

John – A Devotional Commentary from God's Daily Word Ministries

Chapter 4

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Scripture references for lessons on John: The New King James Version.
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John 4:1-4 - Lesson #34

Our last lesson on John closed the third chapter - a focused chapter which taught the absolute supremacy of Jesus and the way of Salvation through faith in the sacrifice of God's "only begotten Son" (John 3:16). Everything Jesus did during His brief three year earthly ministry was for a very focused and direct purpose - to reveal, declare, and glorify God on the way to the cross.

At the end of chapter two, we saw that many Jews heard and wanted to follow Jesus, but He knew their belief was not sincere (John 2:24-25). He was then approached by Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, and began to teach about being born again. Now in chapter four, we see Jesus intentionally travel to minister to someone who is the complete opposite of Nicodemus, teaching us that only God knows the heart, but that the gospel message is for all to hear.

John 4:1-4

"Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), He left Judea and departed again to Galilee. But He needed to go through Samaria."

The Pharisees were well aware of the ministries of Jesus and John. And this increased popularity of Jesus would definitely command their attention. But Jesus wasn't interested in a confrontation with the Pharisees (at least, not yet), nor was He particularly interested in developing a large following. Jesus had clear focus in His ministry, so He gathered His disciples and traveled north. But right between Judea in the south and Galilee in the north lie the region of Samaria.

Jesus could have done as most Jews of His day and just avoided Samaria. After all, the Samaritans came from the northern tribes of Israel that split the kingdom after the reign of Solomon. These were the same people conquered by the Assyrians in 720 BC who then intermarried with surrounding nations and destroyed the purity of their heritage. They were the same people who quarreled with the true Jews when they returned from Babylonian captivity to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. And they were the same despised people who then turned and built their own Temple on Mount Gerizim.

Yes, Jesus could have gone around and no one would have blamed Him. How could anyone expect to minister in Samaria? The Samaritans only believed the first five books of the Bible - and their Bible was even changed to say Abraham sacrificed Isaac on Mount Gerizim! But Jesus was never very concerned about these details. He had an appointment to keep with a young woman who needed to hear the message of eternal life, and through the process teach us some wonderful truths.

There is never a good reason not to share the love of the Gospel message. No people too "low" nor place too "dirty." All need to hear! Let's be determined to never let social, racial, economic, or even religious differences, hinder us from sharing His truth. Let's maintain a focused desire to take His Word to ALL.

Have A Great Day!

John 4:5-8 - Lesson #35

Jesus left Judea in order to avoid a confrontation with the Pharisees. Becoming entangled in debates about nonessential matters would have detracted from laying the foundation of the gospel message; "But He needed to go through Samaria" (John 4:4).

We have seen that it wasn't essential to travel through Samaria. There were other routes, even preferable routes to a true Jew who despised the Samaritans. So to say Jesus "needed" to go through Samaria can only mean the need was Spiritual - Spiritual in regard to the person He knew He would meet.

John 4:5-8

"So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, 'Give Me a drink.' For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food."

This area of Samaria had a rich heritage to the Jewish people. The land was first purchased by Jacob (Genesis 33:19) and then given to Joseph as an inheritance (Genesis 48:22). The bones of Joseph were eventually buried on this same plot of land when the Israelites were brought into the land of Canaan (Joshua 24:32). Jacob's well can still be seen today and is located at the foot of Mount Gerizim.

The sixth hour refers to noontime. Certainly after traveling during the heat of the day it would be normal to be thirsty and weary. And that is precisely the significance of this passage. We see the Son of God, the Creator of the Universe, experiencing normal human sensations. The gospel of John continually portrays Jesus as fully God and fully man; "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14).

We next see a woman of Samaria come to the well by herself. It would not be normal to come at this time of day, and certainly not normal to come alone. Perhaps she was avoiding other women, perhaps she was not welcomed. These possibilities will become more clear as we read her life story.

