

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: **mathétés (math-ay-tes')**: learners; pupils.

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

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

Speak(ing) (verse 26)—Greek: **laleó (lal-eh'-o)**: to talk, tell, say, utter. *(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)

PREPARING THE LESSON

- Refer to the Townsend Press SS Commentary Teacher's Edition for an additional lesson plan—with word studies, insights on teaching adults, learner matrices, etc.
- Review last week's student assignments ("Your Life" and Your World!").
- Thoroughly review your student book for your adult or young adult class.
- Please note that you have the option of using your subscription bundle supplements, i.e., Lesson Scenario, Student Activity Sheet, SSL-AAG

WHY THIS LESSON MATTERS

Some people wonder if they are good enough to give direction to others. Some feel that their past disqualifies them from being effective in serving God, while others hesitate because of fear or uncertainty about how to share the Gospel or witness to others. Is there a “right” way to share the Gospel or to witness of God’s unfaltering love and unmerited favor? The woman at the well was just an everyday woman of Samaria, but after meeting Jesus she became an eager witness and brought others to Jesus.

THE LESSON IN FOCUS

We often judge people on the basis of their background, reputation, or skill set. The Lord, however, knowing all things, does not always see as we see. We look on the outward appearance, but God is able to look beyond the present to see the end from the beginning. He knows the outcome of every scenario. God looks beyond the things that others see and sees the heart (see 1 Samuel 16:7). He knows a person’s potential. When Jesus made plans to minister to souls in Samaria, He used one woman, perhaps one that others would have overlooked for the task. Knowing her heart and how she would respond to His message, Jesus arranged an encounter with her at a public well that resulted in many Samaritans’ not only coming to hear Him, but also being drawn to discipleship. Never underestimate the power of one—one person, one effort, one witness for the Lord. You may not consider yourself to be a great teacher, preacher, or evangelist, but God is able to use whatever influence or gifts of persuasion and communication you may have to touch lives and win souls for the kingdom.

THE LESSON IN CONTEXT

Jesus made the promise of living water in His Tabernacles discourse (see John 7:37-39). It is possible that for some hearers, the mention of living water recalled the story of Moses’ calling for water to flow from a rock to satisfy the thirst of the Israelites in the wilderness in route to the Promised Land (see Exodus 17:1-7). As a Samaritan, the woman at the well might have been familiar with the stories from the Pentateuch regarding Moses and the wilderness journey. Jesus knew the long history of cultural tension and theological differences between Jews and Samaritans. But more than that, He knew when hearts and minds were ripe and ready to receive the Good News of the Gospel. He compared those who were ready to hear the Gospel to a field of ripe grain (see John 4:35-38). His words paralleled His message to the disciples prior to their first independent ministry mission (see Matthew 9:35-38). Significantly, Jesus’ encounter with the woman at the well-marked the first time He would reveal Himself to anyone as the Messiah (see Matthew 16:13-20).

OPENING INQUIRY (Choose from the items below.)

1. Have you ever felt that your testimony was not interesting or significant?
2. Have you ever felt unworthy to share the Gospel because of your past or present shortcomings?
3. How can personal inadequacies or failures contribute to a powerful testimony?

INSIGHTS

Every believer is called to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ every chance we get. The truth, however, is that most believers feel intimidated when sharing the Gospel. Among the reasons why people are uncomfortable with witnessing is that they don't know enough Scriptures, they fear being judged as fanatical (too righteous) or hypocritical (not righteous enough), or they're afraid of coming across as judgmental to the unsaved. The key is to rely on the direction and strength of the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us in all evangelistic efforts. Having a sincere desire for others to be saved is the first step of effective witnessing. Alone, we may not evangelize the masses—but none of us knows how many wonderful blessings can result from sharing the Gospel to just one lost soul.

EXPLORATION

Jesus went to reach lost souls in a place that was shunned and avoided by other Jews. If we are going to follow His example of loving others, we too must be willing to reach out and communicate freely with those whom others may reject. Doing what God desires of us may push us out of our comfort zones at times, but we must be willing to do whatever God requires to share the Gospel and engage others with our own testimony of what God has done for us. Never forget that Jesus accepted you with all your flaws and shortcomings. Whatever your testimony, gifts, strengths, or weaknesses, God can use you to touch someone's life and draw him or her to the kingdom.

ADDITIONAL EXPOSITORY INSIGHTS FOR THE TEACHER COMMENTARY

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.

Despite the differences between Judaism and Samaritan religious traditions and belief, the woman at the well had a clear understanding of the promised Messiah. Jesus did not hesitate to approach the woman just because of her limited theological understanding. Looking at her heart, Jesus knew that the woman's faith and sincerity could overcome any other limitations or shortcomings she may have had. It was not customary or appropriate for Jewish men to engage even Jewish women in public conversation. Jesus, however, was willing to defy tradition and personal perception because of His love and concern for the souls of the people of Samaria. The disciples' return interrupted Jesus' conversation but did not interrupt His purpose. Jesus had already planted and watered the seed of faith in the woman's spirit.

