

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?

“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” (John 4:39, KJV)

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."

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?

Say It Correctly

Sychar. sih-CAR.
Gerizim. GAIR-ih-zeem.

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)