



The Spiritual Harvest

John 4:27-54

Notes: The primary reference used in developing this Bible Study was the *Life Application Commentary*. The Scripture references in this Bible study are taken from the New King James Version.

4:27 – What cultural taboos did the disciples find Jesus breaking?

(1) Jews did not speak to Samaritans and (2) a man did not normally speak to a female stranger.

Why didn't the disciples challenge Jesus for not observing these cultural taboos?

They must have realized that His motives were good and it is likely they had been around Jesus to realize He had a pattern of challenging the traditions of men.

4:28 – Our text tells us that the woman left her waterpot at the well, what does this tell us about her state of mind?

1. She was so excited about her conversation with Jesus that she forgot why she was at the well.
2. Her thirst for the everlasting life that Jesus spoke about was greater than her need for well water.
3. Her leaving the pot there also revealed her intention to return.

4:29 – What did the woman leave to do?

She left to tell others about a man who miraculously knew all about her. And this led her to think that Jesus might be the promised Messiah and so she was seeking others to check Him out to confirm her suspicions.

Why would this woman who had been ashamed of her life now speak publicly about her experience of transparency before Jesus?

She had a life-changing experience with Jesus. What seemed to be important before was now insignificant in light of what she learned from Jesus.

How would the woman telling people about how Jesus knew her make people interested in what she had to say?

The woman's invitation to learn about Jesus was compelling because she only described how Jesus met her needs. She did not attempt to expose the needs of others.

How should we apply this to our own witness?

We too should stick to our own experience with Jesus, how He has met our needs and not condemn others.

When we receive Jesus in our lives, why is it important to leave behind the shame about the past?

God knows all about us, we can repent and receive His forgiveness. God can use the testimony of our past lives to help others see their need for forgiveness.

Why may it be necessary for us to leave behind former friends and activities when we receive Jesus into our lives?

Our former friends and activities may be a hindrance to our spiritual growth and telling others about Christ. The woman did not allow the waterpot to slow her down and neither should we. We may also need to set aside aspects of our former selves because the tempter may lure us into thinking that these old empty ways are still an easy source of happiness.

4:29 – Why did the woman ask the question about Jesus being the Messiah rather than just proclaim it?

Due to her reputation, she was probably used to any conclusion by her about who someone may be would likely go unheeded. The other possibility was that she was not yet totally convinced that Jesus was in fact the Messiah.

4:30 – What effect did the woman questioning about whether Jesus could be the Messiah have?

This question stirred up curiosity and people came out of the town to see for themselves.

4:31-33 – What did Jesus mean by his response to the disciples' urge for Him to eat?

Jesus was saying that He was spiritually satisfied by having shared the good news with the Samaritan woman.

4:34 – In what did Jesus find spiritual satisfaction?

Jesus found spiritual satisfaction from doing the will of His Father and to complete the mission for which He had been sent.

What kinds of things give us spiritual nourishment?

We are nourished by Bible study, prayer, attending church and sharing God's Word with others.

Matthew 4:4 - Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

We are nourished by not only what we take in but what we give out for God.

4:35 – What kind of harvest was Jesus talking about here?

Jesus was referring to a harvest of souls.

Why did Jesus say the fields were white for harvest, why not golden or why mention any color at all?

The Samaritans often dressed in white, it could have been a reference to them. Or it could be that Jesus was looking beyond the earthly realm and the souls to be harvested as they would appear in eternity...

Psalm 51:7 - Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

What is important about the timing of the harvest?

We should not put off following through on bringing people to Jesus if we find that they are ready to receive Him into their lives.

4:36 – What wages does the reaper draw?

The person who wins souls to Christ has the satisfaction of being a part of helping others to experience eternal life. And there will be rewards in heaven for winning souls for Jesus.

4:36-37 – How may the sower and reaper rejoice together?

As in the case of the Samaritan woman, Jesus sowed the seed of the gospel in the woman and reaped a harvest from many in the Samaritan city. This sowing and reaping transpired so quickly that the sower and reaper could rejoice together. However, Jesus is probably referring to this in the context of eternity where both the sower and reaper will be able to rejoice in the role they both played in someone yielding their life to the Lord.

How may the reaper rejoice now?

The reaper may rejoice now because the soul that was saved is a stored harvest, to be revealed at the resurrection.

How may the sower rejoice now?

The sower may rejoice now because he is hoping in a future harvest...

Isaiah 55:11 - So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

How is it that one sows and the other reaps is true?