Jesus initiated the conversation with a simple request, "Give Me a drink." At first we see nothing unusual in this request. It was hot and no one would refuse a drink to a traveler. But the woman did not see an ordinary traveler, she saw a Jewish rabbi. A rabbi would never initiate a conversation with a woman, and a Jew would NEVER drink from a Samaritan cup! No, this Jesus was no ordinary traveler.

I wonder how ordinary we seem in our travels today. How much do we behave and react just like the ordinary world? We have not been called to be ordinary. We must look past the artificial boundary lines and minister with the true love of Christ. We are called to give the entirety of our life because He first gave His life for us. Let's give our all and begin to live a life far beyond the ordinary!

Have A Great Day!

John 4:9-10 - Lesson #36

We have seen Jesus make a purposeful journey into Samaria and, while resting beside a well, ask a woman for a drink.

John 4:9-10

"Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, 'How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?' For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Jesus answered and said to her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, "Give Me a drink," you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.'"

We have already examined the enormous tension which existed between the Jews and Samaritans during the time of Christ. We see this tension in the response of the Samaritan woman. She was surprised that she was being spoken to by a Jewish Rabbi, but her response was mixed with a large dose of sarcasm - "How can you, a mighty Jewish Rabbi, speak to me, a lowly swine of a woman?"

It's wonderful to see that Jesus doesn't waste any time addressing her inappropriate reply. It was well within His right - certainly within His right as the Son of God, but also within His right as a Rabbi, even within His right as a mere man. Jesus could have put her in her place. But instead, He immediately moved the conversation to the next level - a level which would call her to a place by His side.

Notice the similarity to the conversation with Nicodemus in Chapter three. Both times Jesus looked past the initial comments and led the discussion directly to Spiritual matters. Also notice how Jesus looked past the social status of both individuals. Nicodemus was on the highest step of the Jewish ladder and this Samaritan woman on the absolute lowest, but each received full attention and a clear call to eternal life.

It's certainly no accident that these two meetings are recorded one right after the other. The message is clear, the gospel is for ALL; "for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). In both cases, Jesus simply saw an individual who needed to hear the truth.

In the conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus spoke about being born again. This had significance to a Jewish leader in terms of a completely new way of life, but Jesus was making a call to a Spiritual understanding. In the case of the Samaritan woman, Jesus spoke of living water - also a term with significance.

In one sense, all water was life-giving. Since it was not so readily available, water was extremely precious as well as essential. The water from this particular well provided life for the whole area. But there was also a deeper meaning to water; "Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation" (Isaiah 12:3). Jesus spoke of living water as a precious gift from God. Let's truly hear the One who is calling and take His gift of living water into a very thirsty world.

Have A Great Day!

John 4:11-12 - Lesson #37

The conversation beside a well continues, between a Jewish Rabbi and a Samaritan woman. We need to be reminded how unusual it was for this conversation to even take place. If we miss the severe tension between the Jews and Samaritans we miss the main point of this section of Scripture. It is not an exaggeration to say the Jews despised the Samaritans. It is said the Pharisees would pray that no Samaritans would be raised at the resurrection. And later in the Gospel of John, we will see the Jews insult Jesus by calling Him a Samaritan with a demon (John 8:48).

But Jesus, a man on a mission, the Son of God come to reveal and declare the glory of the Father, broke through the established boundary lines of His day and offered this woman an eternal gift - the gift of living water.

John 4:11-12

"The woman said to Him, 'Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?'"

Jesus had appealed to her curiosity by speaking of living water, but as was the case with Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman completely missed the Spiritual implications and focused purely on the realm of the physical. To her, living water meant water from a moving stream - water which was almost always superior to the water of a stagnant well. And if this Rabbi could produce living water, she was interested.

However, this must be a weak offer because she sees Jesus without anything which would hold water. So she proceeds to question His sincerity, "Are you greater than our father Jacob...?" This was a question with an implied answer of no, and was also used to establish the Samaritan claim to Jewish ancestry - a "Who do you think you are?" type of question.

