

# CALLED TO TESTIFY

DEVOTIONAL READING: John 1:37-51

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

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE: John 4:25-42

## I. A Woman's Declaration John 4:25-30

**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.**

25. 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).

Both Jews and Samaritans looked for the *Messias*, or *Christ*; both mean "anointed one." The Jews believed He would be a national leader who would free them from foreign oppression, based on expectations tied to King David (2 Samuel 7:12-16). Because Samaritans held only the books of Genesis through Deuteronomy as Scripture, they did not share any such expectation. Instead, they emphasized the Messiah's role as a teaching prophet who would *tell . . . all things* and bring the people back to true faith, reminiscent of Moses.

26. *Jesus* did not seek to set the woman straight regarding whether the Jewish or the Samaritan understanding of the Christ was correct. Instead of laying out every Scripture regarding himself, Jesus simply claimed to be the one she was waiting to meet.

27. *The disciples* returned just then, having come from the village with food. They *marvelled*, but were not bold enough to ask Him *What* or *Why*. Their timidity contrasts with the woman's own insistence on asking Jesus questions

28. The woman's abandonment of *her waterpot* to return to *the city* suggests a hurried, excited departure. In initiating conversation with *the men* there, she cast aside any cultural restraints from doing so.

29. Her straightforward message has

two parts. First, she gave evidence that Jesus was something more than an ordinary man. Second, she proposed, in the form of a question, a tentative conclusion to that evidence. In wondering whether Jesus might be *the Christ*, the woman challenged others to investigate.

30. The woman's testimony intrigued the people enough so that they wanted to investigate her claims. She was a disreputable person in this community, but they could not ignore her earnest and fascinating testimony. If this man truly was the Messiah, they wouldn't want to miss a chance to meet Him and hear His teaching.

## II. A Crop Prepared John 4:31-38

**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.**

31. The *disciples* either mentally dis-

missed the woman as being unimportant or simply moved on to what they thought was a more pressing task: lunch.

32. The word *meat* refers to food in general, and Jesus' cryptic statement forms something of a parallel to the "living water" He offered to the woman earlier (John 4:10). It also foreshadows Jesus' coming self-description as "the bread of life" and "living bread" (6:48-51).

33. The confused *disciples* did not detect His reference to spiritual rather than physical food. Once again, they did not ask Jesus the question that was on their minds. Instead, they spoke *one to another*.

34. A theme of the book of John is that Jesus had been sent by the Father with a mission *to finish* (also John 5:36; 17:4). At the heart of this work was bringing people to faith in Jesus. Knowing of the disciples' confusion, *Jesus* began explaining: His *meat* was spiritual in nature. Doing the work of *him that sent* Jesus was the great sustenance for His soul.

35a. Jesus began to apply an illustration or metaphor by describing a typical agricultural timeframe. His disciples are well aware that crops are ready to *harvest* following the sowing of *four months* earlier.

35b. This verse is one of the great missionary mandates in all of Scripture. The time for *harvest* is not future! The time for evangelism, the harvest of souls, is now! *The fields* Jesus wanted the disciples to see were not plots of wheat or barley, but of people.

For a field to be *white* means the heads of grain have turned from green to a light-brown color. This indicates the grain is fully mature. When it comes to sharing the gospel, there is no time to waste.

36. In evangelism as in farming, there is sowing and reaping. The gospel must

be shared (sowed) for faith to bear *fruit* (be ready to reap). The result is a crop of believing persons. The goal is not a full granary, but a full Heaven—full of saved souls, those who have *life eternal*.

The workers are rewarded with satisfaction for productive work. They will *rejoice together*, now and in the hereafter.

37. Jesus quoted a traditional *saying*. Reaping requires previous work: sowing. If no seeds are planted, there will be nothing to harvest. Though the disciples didn't realize it quite yet, the moment to reap was swiftly approaching.

38. This verse has a sense of climax for God's plan to fashion a people according to His will. Prophets had been sent to call people to repentance. Jesus himself further prepared the heart of the Samaritan woman. Little did Jesus' followers know at the time that they were being trained to fulfill the coming Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).

### III. A Community Transformed John 4:39-42

**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.**

39. The idea of testimony leading to faith is a central pattern in the Gospel of John. Jesus' inspired words and miraculous works are testifiers themselves

—that He is the one sent by the Father, the Messiah both the Jews and the Samaritans have been looking for (see John 5:36). All this is ultimately reflected in the book's purpose statement (see 20:30-31).

The episode at hand is an integral part of this intent. The Samaritan woman's acceptance that Jesus had supernatural knowledge of details of her life brought her to trust Him and share her testimony with others. The result was that many *believed on him*. The triggers that lead to faith are different for each person. We want to expect that people will believe when they hear a clear, simple presentation of the gospel. But other approaches may be used too. A dramatic life experience may drive people to find God.

40. Given the cultural context, it is surprising that *Samaritans* would ask a Jew to visit with them. This speaks to the powerful impact Jesus has already had in this brief encounter.

41-42. Now we read of belief also having come to *many more . . . because of his own word*. These particular villagers did not discount the woman's testimony, but they needed more—they needed their own experience (compare and contrast John 20:25). Beyond the small group of the disciples, these Samaritans stand as the first community in the Gospel of John who accept Jesus as *the Christ*.

The concept of Christ was discussed earlier. That marked an escalation in the woman's faith, and now the phrase *Saviour of the world* marks an escalation for the entire community. Whereas their messianic expectations had focused thus far on what the Christ would do for Samaritans, they had come to grasp that Jesus had come for much more than just Samaritans. He came not merely to teach about right worship or to restore Samaria; He came to save the world.

# INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

## CALLED TO TESTIFY

### Into the Lesson

Check the boxes as indicated.

*I know a person who. . .*

- is a social outcast*
- has mixed up religious beliefs*
- avoids followers of Jesus*
- interrupts plans*

Today's lesson will highlight Jesus' interaction with someone for whom we would have checked all four boxes.

### Into the Word

Read John 4:25-42. Identify how the Samaritan woman could be described with each of the labels used in the **Into the Lesson** activity above.

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Complete the following true/false quiz. This is a closed-Bible quiz; the Scripture references are to score your quiz after you are finished

1—Jesus had to convince the Samaritan woman that a Messiah was promised to her people too (John 4:25). (T/F)

2—The disciples readily saw the conversation of Jesus with the woman as normal (4:27). (T/F)

3—The woman told the townspeople about Jesus' request for water (4:28-29). (T/F)

4—Jesus said they'd be required to plant spiritual seeds for many years before they could expect a harvest of souls (4:36-38). (T/F)

5—Jesus used the analogy of farming to encourage the disciples to move slowly, be patient, and wait for results (4:35). (T/F)

6—The woman's neighbors in town rejected what she had to say, because someone of her reputation couldn't be believed (4:39). (T/F)

7—The townspeople rushed out to tell Jesus to leave the area (4:40). (T/F)

8—Ultimately, the townspeople were far more convinced by the woman's testimony than by anything Jesus could add to it (4:42). (T/F)

### Into Life

Refer back to the designations in the **Into the Lesson** portion.

How does today's lesson give you confidence to initiate spiritual conversations with the person you had in mind?"

## THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Help reap the fields that are ripe for harvest!