She left the well to tell others about her amazing encounter with Jesus. The disciples marveled at Jesus' public conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well but, out of respect, did not question Him on the matter. The woman invited many others to come hear the Man who told her all about herself. Sometimes, God only expects us to invite people to hear the Word of the Lord. At other times, He may want us to share our encounters with Him. We must be prayerful in determining exactly how to relate to those who need Jesus. The Samaritan woman did not need a deep grasp of theology; her enthusiasm and simple message that day was enough to draw others closer to Jesus.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

(Please review the appropriate student book's related biblical exposition section.)

- Adult Question: What does it take to be persuasive in witnessing to others?
- Young Adult Question: The Bible does not support the popular assumption that the Samaritan woman was shunned by other women. In fact, her ability to convince a large crowd to follow her to Jesus seems to refute the notion completely. Why do you imagine that Jesus picked her for conversation?

COMMENTARY

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.”

The people the woman spoke to were impressed enough to leave whatever they were doing to go and meet Jesus. While they were on their way, the disciples pressed Jesus to eat the food they had brought Him, but Jesus declined, saying His nourishment, or satisfaction, was not in eating food but in doing the will of God. Jesus’ ministry was one of both sowing and reaping. His reference to “the four months until harvest” referred to the length of time it would take for a normal harvest to come forth. Jesus told His disciples to lift up their eyes and see the ripeness of the harvest. Presumably, a crowd of Samaritans had begun to gather around Jesus, as a direct result of His ministry to the woman at the well. In spiritual work, sowers and reapers are generally different people who rejoice together in what their combined efforts have accomplished. Jesus, however, was both sower and reaper. God calls every believer to help labor for the harvest of souls for the kingdom. Some will plant, others will water—but when the harvest is ripe, God will give the increase (see 1 Corinthians 3:6). If we all do our part, in our respective places, then we shall rejoice together when the Lord’s harvest is ripe and ready.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

(Please review the appropriate student book’s related biblical exposition section.)

- Adult Question: 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?
- Young Adult Question: Jesus said that His food was His doing God’s will. Think about what feeds you. Share briefly with the class.

COMMENTARY

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.”

Many Samaritans came to faith in the Lord Jesus because the Samaritan woman was willing, with excitement, to share her encounter with them. Her testimony prompted the local people to invite Jesus to remain with them so they could hear more of what Jesus had to say. Jesus consented to stay for two days. Faith does come by hearing (see Romans 10:17). During Jesus' two-day Samaritan outreach mission, even more people were persuaded to hear Jesus and came to believe in Him based on what they heard. Based on a single encounter with Jesus, the woman invited others to come hear and see Him for themselves. Jesus' message to the Samaritans is not captured in the text, but while many of Jesus' own people had rejected Him, a significant number of believing Samaritans eagerly accepted Him as the Messiah and Son of God. Luke recorded a separate occasion on which Jesus was rejected by Samaritans (see Luke 9:53). It reminds us that not everyone is willing to receive and accept what we share, but we must still share with excitement and expectancy.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

(Please review the appropriate student book's related biblical exposition section.)

- **Adult Question:** 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.
- **Young Adult Question:** Many Christians only express their faith at church, in the safe setting of like-minded believers. Wonder out loud what our communities and churches would look like if more Christians were willing to risk sharing with people who look, believe, and act differently from them.

LIFE APPLICATION

Refer to Adult Book (See student lesson's "Your Life" section.)

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

(See student lesson's "Your World!" section.)

— 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.

Refer to Young Adult Book (See student lesson's "Your Life" section.)

— Jesus has called us to join the great work of harvesting souls for the kingdom. Ask God to place in your path people who need to hear this Good News of Jesus. It is truly the best news in the world!

(See student lesson's "Your World!" section.)

— There are many racial, cultural, social, and denominational barriers that tear us apart. Don't allow these barriers to keep you from sharing with someone God's gift of living water—Jesus our Lord, Messiah, and Savior.

NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

The lesson topic for Sunday, February 14, 2021, is "Showing Loyalty." The Devotional Reading is Romans 4:13-25, the Background Scriptures are Mark 15:40; 16:1-9; Luke 8:1-3; John 20:10-18, and the Printed Texts are Luke 8:1-3; Mark 15:40; John 20:10-18.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, help us to shake off doubt and discouragement. Teach us to rely on Your power and grace to guide us through the terrain of life. We want to be used for Your glory. Holy Spirit lead us and guide us along this faith journey. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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)