

Small Group Bible Study Questions

- A) In the past couple of weeks, we have taken the overall story of the Samaritan Woman, and the disciples response to the situation, and broken into two different talks, outlines, etc. Let's bring all of that back together. Read John 4:1-42 and get a good "feel" for the flow of the narrative.
- B) What strikes you the most about how the disciples respond to the situation around them? How do you think they felt in Samaria? Do we ever see the disciples "turn the corner" on their prejudice and reach out to the Samaritans, or people who are like the Samaritans?
- C) What about you?! Who is it that you cannot imagine would ever respond to the Gospel of Jesus Christ? What are the reasons? How do we balance Christ's teaching about "the fields are white" (John 4:35) with our hesitancy to reach out?
- D) Is it true that "the fields are white for the harvest?" As you look at the culture and world around you, do you believe that the words of Jesus are still true? Not just in theory, but in actual practice? What would have to change in your perspective and life in order to live out what you believe?
- E) Whenever we study and talk about reaching out, it always confronts our attitudes about what we really believe, and how we really live as Christians. Do you need a "transformation of your attitude" in some key area this week? What would it be? Who would you need to change your attitude toward? I have found it helpful to make a list of who I need to be praying for when it comes to my attitude. Maybe it is a parent, a friend or a neighbor. Whoever it is, make a short list and ask God to transform your attitude toward these other people. Ask God to help you "keep the harvest in mind." If you are able, share your list with your small group and pray together for success, in both sowing -- reaping -- and our own attitudes!

What's Your Attitude?

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**DO YOU NOT SAY, 'THERE ARE YET FOUR MONTHS, AND THEN COMES THE HARVEST'? BEHOLD, I SAY TO YOU, LIFT UP YOUR EYES AND LOOK ON THE FIELDS, THAT THEY ARE WHITE FOR HARVEST.
~ JOHN 4:35 (NASB)**

1) The Disciples Go On A Food Run

- A) It is about noontime (John 4:6) when Jesus and His disciples take a break from the heat of travel (they are headed to Cana near Galilee from Judea -- 4:45-46) to rest (they are tired), and eat (they are hungry -- 4:8).
- B) When the disciples leave, Jesus encounters a nameless Samaritan woman and has a radical encounter with her (John 4:7-42). Even when the disciples are not looking and are unaware, Jesus is at work. This is a theme throughout John's Gospel (cf. 5:17).
- C) When the disciples get back with the food, they see Jesus speaking with the Samaritan woman (4:27). They are "amazed," but do not challenge Jesus, although there is talk amongst themselves as to what Jesus is thinking/doing

("What do you seek?," "Why do you speak with her?").

- D) There is a principle here of where we choose to focus. Much like Mary & Martha's story of true worship (Luke 10:38-42), similar principles apply here. Much like the Samaritan woman being distracted by the heritage and theological tradition of her people, similar principles apply here. In order to truly "worship in spirit and truth" (4:24), you must focus on Jesus and not other circumstances.
- E) The disciples insist that Jesus should get some food into His body, even calling Him "Rabbi" (a reminder that He was a spiritual teacher, and probably shouldn't be talking with a Samaritan woman, particularly in public* -- 4:31).

2) Attitude Adjustment

- A) Jesus attempts to shift the conversation from physical food

* Women were not valued much in the Jewish culture of Jesus' time. This was particularly acute in Jewish religious communities. One of Israel's popular Jerusalem Rabbi's wrote (of public discourse with a woman), "Talk not much with womankind. They have said this of a man's own wife, how much more of his fellow's wife! He that talks much with womankind brings evil upon himself and neglects the study of the Law and at the last with inherit Gehenna (Hell)." Probably the greatest blot on the rabbinic attitude toward women was that, though the rabbis held the study of the Law to be the greatest good in life, they discouraged women from studying it at all. For example, "If any man gives his daughter a knowledge of the Law it is as though he taught her lechery (inordinate indulgence in sexual behavior)." An ancient prayer, still found in the Jewish prayer book today, states "Blessed are thou O Lord, who hast not made me a woman." The corresponding prayer for a woman was "Blessed are thou, O Lord, who hast fashioned me according to thy will." While it was not Jesus primary purpose in the establishment of salvation by faith in Himself and freedom from the teaching of the Law which had become so burdensome for the people (Luke 11:37-54), He brings a great liberty and freedom to women (generally speaking) in this and every subsequent society. This story (Samaritan Woman) is an example of Paul's teaching about equality in submission to Christ (Galatians 3:23-29). Information here drawn from various sources (Especially significant are details from NICNT, Leon Morris, *The Gospel According To John*, pages 242-243).

to spiritual food, telling His disciples that He has food "you do not know about" (4:32).

- B) In one of the more amusing verses in the Bible, the disciples are completely dumbfounded. They think Jesus has been slipped some food by someone in the group (4:33).
- C) Jesus (following His normal pattern), ignores the response of the disciples and hones in on His point. Namely, that He is here to "accomplish His work," that is, the work of God (4:34, also cf. 5:19-23). This piques the disciples interest...
- D) Jesus uses a simple (probably local farming) saying to make His point that it is not physical food that he has a problem with, it is the attitudes of the disciples who were asking questions about Him speaking with Samaritan woman (4:35). While they are involved in a debate over the non-essentials -- LOOK! The Samaritans have come, the harvest is near!

3) URGENT -- Eternal Purposes In View!

- A) The sower and the reaper will rejoice together (Amos 9:13)! This is a time of unceasing fertility and prosperity (4:36)!
- B) The point is not the sowing or the reaping (both are abundantly happening), but that you are TOTALLY ENGAGED in what God has called us to do. Both sowing and reaping should abundantly happen in our lives -- the work of the Gospel of Jesus is a singular focus in relation to the world (4:37-38)!