

LESSON 10

February 7, 2021

Unit III: The Call of Women

No Insignificant Witnesses

DEVOTIONAL READING: John 1:37-51

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: John 1:37-51; 4:25-42

PRINT PASSAGE: John 4:25-42

Key Verse—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)

Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." (John 4:39, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Identify the barriers Jesus crossed in conversing with the Samaritan woman.
- Sense the wonder the Samaritan woman felt in her encounter with Jesus.
- Share with others the transforming power of God at work in your lives.

KEY TERMS

City (verse 30)—Greek: *polis* (pol'-is): a city; the inhabitants of a city; "town" (NIV).

Come (verse 29)—Greek: *deute* (dyoo'-teh): come hither; hither; an exclamatory word.

Disciples (verse 31)—Greek: *mathétēs* (math-ay-tes'): learners; pupils.

Finish (verse 34)—Greek: *teleioō* (tel-i-o'-o): to bring to an end; to complete, perfect.

Seek (verse 27, NASB)—Greek: *zêteō* (dzay-teh'-o): to seek, search for, desire, require, demand; "seekest" (KJV); (no equivalent for NIV).

Speak(ing) (verse 26)—Greek: *laleō* (lal-eh'-o): to talk, tell, say, utter.

INTRODUCTION

In President George W. Bush's first presidential inaugural address on Saturday, January 20, 2001, he described the history of America as "a story of flawed and fallible people, united across the generations by grand and enduring ideals. The grandest of these ideals is an unfolding American promise that everyone belongs, that everyone deserves a chance, that no insignificant person was ever born." Sadly, America still comes short of its delivery on the Declaration of Independence premise that "all men are created equal and endowed by the Creator with certain inalienable rights," the Pledge of Allegiance claim of "liberty and justice for all," and the lofty ideals of President Bush. Nonetheless, his words capture the thought of Christianity and still stand as a timely charge and challenge for the nation. None of us can fulfill our human potential

without respect and regard for all of humanity. No one ever born was insignificant. Every one of us has a purpose in God's divine plan. While many may be disappointed by the realities of injustice, we must remain steadfastly focused on the grace and power of God. His redeeming power is more than enough to bring about a lasting change in our world, nation, communities, churches, and homes. Widespread change begins with a meaningful personal change within individuals, acknowledgment of personal flaws, and confidence in God's redemptive power. That redemptive power at work within us should spur a healthy regard for others, as we recall our own constant need for God's grace and mercy. Our duty is to accept others and receive them with the love of God, the same love that He graciously showed us.

THE BIBLICAL CONTEXT

After returning from exile, the people of Israel separated themselves from those who were descendants of Israelites and their foreign wives. (See Ezra 10:10-11; Nehemiah 13:23-25.) Israelites who had not intermarried with foreigners looked down on those who had married outside their race and held even less regard for the offspring of the mixed-race marriages of Israelites to foreigners. Their disdain, rooted in the Law's prohibition against marriage to unbelievers, set in motion a pattern of deep-rooted contempt for the distant relatives of the Israelites. From the fifth century BC, the relationship between the Jews and these descendants of Jews and outsiders, known as the Samaritans, was hostile. The Samaritans observed religious traditions that departed from the principles of Judaism and Mosaic Law. They kept many idolatrous customs mixed with Jewish religious traditions, thus creating a compromised doctrine full of error and heresy (see 2 Kings 17:26-28). Jesus passed through Samaria and intentionally engaged in a conversation with someone who was not only a Samaritan, but also a woman. Most devout Jewish men would have shunned such an interaction. Jesus, knowing all things, knew who she was—she was a Samaritan woman who had had six different men. Yet, even to the woman's own surprise, Jesus speaks to her without any contempt or disrespect (see John 4:17-18).

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

She Calls (John 4:25-30)

KJV

25 The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah 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.

NIV

25 The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”

26 Then Jesus declared, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he.”

27 Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, “What do you want?” or “Why are you talking with her?”

28 Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people,

29 “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?”

30 They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

The unnamed woman at the well had a conversation with Jesus about water (see verses 7-15), her men (see verses 16-18), and the correct place of worship (see verses 19-24). The direction of the conversation piqued the woman’s curiosity about this unusual Jewish man who had engaged her in such a discussion. Whatever religious beliefs she may have held, she was aware of the distinctions between Jewish and Samaritan worship practices, and she did expect a coming Messiah who would reveal all things to them (verse 25). The Samaritan woman’s statement that the Messiah would clear things for “us” revealed her belief in an inclusive deliverer. She was not expecting one savior for the Jews and another for the Samaritans—just one Messiah who would set all things right. Many people are often trapped by limited thinking, boxing God into a shell of personal beliefs and expectations. Because she was so open to a fresh discovery, Jesus simply stated, “I that speak unto thee am He” (verse 26). Just as Jesus speaks, the disciples walk up and are surprised, not at what Jesus says (assuming they heard), but at the fact that He was alone talking to a woman in public—a Samaritan woman at that (verse 27). The woman’s response to the revelation of Christ was simple. With no more questions, she dropped her water pot and headed off to invite many others to see the Man who had told her all about herself (verses 28-29). Verse 30 tells us that on her word and, undoubtedly, her excitement, people came hurriedly to see for themselves if He could possibly be the Messiah.

