

The Power of Testimony

Talking Point: Sharing God's greatest Gift of a life-transforming relationship with Jesus with all cultures.

Text: John 4: 27-42

'Just 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?" Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" They came out of the town and made their way toward him. Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something."

But He said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about." Then His disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?" "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Don't you have a saying, 'It's still four months until harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even 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. Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labour." Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in Him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of His words many more became believers. They 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 Saviour of the world."

Explain: In verses 27-30 we find a few more surprises in the text. The first one is the disciples' stunned silence in returning from their food gathering exercise and finding Jesus immersed in deep conversation with a Samaritan woman in verse 27. This alone would have been shocking but their consternation must have exploded as they watched the first commissioning for mission in John's gospel and it was of a Samaritan woman. Her encounter with Jesus has been nothing short of metamorphic.

The Samaritan woman has gone from hiding from her village in shame, to sharing with her village with joy. The first missionary commissioned in John's Gospel is a Samaritan woman to a Samaritan village. She's let her water jar behind because she's had a taste of living water and that's what she wants to share with her community. She is on the way. Breath-taking!

The shocked disciples' reaction is to bumble their way through as they try and comprehend what has just happened. So they stick to what they know, or what they think they know - lunch. *'Meanwhile His disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something." But He said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about." Then His disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?"'*

The woman has got it but it turns out the disciples don't. They don't even understand what Jesus needs in terms of food and He lets them know it in verses 34 – 38.

Just as the woman needed leading to genuinely thirst quenching water, the disciples needed tutelage into the nature of truly nourishing food. *"My food," said Jesus "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work."* Jesus invited His disciples to open to their eyes to the reality that this encounter with a Samaritan woman is not an exception to the rule, a strange aberration of God's favour; but this Samaritan was actually emblematic of the new epoch of mission, which Jesus was demonstrating and ushering in. In saying to his disciples, *"open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest,"* Jesus issued His disciples with invitation to a new way of seeing the world. What once had been enemies and people far away were now a field ripe for harvest and Jesus wanted His disciples to join him in His mission.

This was a mission that would change the lives of individuals, but also through them change whole communities. As we read the final verses of this encounter we see that Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman had changed her life - which in turn saw a whole community transformed. It seems God in Christ is about encountering individuals right where they are in the mess of life and transforming and commissioning them. But His hope was to do this not just for one and two but for whole communities – just as what happened among the Samaritans.

Illustrate: Global Interaction story about a person joining in God's cross cultural mission – in the hope of transforming a whole community. We have candidates in every state – maybe one could share with you or watch their video story www.globalinteraction.org.au/TeamUpdates .

Apply: Our God has crossed from heaven to earth, crossing boundaries of race, gender, culture, sin and conflict to bring his life transforming gift of Jesus. He wants to encounter and transform us. But he wants us to open our eyes and look at the fields! And join us in His mission. The Apostle Peter once wrote: *"Through thick and thin, keep your hearts at attention, in adoration before Christ, your Master. Be ready to speak up and tell anyone who asks why you're living the way you are, and always with the utmost courtesy."* (1 Peter 3:15 MESSAGE)

Who is Jesus to you and what do you say to someone who doesn't know Him? Can you *"tell anyone who asks why you're living the way you are"* using words and actions that are understandable by an ordinary 'unchurched' person?

Could someone from the congregation share their story? Jesus trusts the woman to reach her own – how are you equipping your own people to lead their own families and friends. Could you encourage people to pray for opportunities to share? Why not have a faith-story sharing workshop?

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