

Called to Testify

Makayla, we would like for you to join us on our out-reach effort," said Sister Sonya.

"Me?" asked the 20 year old, wondering what she had to contribute. Central Community Church had moved into the neighborhood seven months ago. They had held several block parties during the summer months. The church was planning a Valentine's Day Saturday night event and was inviting the neighborhood. Makayla had joined the church because of one of the church's previous block parties.

"You have a testimony to share with people," Sister Sonya said, breaking into Makayla's thoughts. "Be in prayer, Makayla, before we go out next week."

Makayla talked to the Lord about making her a good witness for Him. "Help me. I don't know what I'm doing," she had prayed.

When Makayla went with her small group to knock on doors, she felt a burning sensation. The third house the group came to, the single mother asked them inside. The woman had three teenagers. After the postcards were given and the invitations extended, one of the woman's daughters made a quip about church people.

Makayla then shared about her experience with Central Community Church, and more importantly, with Christ. Makayla disclosed how her previous life was full of sin and heartache. "Choosing to follow Christ was the best decision of my life," Makayla said to a silent, listening room.

- 1.** *In what ways do you see your community being ripe for listening to the Gospel?*
- 2.** *Do you think the number of nonbelievers is growing in your community? Why or why not?*
- 3.** *Are you excited about sharing the good news about Jesus to those who are not His followers? Explain your answer.*

LESSON FOCUS: Ask Jesus to reveal Himself to your community through your witness.

The Samaritan Woman's Testimony

John 4:25-30, KJV

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.

John 4:25-30, NIV

²⁵The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

²⁶Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he."

²⁷Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?"

²⁸Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people,

²⁹"Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" ³⁰They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

Jesus' meeting with the woman from Samaria at Jacob's well would have raised eyebrows in the Jewish culture of the first century A.D. (John 4:4-7). First, no respectable rabbi ever conversed with a woman in public. Second, no rabbi would ever have allowed himself to associate with a Samaritan, because of the intense hatred between Jews and Samaritans. Third, no rabbi would have consciously allowed himself to be anywhere near a woman of questionable morals.

But Jesus broke these taboos. In fact, through the metaphor of water, Jesus even assured the woman that she could quench her inner thirst by trusting in Him for eternal life (vss. 9-24).

Upon hearing the truths Jesus spoke, the Samaritan woman started to wonder whether He was more than a prophet. The woman voiced the hope of both Samaritans and Jews—namely,

that the Messiah would come. At this point, Jesus directly told the Samaritan woman that He was the Messiah.

Just then, Jesus' disciples returned with some food (see vs. 8). They were astonished to discover the Savior talking in public to the Samaritan woman. Yet, His disciples had been with Him long enough to know not to interrogate their Master.

Meanwhile, the woman abandoned her jug of water at the well and hurried back to the village. She seemed thrilled that Jesus was able to tell her everything she ever did (a slight overstatement) and still talk with and accept her. The woman did not say to her peers, "I have found the Redeemer," but asked humbly, "Could this be the Messiah?"

The woman's indirect approach aroused the interest of the Samaritans. By simply relating what had happened, the woman generated considerable interest. A large number of residents from Sychar responded to the woman's invitation.

4. What did the Samaritan woman claim would take place when the Messiah arrived?

5. What surprised Jesus' disciples when they came back?

The Disciples' Opportunities for Evangelism

John 4:31-38, KJV

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

John 4:31-38, NIV

³¹Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something."

³²But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about."

³³Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?"

³⁴"My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.

³⁵Don't you have a saying, 'It's

KJV

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.

NIV

still four months until harvest? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. ³⁶Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. ³⁷Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. ³⁸I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor.

Previously, Jesus' disciples had left Him weary and hungry (John 4:8). When they returned with the food they had bought, they kept urging their Rabbi to eat. Jesus declined their offer by stating that He had food to eat about which they were unfamiliar. Because His disciples took Him literally rather than figuratively, they misunderstood what He meant.

The Son explained that His nourishment came from doing the will of His Father and accomplishing His redemptive task. A connection exists between work as food and the fruit of one's labor as something to be harvested. In the present case, the eternal harvest would be the Samaritans approaching in the distance (vs. 30). Jesus told His disciples to open their eyes and see the ripe harvest coming toward them.