What Do You Think? What does it take to be persuasive in witnessing to others?

He Calls (*John 4:31-38*)

KJV

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.

NIV

31 Meanwhile his disciples urged him, “Rabbi, eat something.”

32 But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you know nothing about.”

33 Then his disciples said to each other, “Could someone have brought him food?”

34 “My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.

35 “Don’t you have a saying, ‘It’s still four months until harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.

36 “Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together.

37 “Thus the saying ‘One sows and another reaps’ is true.

38 “I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor.”

In John 4:8, we understand that disciples had followed Jesus’ instructions to leave and search for food. When they returned with food, they encouraged Jesus to eat (verse 31). It is reasonable to conclude that Jesus had not eaten all day. Thus, their concern was appropriate. Jesus, however, refused the meal and used the moment to reveal the source of His real strength and satisfaction. He told the disciples that He already had food that they did not know about (verse 32). The disciples, puzzled at the statement, began to wonder and ask each other, “who brought Jesus something to eat?” (see verse 33). Jesus explained to them that He was fed and sustained by doing the work of God and seeing it to completion (verse 34). Jesus continued His discourse by directing the disciples to look at the fields and notice that the time for harvest had come. The right time to gather the harvest is when the fields are ripe, not at some random date in the future. To delay gathering the harvest would mean missing it altogether (verse 35). He clarified His meaning by explaining that those who work the Lord’s harvest would receive not only wages but the fruit of eternal life, which compares to sowers’ and reapers’ joy at harvest time (verse 36). Jesus taught a spiritual principle by connecting the natural harvest to the spiritual harvesting of souls for God’s kingdom (verse 37). Jesus concludes by saying that they would reap where they had not labored and continue the labor that another had started (verse 38). Jesus’ short yet somewhat complex message to the disciples was an affirmation of their call to participate in His mission to gather souls for the kingdom of God, whether in Samaria or any other region. Their calling was to act when the harvest was ripe and souls were ready to receive Him.

What Do You Think? Sometimes, God calls us to a task without explaining the big picture. Are you willing to trust and obey God faithfully until He gives greater understanding of His purpose?

We Cling (John 4:39-42)

KJV

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.

NIV

39 Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did."

40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days.

41 And because of his words many more became believers.

42 They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

As Jesus finished teaching, the disciples were able to witness the power of spiritual sowing and reaping. Based on the testimony of the woman who was at the well, many Samaritans came to believe in Jesus (verse 39). They were so excited to be with Jesus that they begged Him to stay and He did so, remaining in the town for two days (verse 40). Remember that Jesus left Judea and was heading into Galilee when He told the disciples that He needed to go through Samaria (see verses 3-4). The disciples surely thought this was a pass-through visit, for Jews generally avoided that route (since Jews had no dealings with Samaritans). During their stay, the disciples were able to witness many more Samaritans (thought by the Jews to be beyond the hope of salvation) become believers in Jesus Christ in response to His teaching (verse 41). The people who came to receive Jesus responded to the Word they received from the Lord—a word that they would surely have missed if not for the invitation and witness of the woman Jesus met at the well (verse 42). The woman clung to Jesus' words and shared her experiences with others who also embraced His words. We must first hold the Word for ourselves, then share it with others. God's Word will handle the rest.

What Do You Think? Our job is simply to plant a seed of faith. Has your witnessing ever been hindered by your attempt to decide who will accept or reject God's message? Explain.

A CLOSING THOUGHT

There are no insignificant people in the world. Everyone is important. All of us have a story worthy of sharing. People receive the Gospel when people of faith are willing to share it with them and encourage their faith. You are special to God. Your witness is important to God's kingdom. God has chosen you to touch the lives in your circle of influence—family, job, or community. It is a great, important work with eternal significance. Let God use you for His glory.

YOUR LIFE

Search your heart and remove fear or prejudice that keeps you from sharing with others your personal experience of what God has done.

YOUR WORLD!

Find someone this week with whom you can share a specific story of something God did for you. Come prepared to share that experience with the class next week.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, help us to shake off doubt and discouragement. Teach us to rely on Your power and grace to guide us through life. Use us as witnesses for Your glory. Lead us by Your Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

CONCLUSION

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson) (Preparing for Next Week's Lesson) While reading the Background Scripture, consider this thought: "How do we show loyalty to Christ?"

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

(February 8-14, 2021)

Mary Magdalene: A Faithful Disciple

MONDAY, February 8: "Jesus Appears to Paul" (1 Corinthians 15:1-11)

TUESDAY, February 9: "Present with Jesus at the Cross" (John 19:25b-30)

WEDNESDAY, February 10: "Spices Prepared to Anoint Jesus' Body" (Mark 16:1-8)

THURSDAY, February 11: "Mary Magdalene Finds Tomb Empty" (John 20:1-9)

FRIDAY, February 12: "Angel Confirms Jesus' Resurrection to Women" (Matthew 28:1-10)

SATURDAY, February 13: "Jesus Appears, Disciples Sent into Ministry" (John 20:19-23)

SUNDAY, February 14: "Mary Magdalene, Faithful Female Disciple" (Luke 8:1-3; Mark 15:40; John 20:10-18)