The sower and the reaper do not have the same role.

1 Corinthians 3:6 - I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.

Can you identify the process of sowing and reaping that occurred in your life?

Sower: My parents demonstrated a reverence for God's Word. My father-in-law gave me a book on Bible prophecy that helped me to recognize the truth of God's Word.

Reaper: my wife Teresa had been having a conversation with me on spiritual things when I believed but I didn't tell her at the time because I didn't understand myself what happened.

What should our own salvation experience make us want to do?

We should seek out opportunities to sow and reap whenever we can.

4:38 – Who do you think Jesus had in mind that the disciples would be reaping a harvest from?

This probably refers to the coming harvest of Samaritan believers as well as the harvest that would come after Pentecost.

Who did the sowing in preparation for the disciples to be reaping?

The others who labored may have been some of the Old Testament prophets or more likely John the Baptist and his disciples.

How is sowing a reaping such a good analogy for laboring so that others may have eternal life?

Think of what farmers do, plowing, fertilizing, sowing, weeding, watering, harvesting... so much is out of their hands yet what they do is vital. Our testimony, kindness, encouragement, patience or teaching of the gospel may be the turning point in a person's life.

4:39 – Why did the Samaritans of Sychar believe in Jesus?

The Samaritans that the woman talked to believed because of Jesus' conversation with her, her bold witness in town, and the curiosity or openness of the people themselves.

4:40 – What did the Samaritans ask of Jesus?

The Samaritans wanted Jesus to stay with them and so they asked Him to stay.

Did Jesus stay with the Samaritans?

Jesus stayed two days with the Samaritans as a result of their request.

4:41 – Why did the Samaritans of Sychar believe in Jesus?

More people believed in Jesus when they heard Him themselves.

4:42 – What did the Samaritans who believed testify about Jesus?

The Samaritans who believed testified that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, the savior of the world.

Did the Samaritans come to believe in Jesus as a result of her testimony about Him alone?

No, they heard Jesus on their own which confirmed what she had to say about Him.

What is the danger in only depending on what the person who shared the gospel with you for your understanding about Christ?

For spiritual growth to occur, it is necessary for a person to personally experience a direct relationship with the Lord. Also, we should expect to minister to each other; the giving should go both ways, not just one way. God will help us to minister to those who first ministered to us.

4:43 – Where did Jesus go when He left the Samaritans?

Jesus and His disciples went to Galilee.

4:44 – What was Jesus' own country?

Jesus was from Nazareth in Galilee.

Why is it that a prophet had no honor in his own country?

People in a prophet's home area knew him as just another regular guy and could not believe there was anything special about him...

Matthew 13:53-58 - Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these parables, that He departed from there. And when He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, "Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works? "Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas? "And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things?" So they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house." Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

4:45 – Why did the Galileans receive Jesus?

The Galileans had either seen or knew about the miracles Jesus had performed.

What was the contrast between how people received Jesus in Galilee and Samaria?

Jesus performed no miracles in Samaria yet people believed on the basis of His testimony alone... the Galileans were miracle groupies who did not believe.

Why didn't people believe Jesus despite the miracles?

The question was never whether or not Jesus could perform miracles, rather it was where did this man get these powers... was it of God or not?

Matthew 12:24 - Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, "This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons."

How can you tell if a miracle is of God or not?

If a miracle is of God, it should reinforce God's Word because God can not contradict Himself.

Does God perform miracles today?

Of course He does...

Ephesians 3:20 – [God] is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us

What are the differences between the miracles He worked in conjunction with the ministry of Jesus and the Apostles versus today?

Miracles are no longer needed to authenticate God's messengers because the canon of Scripture is closed for our age.

How do we know the canon of Scripture is closed for our age?

The Apostles mission was completed, they died and there were no modern-day Apostles needed to take their place. The Apostle Paul said that this is what would happen...

1 Corinthians 13:8-10 - Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

Note that Paul is saying that gifts of revelation will cease which indicates that the time would come when God has completed His revelation to mankind for this age. I believe "that which is perfect" is a reference to the completed canon of Scripture because it is made up of pieces of revelation that will cease.

Have miracles that authenticate God's spokesmen always been the norm?

The spectacular types of miracles that authenticated God's spokesmen have only occurred during distinct periods of time: (1) Moses & Joshua, (2) Elijah & Elishia, (3) Jesus & the Apostles, (4) the two prophets of Revelation. Not all prophets had these spectacular miracles associated with their ministries... most were authenticated by the near-term prophecies that were 100% accurate.