Having eyes which are focused on the physical keeps so many people from responding to the call of Christ. Many people in the world are focused on simply trying to survive, wondering when their next meal will arrive. But many others are so entangled in their "stuff" that any thought of Spiritual matters have been pushed far, far away. They may attend church every week, maybe even read the bible - maybe even study! - but the Word of God has no impact on their life! "He who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful" (Matthew 13:22).

We must not allow our physical circumstances to consume, control, or define our life. We are called to a life in Christ - a life of eternal joy which has nothing to do with the comforts of this world. Let's begin the process of untangling our life so we can receive His gift and truly drink.

Have A Great Day!

John 4:13-15 - Lesson #38

Jesus offered the woman at the well an eternal gift of living water - a Spiritual gift from above - but she questioned His sincerity and authority as her eyes remained focused on the physical; "Are You greater than our father Jacob..." (John 4:12). The woman has not been gracious with her words, but Jesus answers her question by continuing to explain the truth of living water.

John 4:13-15

"Jesus answered and said to her, 'Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.' The woman said to Him, 'Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw.'"

The gift which Jesus brings cannot be compared to anything in the physical world. Those who drink from earthly wells can only be satisfied for a short while and then they thirst again, but those who drink the water of Christ are satisfied eternally. This comparison of thirst certainly speaks to the superiority of the gift which Jesus offers, but it also speaks to the absolute sufficiency. He is not simply saying we will be satisfied longer if we drink His water but that we will never need to drink from earthly wells again because we will never thirst! Old habits may bring us back to the well, but our dependent need has been removed.

Living water from Christ will become a fountain, springing up and bursting forth. When we drink of His water, there will be a new life which cannot be contained. The prophet Jeremiah understood this in relation to God's Word, "like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, and I could not" (Jeremiah 20:9). This is the life Jesus was offering and continues to offer today.

The woman asks for some of the water but with a complete lack of understanding - she may even be mocking Jesus with her reply. Even if she is being sincere, her only concern is her physical needs - take away my thirst and my need to keep coming to this well.

No eternal life can flow from a heart filled with selfish motives. Someone once told Jesus, "Lord, I will follow You wherever You go" (Luke 9:57), but Jesus identified the selfish motives with His reply, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head" (Luke 9:58). In other words, do not follow if you think that comfort and material gain are the result.

What is our motivation in following Christ? If we come for advancement or social acceptance, freedom from pain and sickness or even seeking excitement and change, then we are not prepared to drink. Let's take the time to truly understand His gift of living water. Let's empty ourselves before the One who is eternal and allow His life to fill us and then spring forth everlasting.

Have A Great Day!

John 4:16-19 - Lesson #39

We have witnessed Jesus offer a Samaritan woman the eternal gift of living water, but the woman has remained focused on her physical needs. Jesus continues by piercing directly into her heart.

John 4:16-19

"Jesus said to her, 'Go, call your husband, and come here.' The woman answered and said, 'I have no husband.' Jesus said to her, 'You have well said, "I have no husband," for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly.' The woman said to Him, 'Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.'"

Jesus has known this Samaritan woman before the foundations of the earth. He has never been talking about mere water - He has been engaged in a battle for her soul. Changing the conversation by saying "Go, call your husband" was brilliant because it maintained proper custom. If the discussion was to become more involved, it would be proper for a man to request to visit with the husband. However, this shift was primarily designed to expose the one thing which was keeping the woman from seeing the Spiritual nature of the gift. The woman needed to recognize the sin in her life.

The gospel message is about the forgiveness of sin! Why has that basic message become so lost in our world today? We say things like, "Ask Jesus into your heart" or "Let Jesus fill that empty spot in your life." We have teachings about how to better cope in this world and live a "better" life, but if we do not talk about sin we have NO gospel message!!