The Savior urged His followers to look and see that the fields for evangelism were ripe and ready to yield an abundant crop of believers. Both those who sowed the seed of the Gospel and those who reaped the harvest of many converts would be overjoyed that so many were brought to eternal life.

- 6.** *Why were Jesus' followers concerned for His welfare?*
- 7.** *What did Jesus' say consumed His time and attention?*
- 8.** *What truth did Jesus clarify by talking about farming?*

The Fruit of the Samaritan Woman's Testimony

John 4:39-42, KJV

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.

John 4:39-42, NIV

³⁹Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did."⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days.

⁴¹And because of his words many more became believers.

⁴²They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

Sychar's residents were amazed that Jesus had such incredible insight into the life of the woman they knew so well. As a result of her testimony, many Samaritans put their faith in Jesus as the Messiah. The villagers were even more impressed with Jesus when they met Him face-to-face. They insisted that He remain with them; Jesus stayed for two days.

This encounter with Jesus became the basis for the Samaritans declaring Him to be not merely a prophet but the "Savior of the world" (vs. 42). The response of the Samaritans to Jesus contrasts with that of the Jews that He came to reach. The Samaritans not only believed that Jesus is the Messiah, but also openly declared so to others.

9. *What impact did the Samaritan woman have on her peers?*

10. *What request did the local residents make to Jesus?*

Ripe for Harvest

When we look at our garden, do we spend more time focusing on the flowers or on the weeds? For many of us, our daily struggles with the weeds often take away our enjoyment of the beauty of the flowers. So too with people in our community. We are so intent on being critical of what's wrong with our society that we forget that the opportunities to share the Gospel with those who are lost are all around us—and truly those opportunities should excite us!

“The way you store up treasure in heaven,” said Rick Warren, senior pastor of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California, “is by investing in getting people there.” After all, whenever Jesus spoke about monetary treasure, wasn't He actually talking about bringing people into the kingdom of God? Evidently, this was His point in His parable about the talents (see Matt. 25:14-30).

What is clear in Jesus' message is that God reacts strongly to our attitude toward Him when He commands us to serve Him. The first two servants sought to please their master by increasing his wealth while the third servant regarded his master as harsh and demanding, and so, he hoarded what was given him. Hence, the master called the first two servants “good and faithful,” but the third servant he called “wicked” and “lazy.”

It should be the goal of every Christian to have the Lord say to us, “Well done, good and faithful servant!” (Matt. 25:21, 23). Moreover, it will be exceedingly wonderful when the Lord also says to us, “Come and share your master's happiness” (vss. 21, 23).

11. *How would you like to improve your attitude about sharing Christ with nonbelievers?*

12. *What blessings come to you when people come to the Lord through your efforts?*

13. *In what ways could you teach other Christians to be more effective in their evangelism?*

Reaching Others with Christ

When Jesus encountered the Samaritan woman at the well, He asked her for some water, and then He offered her true, living water. In response, she inquired what is that living water, and He told her that He is that water; moreover, He declared that He is the Messiah. Jesus' disciples were dumbfounded that their master was conversing with a "Samaritan woman," but Jesus told them the crop is ripe for harvest. His message to them, as it is to us, is that there are many people who need Him and we are to share Him with them.

► *Write a pledge here to share the Gospel with at least one person this coming week, or write it on an index card. Each day this coming week, if you have shared your faith in Jesus with one or more people, describe the circumstances, explain what prompted you to share, and relate the person's response to your message.*

KEY VERSE

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. —John 4:39, KJV

Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." —John 4:39, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of February 8 through February 14

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

Mon. 1 Corinthians 15:1-11—Jesus Appears to Paul.

Tues. John 19:25-30—Present with Jesus at the Cross.

Wed. Mark 16:1-8—Spices Prepared to Anoint Jesus' Body.

Thurs. John 20:1-9—Mary Magdalene Finds Tomb Empty.

Fri. Matthew 28:1-10—Angel Confirms Jesus' Resurrection to Women.

Sat. John 20:19-23—Jesus Appears, Sends Disciples into Ministry.

Sun. Luke 8:1-3; Mark 15:40; John 20:10-18—Mary Magdalene, Faithful Female Disciple.