christ, we can model Christ's sacrificial love, grace, and mercy to everyone we meet. It also reveals that we cannot and should not underestimate the ability of women and girls or anyone regardless of the labels society has placed on them.

Application for Activation

Go tell the Good News of Jesus Christ! You never know who might be transformed by your testimony. Do not be afraid to share what God has done for you. However, we are not only called to share the Good News of Jesus Christ individually. Working as members of church families, we also can share the love of Jesus with our community. As a church, explore the possibility of interfaith or interracial dialogue. The church is the hands and feet of Jesus in the world and we should pursue every opportunity to love others as freely as Jesus has loved us.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

John 4:25-42 25 The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. 26 Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.

While the Jews and the Samaritans both worshiped the same God, their understanding of the Word of God was very different. The Samaritan Scriptures only included the Pentateuch, the first five chapters of the Old Testament. Their religious tradition rejected the writings of the prophets. Furthermore, they believed that Mt. Gerizim was the true place of worship, not Mt. Zion and Jerusalem. The Samaritans recognized that the Messiah would come, but they expected Him to come as a teacher who would reveal all truth (Deuteronomy 18:15-20).

The conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman challenged and clarified her understanding of the Messiah. When the woman explained her view (which was the Samaritan view) of the Messiah, Jesus confessed to be the Christ, the very One she had anticipated. Indeed, His revelation was the summation of the systematic and theological conversation He and the woman had been having at the well. Jesus' revelation of Himself as the Messiah, marked the first time He openly admitted who He was. Prior to His trial, He did not profess it to the Jews. Yet He openly declared to this woman that He was the Christ because He intended to reveal the truth of God to her.

27 And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?

The disciples had left Jesus at the well and were surprised to find him talking to the woman when they returned. This was an apparent violation of several customs. It was rare for a Jewish teacher to engage a woman in public discourse. Furthermore, the chasm between the Jews and the Samaritans meant that Jews saw the Samaritans as unclean. It was a violation of Jewish laws of purification to eat or drink anything belonging to or coming from the Samaritans. Therefore, when the disciples returned they "marvelled" (Gk. *thaumazo*, thow-MOD-zo) or wondered why He was having a conversation with the Samaritan woman. The word itself implies that this was indeed a miracle. This was likely due to the respect they had for Jesus as their leader and teacher. It was also possibly awe since Jesus had so often done what was not expected by challenging traditions and confronting people others would overlook or reject. They respected Him too much to question His behavior.

28 The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, 29 Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? 30 Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.

While some speculate that the disciples' return broke off the woman's conversation with Jesus, it is more likely that Jesus' work was done when He revealed Himself to be the Messiah. The woman made her way back to

Sychar to tell what happened to her at the well. She was so excited, she left her waterpot behind. She had come to the well to get water but hurried back to the city without it because she had a more important task now. This is a clear indication of the deep impression that Jesus had made on her. It was clear that this stranger who knew all about her past was not just an ordinary man. He was an extraordinary man, the declared Messiah, who had such a profound impact on her that she did not hesitate to tell the men of the town all about Him. She likely told the men because they were the teachers and leaders who would most appreciate a theological discussion with Jesus.

Jesus had forced her to face who she was. She had already come to terms with her need (4:15), her sin (4:19), and her true condition (4:26). In the end, she realized that He was the Messiah and was determined to tell others. The fact that she was a woman, particularly a woman with a stained reputation, should have meant that any theological or religious information coming from her would not be accepted by the elders of Sychar. The woman's plea was so sincere, however, that the Samaritans left the city and began heading toward Jesus. The urgency of her invitation caused them to seek this man for themselves.

31 In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. 32 But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. 33 Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat?

While the Samaritans were on their way, Jesus spoke privately with His disciples who had come back to meet Him at the well. John recorded the conversation in verses 31-38. The disciples had come back from getting food from town and were concerned about whether Jesus had eaten. They knew He should have been hungry by then. When Jesus rejected the food, they did not understand. Jesus' words were confusing. Ancient teachers would sometimes use physical food as a figure of speech for spiritual food. The disciples thought that when Jesus used the word "meat" (Gk. brosis, BRO-sees), He was talking about already having physically eaten. The word "meat" is usually used to refer to physical food of any kind, and where it is used metaphorically, the metaphorical use is made clear (cf 1 Corinthians 10:3). The disciples, therefore, wondered where He could have gotten this physical food. They were baffled. Why wasn't Jesus ready to eat?

34 Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

Jesus realized the disciples were unaware of what He was talking about. He broke it down to them. Jesus' focus was to do His Father's work. He explained that when He does His Father's will, He is satisfied much like their bodies are satisfied when they eat. In this case, His meat had been leading the woman to an understanding of who He was through His revelation of her life. Furthermore, His intention was for His Word to reach the Samaritans. He was satisfied because He was doing the work of His Father. He went on to explain about the food He had to eat. Jesus made a bold statement to say He was being fed by doing what His Father told Him to do. It was imperative with Jesus to accomplish His Father's work, as it should be with us. For the child of God, doing the will of the Father is a source of our strength and satisfaction. This is where the child of God's purpose lies. Jesus did not look at the work of the Father as a chore or a burden.