Jesus came to earth to proclaim the glory of the Father and to die for the forgiveness of sin; "this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission {forgiveness} of sins" (Matthew 26:28). His death paid the penalty for sin, and belief in Jesus allows this payment to be applied to our account; "To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission {forgiveness} of sins" (Acts 10:43).

We will never believe in a Savior until we recognize we need to be saved. Without the recognition of sin, Jesus becomes optional - something helpful but not essential. Without an understanding of sin, Jesus is seen as a crutch for those not willing to work hard. The woman had all the facts, but her eyes were not opened until she came face to face with her sin, then she began to believe; "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet."

Our sin caused us to be enemies with God, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Let's recognize our sinful state without Christ and receive His eternal forgiveness. Jesus said; "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Luke 5:32). Let's present the true gospel message and call all sinners to Christ.

Have A Great Day!

John 4:20-24 - Lesson #40

Jesus revealed the issue which was keeping the Samaritan woman from seeing past her physical needs and desires. As difficult as it is to be confronted with sin, it is the one issue which brings us face to face with the true Savior and His message of forgiveness, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet" (John 4:19). However, any beginning of understanding quickly faded into a defensive debate.

John 4:20-24

"Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.' Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.'"

The Samaritan woman employed the old confrontation tactic of diverting the argument. Seeing that her sin was exposed, her immediate defense was to bring up a theological question which had been argued for hundreds of years. It grieves me to reflect on how many heated arguments there are today about things like Spiritual gifts, the end times, eternal security and free will, and yet so little talk about Jesus dying for the forgiveness of sin so we can be brought back to a loving relationship with God for all eternity.

The issue of the day between the Samaritans and Jews was the proper place to worship. Before the Israelites first entered the land of Canaan - approximately 1400 years before Christ - God gave instruction through Moses that there was to be an established place of worship; "you shall seek the place where the Lord your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His dwelling place; and there you shall go" (Deuteronomy 12:5).

Since Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem, the Jews believed this was the place to forever worship God. The Samaritans believed the location for proper worship was the Mountain from which blessings were given; "These shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people, when you have crossed over the Jordan" (Deuteronomy 27:12). As is usually the case, both sides used scripture to support their position.

But rather than even engaging in the debate - rather than beating her down - Jesus takes the woman to a higher level by telling her the real issue is not about where, but about Who. Jesus was not concerned with where or how the woman worshipped, only that she knew the One to Whom worship was due.

Our Father is to be worshipped from a pure heart whenever and wherever we go. Let's embrace the gospel, embrace the Savior, and with this as our intense focus, worship God in Spirit and in truth.

Have A Great Day!

John 4:25-27 - Lesson #41

When challenged about the proper place for worship, Jesus replied that there was coming a time of new worship; and yet, that time is right now. What is this new worship? It's the worship where "the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth" (John 4:23). Jesus makes His point even stronger by saying; "those who worship Him MUST worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24).

Is our worship spiritual and true? We should note that the words worship and worth come from the same root meaning. Worship then becomes acknowledging God's worth by acknowledging who He truly is; "Your word is truth" (John 17:17). We only know who God is by how He has revealed Himself in His Word.

But worship is more than simply a mental exercise. Study is important, but only as a beginning not as an end. Worship is entering into the presence of God and being in love with Who He is, with the overflow of our heart; "In Your presence is fullness of joy" (Psalm 16:11). This is how we must worship (or it is not truly worship) - and this worship is not determined by location or time, but by the condition of our heart.

John 4:25-27

"The woman said to Him, 'I know that Messiah is coming' (who is called Christ). 'When He comes, He will tell us all things.' Jesus said to her, 'I who speak to you am He.' And at this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, 'What do You seek?' or, 'Why are You talking with her?'"

The Samaritans only recognized the first five books of the Old Testament. Their view of "Messiah" was the promised prophet spoken of by Moses; "a Prophet like me" (Deuteronomy 18:15). The woman says that when the anointed one comes, He will answer all questions - He will be the trusted authority.

