

Sunday School Lesson February 7, 2021

Good morning, I hope you are well and feel blessed.

Lesson for February 7, 2021, "Called to Evangelize"

Background Scripture John 1:37-51, and John 4:25-42

Jacob's Well (John 4:5-6). There is a present-day well near Sychar (sih-CAR), which Samaritans believed was built by Jacob. A narrow opening four feet long led from the floor of the vault into the well which was dug through limestone. The ground mentioned by John had been purchased by Jacob (Genesis 33:19). The area was later wrested by force from the Amorites (Genesis 38:22). The well is near the base of Mount Gerizim, which was as holy to the Samaritans as Mt. Zion was to the Jews. Many religious differences like this led to disdain between Jews and Samaritans.

The Woman at the Well (John 4:4-7). The little we know about the Samaritan woman at the well is gleaned from Scripture. She comes to draw water from the well at noon, even though most women came in the morning and socialized. Jesus gives us a personal detail that perhaps explains this behavior. She has had five husbands and is currently living with a sixth man. Although the woman was possibly widowed more than once, she has likely been divorced at some point (John 4:18). The stigma for divorce, especially for the woman, was high in Jesus' time, and likely the woman draws water at an odd time to avoid the judgment and gossip of the other women of the town who knew her reputation.

In John chapter 4, Jesus and His disciples left Judea to return to Galilee. The route led them directly through Samaria. Although Jews and Samaritans both descended from ancient Israel, their religious practices and beliefs were slightly different, and there was long-standing hostility between them. While His disciples went into the city to buy food, Jesus rested by the well in the heat of the day. While Jesus rested, a Samaritan woman came to the well to draw water. Due to the social customs, the woman did not expect Jesus to speak to her. He asked her to draw physical water for Him and promised that He could provide her with living or spiritual water.

There at the well, they shared a theological conversation. As the conversation progressed, she realized that Jesus was no ordinary Jewish man. Just before the disciples returned, Jesus revealed Himself to be Israel's long-awaited Messiah.

"I Am" (John 4:25-30). A common phrase Jesus uses in the Gospel of John is "I am He." The phrase reveals Jesus to be the great "I Am." Although Jesus' disciples struggle throughout the Gospel of John to understand who Jesus is, the Samaritan woman does not struggle to believe that He is the Messiah. When the disciples return from the city, the woman leaves her water jug at the well and runs to tell the good news of the man who had "told her everything she had ever done." Although the disciples were surprised to find Jesus speaking publicly with a Samaritan woman, none of them said anything to discourage the conversation. When the woman reported her experience with Jesus in the city, the Samaritans went out to meet Him. Why do you think the Samaritan woman was so receptive to the idea that Jesus was the Messiah?

Gathering Fruit for Eternal Life (John 4:31-38). While the woman was in the city sharing her testimony, the disciples encouraged Jesus to eat, but they received an unexpected response. Like the woman to whom Jesus had offered living water, Jesus told the disciples that they did not know about the food He had. Mirroring the woman's confusion about living water, the disciples wondered who might have brought Jesus something to eat. However, Jesus explained that His "food" was the work God sent Him to do. He told the disciples that the fields were ripe for harvesting. Harkening back to the long legacy of Hebrew Bible prophets and teachers, Jesus told the disciples that they entered into the labor which others had already begun. Likewise, when we share the story of Jesus and His love, we stand on the shoulders of those who have labored to spread the good news.

Because of the Woman's Testimony (John 4:39-42). What impact could your simple testimony have on the people around you? The testimony of the Samaritan woman Jesus met at the well was simple. She believed that Jesus was the Messiah because He had told her everything she had ever done. The woman believed in Jesus because she felt seen by Jesus. For the Samaritans, her honest and straightforward testimony was sufficient. They believed in Jesus because of what she had told them about Him. The group Jesus met that day invited Him to stay with them and He agreed to do so for two days. Upon interacting with Him, even more people believed. They told the woman that they no longer believed because of her words alone. They now believed in Jesus because they had encounters with Him.

Our lesson is titled, "Called To Evangelize". I came across an article containing lessons that Jesus teaches us about evangelism. I thought these points might be helpful and at the same time provide insight pertaining to this Sunday School lesson. We are all given the command to witness as followers of Christ. The article was written by Kevin Harney, lead pastor of

Shoreline Church in Monterey, CA. and author of several books and study articles.

Lessons Jesus teaches us about evangelism:

Start where people are: Nicodemus came seeking Jesus under the cloak of night. Jesus encountered the woman at the well in the blistering heat of the day. We need to be ready to share the love and message of Jesus when people are ready and when the Holy Spirit opens the door. Day or night, at all times, we should meet people where they are and be ready to walk with them toward Jesus.

