

February 7, 2021

“Called to Testify”
Lesson 2 of Unit

John 4:25-42

Intro

A brief explanation of the relationship between Jews and Samaritans will help our understanding of today’s text. When King Solomon died in about 930 B.C., Israel split into two parts. The northern 10 tribes were called Israel, and the southern tribes Judah.

About 50 years later, King Omri of Israel built the city of Samaria as his capital, and it remained the capital. But Omri and later kings as well as the people engaged in idolatrous religious practices, and then ignored God’s prophets about their sin. So God sent the Assyrians to destroy the northern kingdom about 722 BC.

Most Israelites were taken away, but some remained. Outsiders were brought in by the Assyrians to resettle the land. The resulting mixture of people were called Samaritans. Their religious practice accepted only the five books of Moses, but no other OT writings.

The Samaritans offered to help rebuild the temple destroyed in 586 BC, and to help Nehemiah rebuild the wall. They were refused in both cases. Their temple on Mt. Gerazim was destroyed about 100 years before Jesus’ earthly birth. These things and others like them caused a deep divide and hostile feelings between the Samaritans and the Jews.

In Jesus’ day, Samaritans were not quite Gentiles, but they were definitely not Jews either. They felt like and were treated like outsiders, like people who didn’t belong.

Finally, Jesus and the woman He speaks to here have already covered her marital situation; Jesus seems to know a lot about her life! She changes the subject to the proper place to worship (Jerusalem vs. Gerazim), and Jesus redirects the conversation to true worship and spiritual surrender to God.

Read John 4:25-42

1. vs. 25-26: These Samaritans knew of and believed in the Messiah (Deut. 18:15-18)
They referred to Him as God’s prophet, not the national leader like King David
They saw His role as teaching and explaining “everything”
2. vs. 27: The disciples, of which John is one, return after going to find food for Jesus
They don’t know why Jesus is talking with this woman
It’s not because she’s a Samaritan—the disciples just bought food from Samaritans
It’s because she’s a woman
Rabbinical rule says “Let no one talk with a woman in the street, no not with his own wife.”

It's interesting to contrast the disciples' behavior with the woman's
They are reluctant to ask Jesus, but she is comfortable, even insistent, on asking Jesus questions

3. vs. 28: The woman leaves her water jar behind

Suggests she left in a hurry, in a state of excitement
To draw water was why she came to the well
She goes back to town to tell the people her news

4. vs. 29: The woman does two things here

- 1) She provides evidence: "He told me everything I ever did"
- 2) She suggests a conclusion: "Could this be the Messiah?"

She begins with "Come"; after what she says, it seems the thing to do

5. vs. 30: The people leave whatever they were doing to come check out this person

The woman's claims have obviously intrigued them
The people believe there will be a Messiah from God
They believe He will explain "everything"
The woman uses "everything" to say what Samaritans believe the Messiah will explain, and also to say what Jesus knew about her life

Meanwhile, back at the well...

6. vs.31-33: The disciples want Jesus to eat

He's hungry / they are hungry and need Him to start the meal or say the blessing
Jesus says He has food that they don't know about
He describes "living water" to the woman in 4:10
He will describe himself as "living bread" in 6:48-51
The disciples response is one of the funnier elements in the Bible
"Could someone have brought him food?"
They talk to each other about this, but don't ask Jesus to resolve their confusion

7. vs. 34: Jesus explains to the disciples that the food he's talking about is spiritual in nature

Doing what God wanted Him to do was like food, sustaining and energizing Him
While the disciples found real food, Jesus was talking to the woman

8. vs. 35: Jesus uses an analogy they would understand—the knowledge of when a harvest occurs

Jesus speaks figuratively and spiritually—the time for the harvest is now
He is obviously speaking of people, of bringing them into relationship with Himself
It's possible He is pointing to the people coming to see him (see vs. 30)
The point here is much the same as the "fishing for men" accounts

9. vs. 36-38: Our text suggests that it's possible different people sowed the crop from those who reaped

"the sower and the reaper may be glad together"
This is an analogy of sharing about Jesus
Some plant (tell others initially), some harvest (finish bringing that one to Christ)

These verses suggest that we do what we can, and be happy to work with fellow believers

Jesus' words in vs. 38 point out the varying roles in preaching the Gospel

He also call planting "the hard work", suggesting planting the seeds of the Gosp
is more difficult than reaping

This seems to be early prep for the Great Commission of Matt. 28:18-20

10. vs. 39: The woman's words about what Jesus told her about her life caused others to believe

Her words were the "sowing" of the spiritual seeds of belief

The people knew her, so they were moved by what she said

We don't know what will ignite a person to belief

Our job is to look for opportunities and follow the Spirit's leading

11. vs. 40: Samaritans and Jews would do business together, but were not socially friendly

These people "urged" Jesus to stay with them

Jesus stays for two days

This shows the impact Jesus had on these people, on their spiritual openness, and on Jesus' making them feel loved and sought after

12. vs. 41-42: The woman's words served as the "sowing"—they got the people to come see Jesus

Some believed in Jesus because of her words

Others needed to hear and interact with Jesus

When they did, they also believed in Him as the Messiah

They now see Jesus as more than a prophet who explains God's words

They call Him "the Savior of the world" – Jews, Samaritans, and
Gentiles

Application: The Samaritan woman is a significant person for a number of reasons. She represents all those who are open to hearing the truth of the Gospel. She also represents people who either feel or truly are outcasts—people who are rejected and shunned from their society.

In addition, she shows us how Christ's words can change someone. She is likely not well-respected in her town for the questionable morality of her life choices. But she has been touched, changed, and tells her town about it, despite what they might think of her.

She is also nameless. What her name is we will probably learn someday, but right now, we can learn from her actions. Interact with Jesus, be willing to learn from Him, let Him change us, and tell others what He has done for us (plant seeds).

Prayer: Father God, help us to learn from Your encounter with this Samaritan woman. Help us to be willing to listen and follow You, to let you change us to be more like You, and to have the same joy and excitement in telling others how You have changed our lives. In Jesus' name, Amen.