Jesus' response was unusually direct. The time was gone for wordplay with debatable meaning. He simply says, I am the One you are looking for! This woman had made many bad choices and knew just enough about religious issues to create a wall to hide behind. But Jesus stepped into her world and said, I am He!!

We don't yet see the woman's response to Jesus because the disciples returned and "marveled that He talked with a woman." Sure they "marveled"! The Rabbis taught it was better to burn the Word of God than give it to a woman. It was not normal to be in a public conversation with a woman, and especially not about spiritual matters. But the disciples had learned to trust Jesus and knew He moved with purpose.

The promised one is here. He has made Himself clearly known and said the forgiveness and fulfillment we seek are found in Him. The question is the same as it is every time we're presented with His truth: How will we respond? Let's truly worship Him today. Let's place our trust in the One who came to say, I am He.

Have A Great Day!

John 4:28-30 - Lesson #42

The disciples returned to the well and saw Jesus speaking to the Samaritan woman - something extremely unusual; "they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, 'What do You seek?' or, 'Why are You talking with her?'" (John 4:27). As the disciples journeyed with Jesus, they were in the process of learning who He was. And part of this process involved learning to trust in the not-so-ordinary mode of operation.

How many times has this lesson been taught throughout God's Word? Think about Abraham and Sarah needing to trust for the birth of Isaac in their old age (Genesis 18), the Israelites passing through the Red Sea (Exodus 14), the priests carrying the ark into the Jordan river (Joshua 3), defeating Jericho by marching around the city and shouting (Joshua 5), Gideon defeating the Midianites with only 300 men (Judges 7), and the list goes on and on. And yet, even with all these great lessons of trust, how often do we say: Lord, what are You doing? I'm not sure I can trust You! But the disciples continued to be transformed.

John 4:28-30

"The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, 'Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?' Then they went out of the city and came to Him."

The approach of the disciples brought an abrupt end to the conversation. We can't be certain how much the woman really understood about Jesus, but it's clear she saw Him as someone unique, someone special, someone who must be shared.

Leaving her waterpot meant she was in a hurry and planned to return. She had news that couldn't wait. There must have been something very compelling in her voice and in her face that day. She had been shunned by the people of the city; and yet, she went directly to the men - with excitement - and said come and see the Man who told me all I have done. With just those words, the men might have replied: Yeah, big deal! We know what you've done and it isn't pretty!!

But there was something different about the woman that day. And her excitement directed them to the anointed One, the Messiah...the Christ! She wasn't just talking about a prophet, but The Prophet!! Her compelling invitation to "Come" was such that they needed to find out more for themselves.

The woman knew very little, but what she knew changed her life and compelled her to share. Have we truly taken hold of the truth worth sharing? Is there a compelling on our heart to call people to Christ? "And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17). Let's allow His truth to so invade our life that we are compelled to reach out with the invitation to Come!

Have A Great Day!

John 4:31-34 - Lesson #43

Jesus had remained at the well while "His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food" (John 4:8). While the disciples were away, Jesus taught a Samaritan woman wonderful truths about everlasting life; about the Father; about worship; and about Himself. When the disciples returned, the woman hurried into the city to call others to come; "Could this be the Christ?" (John 4:29). The disciples had brought back food from the city and were concerned that their weary and beloved Rabbi was not eating as they felt He should.

John 4:31-34

"In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, 'Rabbi, eat.' But He said to them, 'I have food to eat of which you do not know.' Therefore the disciples said to one another, 'Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?' Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.'"

This has now become a familiar pattern of conversation within John's gospel. When Jesus spoke with Nicodemus, His statement "unless one is born again" (John 3:3), was taken literally and completely misunderstood: "How can a man be born when he is old?" (John 3:4). A similar misinterpretation occurred when Jesus offered the Samaritan woman "living water" (John 4:10); "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep" (John 4:11). In both cases, the Spiritual message was missed.

