

FPFWC Christian Development



The Call of Women

February 2021

Winter Quarter

February 6, 2021

Lesson #1 –Called to Testify

Scripture Focus – John 4:25-42

ICE BREAKER –

- 1. *How can a genuine changed life make people curious about the gospel?***
- 2. *How does a believer gain boldness or courage to share the good news about Jesus Christ?***

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

LESSON BACKGROUND

Fullest understanding of today's text requires some insight into the relationship between Jews and Samaritans in Jesus' day. When King Solomon died in about 930 BC, the nation of Israel split into two parts: the northern 10 tribes were then often referred to collectively as Israel, while the remaining tribes to the south were called Judah (example: Jeremiah 50:4).

King Omri of Israel built the city of Samaria to be his capital in about 875 BC (1 Kings 16:23–24). He ruled from Samaria as did his infamous son Ahab (16:29), establishing the city as a lasting site. Both kings aroused God's ire because of their idolatrous religious practices (16:25, 33).

Ignoring warnings of the prophets led to judgment (2 Kings 17:13). The ultimate form of that judgment came when the Assyrians destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel about 722 BC (17:5–18). Many Israelites were exiled, and outsiders were brought in to resettle the land (17:24). Israelites who were not taken into exile were left impoverished and without clear identity for many years.

Eventually, the resulting mixture of people came to be known as Samaritans. They developed a religion that accepted the five books of Moses but did not recognize the other books that make up the Old Testament. When Samaritans offered to help rebuild the Jerusalem temple destroyed in 586 BC, the Jews refused (Ezra 4:1–5). This angered the Samaritans, and we see some of this anger come out when Nehemiah began to rebuild the city walls (Nehemiah 4:1, 2).

About a century before Christ, a ruler of Judea destroyed the Samaritans' rival temple on Mount Gerizim. This and other things caused deep animosity between Samaritans and Jews. For the Jews of Jesus' time, Samaritans were not quite Gentiles but were definitely not Jews either (see Matthew 10:5; note the attempt to discredit Jesus in John 8:48).

Our lesson begins after Jesus and a Samaritan woman discussed her marriage situation (John 4:16–18). Jesus' knowledge of her personal life astounded her. For this reason, she addressed Him as a prophet (4:19). She changed the subject to the less personal but quite controversial topic of the proper site for worship. Jesus' answer cut through this temple-location controversy to get to the heart of worship: spiritual surrender to the Lord (4:23–24). Such truth telling had opened the woman to discuss matters of the heart as today's text opens.

LESSON COMMENTARY

4:25–26. The woman believed in a coming **Messiah** or **Christ** (see comment on 1:20) who would **declare all things** to them. Since Jesus had already exposed her past (v. 29) and had prophesied a radical change in worship (v. 23), her hopes ran high that He might be the Messiah. **I who speak to you am He** (v. 26) means, lit., “I am—the one who speaks to you” (there is no predicate or “He” in the Gk.). The statement is similar to Jesus' “I am” claims in John. See comments on 6:35; 8:24, and 8:58. “I am” recalls the name of the self-existent God of the OT (Ex. 3:14–15; Is 41:4; 43:10, 13) and implies Jesus' deity.

4:27. The **disciples**, influenced by the attitudes toward women in first-century Judaism, **were amazed that He had been speaking with a woman**. Their surprise might have been eliminated if they had not refused to communicate with Him (**no one said**). The answer to **What do You seek?** was that Jesus was seeking exactly what the Father was seeking (v. 23): true worshipers.

4:28–30. In the joy of her discovery, she **left her waterpot** to go **into the city**. That Jesus **told her all the things that she had done** (v. 29) was for the Samaritans the supernatural knowledge of the coming Messiah (v. 25). Her hesitancy (**this is not the Christ, is it?**) was because she needed to be cautious as a woman “teaching” men. By her testimony, the Samaritans started **coming to Him** (v. 30), both physically and spiritually.

4:31–33. The **disciples** were focused on physical needs (**Rabbi, eat**), while Jesus was concerned for spiritual needs. **I have food to eat that you do not know about** exposed their ignorance of His true inner sustenance (Mt 4:4). That is not to say that Jesus did not need to eat. Jesus was willing to forgo food for a time to engage in what truly energized and strengthened Him, namely ministry. The disciples still did not know the Lord intimately (cf. Jn 14:9). They again misunderstood Jesus' attempt to communicate spiritual truth by means of physical analogies.

4:34–35. The disciples' confusion presented the opportunity for Jesus to teach them. His spiritual **food was to do the will of the One who sent Him** (5:30; 6:38–40; 8:29) **and to accomplish His work** (9:4; 17:4). **There are yet four months** may be a proverb or used literally of the time of the year (December, before the harvest of winter crops in April). His followers must **look** at the masses of people (viz., the Samaritans coming, v. 30) as **fields** that are **white** (ripe) **for harvest**.

4:36–38. Even now (**already**), ahead of time, on earth, the disciple who leads others to faith in Christ **is receiving wages**, rewards, or blessings. “Wages” (*misthos*) is the same word translated as (future) “reward” (Mt 5:12; 6:1–2; 10:41–42). Paul's identical teaching on future rewards (1Co 3:6–15) originated with the

Lord. Sowing and reaping are both necessary for a spiritual harvest. So the planter and the harvester can **rejoice together** without jealousy and competition. **Others have labored** may refer to the OT prophets and John the Baptist, who ministered in Samaria previously (cf. 3:23).

4:39–40. From that city (Sychar, v. 5) specifies **many of the Samaritans** who **believed in Him**. When Philip later visited the area (Ac 8), many more Samaritans believed, likely because of the impact made by John the Baptist and Jesus before him. When a pastor enjoys great success, he and his congregation need to recognize that much of the credit is due to those who came before him and prayed and worked.

In contrast to Nicodemus (see comment on 3:9), the Samaritan woman boldly testified about Christ. With divine omniscience, Jesus had described **all the things that** the woman had **done**. At the request of the **Samaritans** (v. 40), Jesus stayed **two days** in Sychar. Perhaps He stayed at the Samaritan woman's home (cf. Ac 16:14–15).

4:41–42. The wisdom of Jesus' decision to stay in Sychar became evident: **Many more believed because of His word**. God's Word is the stimulus to faith (Rm 10:17; Gl 3:2, 5). The woman's reward (cf. v. 36) was to hear from those to whom she witnessed, now witnesses of their own faith. To **believe** in Christ is to **know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world**. The words "Savior of the world" include Gentiles.

LESSON NUGGET – Patiently, Jesus revealed himself to the Samaritan Woman: "a Jew", "greater than Jacob", "a prophet", "Messiah". She believed in Him, and her life was so changed that she immediately shared the good news with others.

Sources: Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary and Wiersbe Expository Outlines on the New Testament