Love: It is impossible to read John 3 and 4 and not sense the authentic love Jesus has for these two people. The Savior longed for them to have their spiritual eyes opened. He wanted Nicodemus to be born again and move from empty religion to a vital relationship with God. He desired the woman to drink living water that would quench her soul for the rest of her life and for eternity. He wanted her to stop throwing the bucket of her heart down relational well after well. Jesus wanted her satisfied with his heavenly love. All of our outreach must be driven by a love for God and for the people who need to know his amazing grace. Outreach is not a chore or a duty. It is an outpouring of the undeserved love we received freely at the cross of Jesus.

Listen: In both accounts, Jesus listened to the words and hearts of the people he encountered. Nicodemus and the woman had questions and Jesus not only listened, but he heard them. As we help people move toward God, we need to listen, invite questions and really hear what people are wondering about. Defensiveness is never helpful. Focused listening is essential.

Talk life: Jesus talked with each of them about what was on their minds. Nicodemus was interested in who Jesus was. The woman was interested in water. This is where the conversations began. Christians who reach out naturally, like Jesus, will take time to talk about whatever is on the minds and hearts of the people in their life.

Talk theology: The conversation moved to deeper places as Jesus dug into the rich theological questions that were just under the surface. Neither Nicodemus nor the woman knew fully the questions that were percolating in their hearts. Jesus naturally went deeper.

Ask the hard questions: Jesus was not rude, but he was blunt. He did not dance around tough issues. The Master looked at Nicodemus and asked, "You are Israel's teacher, and do you not understand these things?" The last thing a religious teacher wants to hear is, "You don't get it." Jesus gently asked the woman, "Can I meet your husband?" The truth was, she had been married five times and now she was living with a man outside the covenant of marriage.

Speak the hard truth: Jesus told Nicodemus that unless he was born again, he would not see the kingdom of heaven. He told the woman that she would never have her thirst quenched until she came to the source of living water. Both of these tough truths needed to be spoken. As we listen and talk with the lost people God has placed in our life, we need to gently, but clearly speak the truth.

See the felt need and address the real need: Every person we engage with has specific felt needs. We must engage with people's longings, desires and dreams. But under the surface, we see that we were made for more. As we learn about people's felt needs, we should see the real needs that God wants to meet. As we do, we can help others see the God who offers more than they imagine or dream.

Nothing is off-limits: In these two encounters we see that the arms of Jesus are open very, very wide. The whole of humanity is represented in Nicodemus and the woman. One is a man, the other a woman. One is an insider, the other an outcast. One is Jewish, the other is a Samaritan (seen as a half-breed and traitor to the Jewish nation). One is powerful, the other powerless. One is wealthy, the other poor. The contrast could not be more vivid. Jesus touched people with leprosy, he dined with sinners, he befriended tax collectors, he loved the outcast and he opened his arms to all

who would come, including you and me. We need to be ready to joyfully engage with whomever God brings into our lives. Nothing off-limits.

Watch for fruitfulness: Nicodemus became a follower and was present after the crucifixion, helping prepare Jesus for burial. The woman was transformed by Jesus and immediately became an evangelist and helped start a revival in her hometown. We must pray for lives to be changed. We should anticipate that God will bear fruit through our lives when we walk in the steps of the Master and are mentored by Jesus. When we reach out organically, as Jesus did, the Holy Spirit will move in power, Jesus will draw people to himself and God will be glorified.

Our text daily Bible reading for Monday, February 1 was from Revelation 21:1-7, which speak of blessing for the person who “keeps” the words of the message from God. For this blessing, it is not enough just to read the book. We must trust its message. We must learn to trust God more and to serve him better.

If we do that, the message of hope in the Book of Revelation will make us stronger and better Christians. We will no longer care so much about our feelings or our situation in this world. We will remember that God is preparing a better world for us, his people. If we truly trust Christ, then we will be citizens of that perfect world.

Closing: For the love that casts out fear, the faith that sustains and the hope that never perishes, be with us now and forever more. Amen. God watch over us and take care of us.

Next week’s lesson February 14, 2021, “Mary Magdalene: A Faithful Disciple

Background Scripture Mark 15:40; 16:1-9; Luke 8:1-3 and John 20:10-18

Sources for this lesson: The Bible, Lectionary Bible Studies, by John W. Arthur, The Teacher’s Bible Commentary, H. Franklin Paschall and Herschel H. Hobbs, Editors, Called to Evangelize lesson notes, by Rev. Williams, Kevin Hanrey, lead Pastor of Shoreline Church and The Present Word Text.