The disciples could not yet understand Spiritual messages; so when Jesus spoke of food, all they could do was wonder who brought Him something to eat. Jesus had just experienced the full satisfaction which only complete obedience to the will of God can bring, and all the disciples could think of was lunch. How often do we miss true satisfaction and peace because we are consumed with our physical surroundings? "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

Physical food is certainly important, but many believers all around the world today are sadly malnourished because they know nothing of the Spiritual food available only through doing the will of God - and of finishing His work. In the immediate context, Jesus was nourished because He obediently came through Samaria and ministered truth to the Samaritan woman. In the broader context, Jesus lived in perfect harmony with the will of God as He revealed the Father and proclaimed truth to all those given into His hands. At the end of His earthly ministry, Jesus would say His work of declaring and glorifying the Father was finished (John 17:4). And on the cross, He made His work truly complete; "It is finished" (John 19:30).

His food is available, and His food is good! But to eat it means to consume it as it is presented. We can't manipulate God's will so it conforms to our own, nor can we bargain with God to change His will into something more "acceptable." God's will is perfect and we are called to obediently follow. Let's refuse to live another day as weak, malnourished followers of Jesus. Let's receive all He has to offer by obediently doing His will all the way to completion. Let's begin today to feast on true Spiritual food.

Have A Great Day!

John 4:35-38 - Lesson #44

As we near the end of our time in Samaria, it's useful to view with the disciple's eyes. The journey through Samaria was not enjoyable. The Samaritans were unworthy of their time, even despised. But Jesus led the disciples through the heart of Samaria and stopped beside a well. As the disciples left Jesus and traveled to a nearby town to purchase food, they passed a woman carrying an empty water pot. It would have been common to pass the woman in silence and even make her walk off the path so they could freely pass.

The disciples then conducted their business in the town, only interacting when absolutely necessary in order to obtain lunch, and hurried back to Jesus. When they return, they see Jesus talking with the woman but decide it best not to question Him. Instead, they try and convince Him to eat. But Jesus, always the teacher, begins to tell about the truly satisfying food of doing the will of the Father, "and to finish His work" (John 4:34). Jesus continues by describing this work.

John 4:35-38

"Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors."

The disciples had missed several opportunities, but Jesus simply continued to teach and encourage. It was a common proverb that you plant a seed and then wait at least four months until the harvest. But Jesus said the field was "white for harvest." Some translations differ, but the Greek word is "white." One possible meaning of white is to be very ripe, as though the plants will spoil if not harvested right away. This interpretation conveys the urgency of the harvest. But it's also possible Jesus was looking out at the field and motioning to the large group of people approaching in their white robes - the harvest was on the way.

A great harvest was coming, but the labor of planting had been done by others - by Jesus and by the woman as she testified throughout the town. John the Baptist may have even ministered in the area, John 3:23, preparing the way with a message of repentance. We all stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before, and we must learn to rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish any good work. But as we continue our journey, we must be prepared to plant, water, or harvest, knowing each is part of God's wonderful plan; "Now he who plants and he who waters are one" (1 Corinthians 3:8).

We are each being called to look past any prejudices or preconceived notions regarding those in the field. Wherever we are sent, there is a great work to be done. The world needs to hear the truth, and our first steps come as we recognize the fields are ready, and they are truly white for harvest.

Have A Great Day!

John 4:39-42 - Lesson #45

As the Samaritans from the nearby town approached, Jesus told His disciples the fields are "white for harvest" (John 4:35). Jesus had ministered to one woman; but she took her limited information, along with the baggage of a bad reputation, and became God's messenger who called others to come see Jesus.

John 4:39-42

"And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, 'He told me all that I ever did.' So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. And many more believed because of His own word. Then they said to the woman, 'Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.'"

We need to be careful not to read into scripture our present understanding of words and phrases. When we say someone "believed in" Jesus, we think of someone who believed that Jesus is the Son of God who came to die as a sacrifice for sin. We would tend to say that someone who believed in Jesus is someone who is saved. This cannot be the meaning for the Samaritans when it is first recorded that they "believed in" Jesus.