It was what He had come to do. As believers, we should examine ourselves and the things we do to determine whether we are truly doing the will of God. For Jesus, our Lord, did not look on the Father's will as a heavy burden or a gruesome task. He saw His work as food for His soul. His soul survived on doing the will of the Father.

35 Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.

Jesus likely refers to the four months between planting and harvesting. In March, the barley fields would turn white, showing they were ready for harvest. We tend to focus our attention on the physical harvest, the planting of seed and reaping of grain. Jesus was thinking about the souls of the people, the lost souls He had come to save (Luke 19:10). He was changing the focus of their attention from a worldly perspective to a spiritual one. In

essence He told them, “Don’t look with your natural eye; look with your spiritual eye. See the souls that need salvation.”

Jesus was hungry to see people come to Him. Do we have that same hunger to see people come to Jesus? Are we willing to push past our hunger to minister to others? Are we willing to go to the least likely places when we would rather go home and crawl in bed with a snack? Here we see an example of Christ’s humility, His helpfulness, His honesty, and even His hunger.

36 And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. 37 And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. 38 I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.

In a natural harvest, the person who reaps may be one person, while the person who sows may be another person. Many people must labor and toil working the field long before the actual harvest. This is a team effort although the team members may not work at the same time. It was important for the disciples to understand the principle of uniting sowers and reapers. In verse 37, Jesus explains an ancient truism regarding sowers and reapers. Jesus wanted them to see with their spiritual eyes. The Old Testament prophets had put in the work, doing their part to prepare the soil. The last in their tradition was John the Baptist. Christ also wanted the disciples to understand that this work would continue. It is now the task of our generations to see the unsaved as lost souls, as Jesus does. Our work is to do what the Father has sent us to accomplish: to seek and save the lost.

Paul uses this same metaphor when speaking to the Corinthian church: “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase” (1 Corinthians 3:6). God is the key component. He is the One that causes the growth. Each person plays an active role, but there is only one purpose.

39 And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did. 40 So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days. 41 And many more believed because of his own word; 42 And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

The Samaritans of the city of Sychar heeded the woman’s experience. Jesus had talked to her. He knew all about her sin, her lies, and her secrets, yet He continued to talk to her. The men of the town recognized that Jesus ministered to her, knowing her past, causing her to realize Him to be the Messiah, the One whom they had hoped to see. They saw and believed for themselves.

They were interested because the woman “testified” (Gk. *martureo*, mar-too-REH-oh); she was an earnest witness. Witnesses are simply to tell the truth about what they know. As a result these men had to go to the source. At the well, they found Jesus to be a witness. Jesus was a witness who asked probing questions. He was a witness who showed concern for human needs. He was a witness who fully and faithfully explained the Scriptures. He was also a witness by emphasizing the Good News for thirsty people. Now they desired more. They wanted Jesus to stay longer. They wanted more of what He had to offer. They wanted Him to stay with them and He did for two days. The Samaritans believed because of the woman’s testimony. Today, we believe because of the eyewitnesses in the New Testament and throughout the entire Bible. They heard what the woman said. We read what the Scriptures say. They saw her transformation. We see their transformation in the pages of the Gospel. They knew who she was and saw who she became because of this Man, Jesus. We too, come to seek Jesus because of the testimony of others. The testimony of others can lead you to have faith for yourself. Initially, you may come to believe in Jesus based on what someone else testified about Him but coming into a real relationship with Him requires a personal experience that leads to a testimony of your own. The testimony of others will get you so far. However, if you witness specific situations and see Jesus in the midst of them, it will change your perspective and cause you to have a deeper sense of who He is. You begin to recognize His saving power in ways you have never seen before. You come to know Him as the woman at the well did,

realizing He already knows more about you than you ever thought anyone would. He knows your secrets. He knows your lies. He came to the well for you for the same reason He came to the well for her, to save your soul.

Her testimony was a good start for them but they needed to know for themselves and they did. It was no longer hearsay. They, too, had become eyewitnesses to who Jesus is, the Savior of the world.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Receive the Water of Life
(Revelation 21:1–7)

TUESDAY

Jesus Declares, “I Am From Above”
(John 8:21–30)

WEDNESDAY

God’s Children Led by the Spirit
(Romans 8:12–17)

THURSDAY

Simon and Andrew First Disciples
(John 1:37–42)

FRIDAY

Galileans Philip and Nathanael Become Disciples
(John 1:43–51)

SATURDAY

Jesus Heals the Son of a Galilean Official
(John 4:43–54)

SUNDAY

Samaritans Come to Jesus
(John 4:25–42)