How were the Apostles unique from believers today?

(1) The Church was founded upon the apostles...

Ephesians 2:19-20 - Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone,

(2) The Apostles were those to whom the resurrected Jesus physically appeared...

1 Corinthians 9:1 - Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?

Paul made it clear that he too was an eyewitness to the resurrected Jesus...

1 Corinthians 15:7-8 - After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

(3) The Apostles were chosen personally by Jesus Christ and called by Him into their apostolic ministry...

Hebrews 2:3-4 - how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?

Jesus gave those He called power to perform miracles that would authenticate them as being God's messengers...

Matt 10:1 - And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease.

(4) The Apostles were authenticated by miraculous signs...

2 Corinthians 12:12 - Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.

(5) The Apostles have an eternal and unique place of honor...

Revelation 21:14 - Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

How do we know the Apostolic age has ended?

- God had a special purpose for the Apostles and that purpose was realized. Note the distinctions between the following verses...

Early in the ministry of the Apostles, everyone was healed by them...

Acts 5:16 - Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

Yet ~25 years later, Paul couldn't even heal his own affliction:

2 Corinthians 12:7-8 - And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.

Paul advises Timothy to us medicine which wouldn't have been necessary if Paul could still heal him:

1 Timothy 5:23 - No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities.

Paul mentioned having to leave a beloved brother that he could not heal:

2 Timothy 4:20 - Erastus stayed in Corinth, but Trophimus I have left in Miletus sick.

Why doesn't God give Christians today the kind of miraculous powers the Apostles had?

- God has already given us all we need to grow in our relationship to Him: His Word and the Holy Spirit to understand His Word.
- The normal thing is for Christians to live by faith, not by sight:
2 Corinthians 5:7 - For we walk by faith, not by sight.
- If we could see everything in the physical realm, it wouldn't be faith:
Hebrews 11:1 - Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.
- Jesus has blessed us by giving us the faith we need in this age without having to see...
John 20:29 - Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

4:46 – What need did Jesus encounter when He returned to Cana?

A certain nobleman who had a son that was sick in Capernaum asked Jesus to heal his son. This nobleman was probably an official in Herod's court. Capernaum was about 20 miles from Cana.

4:47 – What was wrong with the nobleman's son?

The nobleman's son was at the point of death.

4:48 – Who was Jesus speaking to here?

Jesus took the opportunity to address all the Galileans and reprimand them for being sign-seekers (miracle-groupies).

4:49 – Was the nobleman with a sick son a sign-seeker?

The nobleman was not merely a sign-seeker, he had a need and truly believed that Jesus could meet that need.

4:50 – How did Jesus respond to the man’s request?

Jesus met the man’s need.

Why did Jesus meet the man’s need?

The nobleman believed that Jesus could help him and he was not among those who had to see signs and wonders in order to believe.

How do we know that the nobleman believed Jesus?

The nobleman obeyed Jesus and did just what Jesus told him to do by going home.

Why isn’t it enough for us to say we believe that Jesus can take care of our problems?

We need to act as if Jesus can take care of our problems. We also need to leave the means, ways, and timing up to Jesus.

4:51 – What report did the nobleman receive when he got home?

The nobleman’s servants met him and told him the good news that his son had recovered.

4:52-53 – Why do you think the nobleman inquired as to the timing that his son recovered?

The nobleman was anxious to confirm that it was Jesus who healed him so that he may give Him the glory.

When was the boy healed?

The boy was healed at exactly the time that Jesus spoke the words, “your son lives.”

4:53 – What was the response to the boy being healed by his family?

They all came to believe that Jesus was the Messiah.

It was fairly common for whole families to be saved when one member of a household was saved, for example...

- Acts 10:2 - a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always.
- Acts 16:15 - And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." So she persuaded us.
- Acts 16:33 - And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized.

Why is that true?

People in an immediate family know each other pretty well and when one is profoundly changed, the others can clearly see the difference and desire that change for themselves.

What seems unusual about this today?

This flies in the face of our individualistic culture today.

How did the nobleman’s faith grow in Jesus?

1. He believed enough to ask Jesus to heal his son.
2. He believed enough to insist that Jesus come with him to heal his son.
3. He trusted Jesus’ assurance that his son would live and he acted on that trust.
4. He and his whole household believed in Jesus.

4:54 – What was the first sign to which this verse made reference?

The first sign was when Jesus turned water to wine at the wedding in Cana of Galilee.