The Samaritan woman had little information. She thought Jesus was a prophet like Moses who "will tell us all things" (John 4:25). This was her definition of the Messiah, her understanding of Christ. And yet, this was enough to call others to come and see. The belief of the Samaritans when they first came to Jesus was far from a belief which would save, but it was enough for them to listen and earnestly try to understand.

We should note that John uses a form of believe over eighty times in his gospel. The other three gospels combined use the forms of believe less than half as many times. John often uses believe as a faith which leads to eternal life, but he also uses believe as a present acceptance and willingness to follow. The Samaritans had not heard about the forgiveness of sin, which is essential for eternal life, but they believed what they heard. And this belief compelled them to urge Jesus to stay longer and teach them more.

During the two days of teaching and fellowship, the substance of their belief definitely grew. No longer did they simply believe in the Christ presented by the woman; but now they had listened to Jesus and believed Him to be "the Savior of the world"! This statement intentionally removes all doubt - the Samaritans truly believed!! His sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin was still a future event, but Jesus fully revealed His plan and confirmed the gospel message was to be taken "to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

What is the substance of our belief? The Jesus of our parents or friends is a great place to start, but only as it compels us to personally ask Jesus inside and learn of His truth. Let's trust Him enough to desire Him more. Let's invite Him in and sit at His feet until we truly believe that Jesus is the Savior of the world.

Have A Great Day!

John 4:43-45 - Lesson #46

Jesus had finished His ministry in Samaria - a ministry which was certainly successful. The woman at the well and many in the nearby town did not just believe in a good teacher, or prophet, or worker of wonders, they listened intently to Jesus and proclaimed He was "the Christ, the Savior of the world" (John 4:42).

His ministry in Samaria was no slight detour from His path. This time of ministry WAS the path! Recall that when Jesus departed Judea, "He needed to go through Samaria" (John 4:4). The true need is now clear. In these few days, Jesus taught that God truly loved the whole world. His sacrifice would not just be for a select group, but for the world. And now it was time for His journey to continue.

John 4:43-45

"Now after the two days He departed from there and went to Galilee. For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country. So when He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things He did in Jerusalem at the feast; for they also had gone to the feast."

Jesus continued the journey to Galilee which began several days earlier. The statement about a prophet having no honor in his own country is saying Jesus expected a difficult time of ministry in Galilee. These words are also recorded in the other gospels and each time they reference those who would not believe because they thought Jesus was just a man who lived among them: "Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works? Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary?" (Matthew 13:54-55).

But in spite of the difficulty He knew lie ahead, and in spite of the wonderful reception He was presently receiving in Samaria, He also knew His own country needed to hear His message. The ministry of Jesus was focused on accomplishing the will of God. He would not be deterred because of possible difficulty nor influenced by the actual praise from men. Each step would be directed by God for the purpose of glorifying Him and proclaiming His Name.

The Galileans "received" Jesus, but they did not honor Him. They wanted to be near Him, not because of who He was but because of what they had seen Him do. The Pharisees looked down on the Galileans, and they had witnessed Jesus triumph over the Pharisees while in Jerusalem. Jesus was their hero, their champion, their hometown boy made good, but He was not their Savior.

We are all aware of the fear of failure. This must be given to God and overcome. There should never be anywhere we cannot follow. But we would also be wise to cultivate a healthy fear of success. We must never allow apparent success to keep us from moving out when our Father calls; for this is always a failure in the eyes of God. Let's continue to live a focused life where our only desire is to glorify God in ALL we do. And let's believe He came to save the world - came to save us - and truly receive Him with honor.

Have A Great Day!

John 4:46-49 - Lesson #47

After a long and eventful journey, Jesus arrived in Galilee. This ought to have been a time of excitement and anticipation, He was returning to the region of His childhood, a region filled with family and friends. But instead, Jesus knew this would be a difficult task; "For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country" (John 4:44). And yet, this was a region that needed a Savior.

John 4:46-49

"So Jesus came again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him and implored Him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. Then Jesus said to him, 'Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe.' The nobleman said to Him, 'Sir, come down before my child dies!'"

It is commonly believed that this nobleman was a high ranking official in the court of Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great. This man of authority and high esteem, was facing a serious crisis - his son was close to death. He came to Jesus out of desperation, grasping when all else had failed.

Was this a shallow faith? Absolutely! But how many of us initially came to Christ with similar circumstances - with a burden far too heavy to carry? "In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). We may not have known what it meant to be a child of God, but we seemed to know that Jesus could help carry the load. We cannot call this a saving faith, and there is great danger for one who becomes comfortable and fails to mature, but God can clearly use such faith to draw people closer to Himself.

Notice that a desperate and shallow faith does not imply weak character. The nobleman had humbled himself in approaching Jesus; and as he made his plea, he showed determination and resolve. He was persistently making his request known and refused to be deterred even when rebuked. Jesus accused the nobleman, as well as many others, of seeking after signs and wonders and not the true Wonder of Wonders.

Jesus spoke strongly against those who made signs and wonders the basis for their faith. Miracles were an important part of Jesus' ministry; but they were always to point to God and His plan of Salvation, not to be sought after and worshiped. Such belief continually seeks something new and externally exciting but neglects the deep roots of truth which last a lifetime and hold us secure in the storm.

When trials come our way, let's see them as opportunities to present our requests to God. Let's use our limited faith to draw close to His side, and grow by knowing Him better through the study of His Word and true intimate fellowship. Let's come as we are, but then let's continually grow and become like Him.

Have A Great Day!

John 4:50-54 - Lesson #48

The son of a nobleman lies in bed, dying. The boy's mother tries her best to provide comfort, but all hope is fading. The nobleman stares into the distance feeling useless, helpless. He has always been a good provider and protector of his family, but now....there is nothing he can do. He has heard of a man named Jesus who seems able to perform miracles. Perhaps this man can save his son. And so, the journey of faith begins.

It's difficult to say how much the nobleman knew about Jesus, but he knew enough for there to be a spark of hope. When he heard that Jesus was in Cana (about 18 miles away), he quickly set out with the goal to bring this man back to his house so his son could be healed. As the nobleman approached Jesus and began to urgently ask Him to come to Capernaum, he was not fully prepared for Jesus' response.

John 4:50-54

"Jesus said to him, 'Go your way; your son lives.' So the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he went his way. And as he was now going down, his servants met him and told him, saying, 'Your son lives!' Then he inquired of them the hour when he got better. And they said to him, 'Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.' So the father knew that it was at the same hour in which Jesus said to him, 'Your son lives.' And he himself believed, and his whole household. This again is the second sign Jesus did when He had come out of Judea into Galilee."

The nobleman was challenged to evaluate what he really believed. If he continued to beg Jesus to come to his house, it would say he didn't believe what Jesus said. And yet, if he did what Jesus said - if he released control - he would be making the long trip back home empty handed, perhaps to find a dead son. The nobleman believed and "went his way," but his was a very tentative belief filled with turmoil.

Mark writes of another father who brought his sick boy to Jesus and clearly captures the turmoil of belief; "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24). I wish I could say this is simply an example of immature faith, but I can't. As my faith continues to grow and to be challenged by God, I am often brought to decision points where I fall to my knees and cry "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"

The nobleman's belief was confirmed and further strengthened when he asked the hour when his son recovered. By the time the nobleman returned home his faith was so strong that it compelled his whole household to believe. Our faith is never adequate for someone else, but the power of testimony and example are very strong - especially when a true example comes from a believing father.

As difficult as some decisions of faith may be, we must consider them as opportunities to learn and mature and draw closer to God. His claims and promises are true - He CAN be trusted. Let's accept the challenge to trust Him with every single step. Let's truly live by faith and strengthen our belief.

Have A Great Day!