



Can I brag about my handy man skills for a minute? A few weeks ago my stove stopped working properly and everything my wife baked or broiled would burn. That is called a crisis in the Hall household. My wife is a fantastic cook. I called an appliance repair man and he wanted to charge me \$100 just to come and assess the problem. Ridiculous, right? I searched Google and after extensive research determined the problem was either the heat sensor or digital clock unit. (How did we ever live without the internet?) To test the heat sensor, I unscrewed the back of the stove, pulled it out, and thanks to Youtube learned how to use a voltage reader. The heat sensor was working fine. I then ordered a new digital clock unit and replaced the old one. After an electrical shock to my hand, I remembered to unplug the stove first! We tested the stove and voilà, it worked perfectly! A sense of deep satisfaction filled my soul. I don't need an overpaid appliance professional. Truth be told, there are plenty of instances where I made the problem even worse and I should have called a professional!

When it comes to spiritual things, sometimes calling a "professional" in to help is the last thing you need to do. Have you ever felt like you needed to be a pastor or missionary to have an effective ministry in God's Kingdom? Have you ever felt that you just didn't know enough of the Bible to share your faith with a friend or a colleague? I've been in conversations with bright irreligious people and have wondered if I was getting in over my head. You have too. We've all thought of excuses as to why God can't use us. "If only I were a pastor, or knew the Bible better, or if I were a trained Christian counselor, or if I didn't struggle so much with sin and my own brokenness, then maybe God could use me to make an impact in others' lives."

As we continue the story of the woman at the well, we'll see the kind of people God uses and how he uses them to grow his kingdom.

**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 labor."**

**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 Savior of the world" (John 4:27–42).**

### **Because Jesus is the Savior, We Must be Alert to People's Needs**

This passage teaches us that because Jesus is the Savior, we must be alert to people's needs. The disciples return from the small village of Sychar with food for themselves and for Jesus. As they left Jesus earlier and went into town, did they pass by this woman on the road? What went through their mind then? Why was she fetching water in the noon day sun by herself, they must have wondered. John tells us the disciples were "surprised" to see Jesus now talking with her. And they had every reason to be surprised. For a rabbi to talk to a woman, even his own wife, was at best a waste of time and at worst a diversion from studying the Torah (the first five books of the Old Testament). For some, it was considered a great evil worthy of hell. Other rabbis even believed that to teach their daughters the Torah was as evil as selling them into prostitution. Not only that, but this woman was a Samaritan. A race of people detested by most Jews. It's no wonder the disciples were shocked by what they saw. But Jesus, acting radically for his time, removed the barrier of gender and

race and saw her need for living water. Her soul was thirsty and Jesus gave her living water to drink.

After her conversation with Jesus, she immediately leaves her water jar and runs back into town and begins to tell everyone about Jesus, *“Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did.” Could this be the Messiah?*” With only 14 Greek words she urged the town to come, meet Jesus, and they came out in droves. Now, I am a preacher, so let’s critique her short sermon. For one, she gives no introduction, there are no funny illustrations, and her conclusion is pretty weak. Everyone in town probably already knew everything this woman had done, so that wouldn’t have compelled them either. Even theologically, she is off-base. She calls Jesus a man, not a prophet or God. She wasn’t even sure Jesus was the Messiah. Samaritans and Jews had a different view of the Messiah in the first place, so which idea of Messiah did she have? She doesn’t say.

What then persuaded people? Her passion for one. She’s so excited because for the first time in her life, there is a man who knows everything about her and still loves her! Here we have a broken, sinful, social outcast and adulterer who becomes the first missionary to the Samaritans. She hardly knew anything about Jesus and previously had every reason to avoid the townspeople. But, that’s all changed now and the people in her village could see the change in her life and they responded to her simple invitation to “come and see.” To come and experience Jesus for themselves. Like herself, she knew the town had a deep spiritual thirst that only Jesus could satisfy. Her courage and joy is contagious.

Even though Jesus was tired, thirsty and hungry, he made time to connect and minister to an unlikely person—an adulterous Samaritan woman. He was alert to her needs and yet the disciples were clueless. How many people do we come across every day with deep hurt, trouble and pain, yet for a thousand reasons we do not see behind their masks and pay very little attention to their needs? I do it all the time. I want to drop my kids off at school quickly so I can get to the office to work. A friend posts something troubling on Facebook and all I do is write him a quick note letting him know I’m praying for him. And hopefully I remember to do that. Someone reaches out to me for lunch or dinner and my schedule is so full we can only make plans for next month. Nothing is necessarily wrong with any of those scenarios but sometimes I think, am I really alert to people’s needs? Especially my friends who are far from God? Do we really have the eyes to see people the way Jesus sees them? How about you?

### **Because Jesus is the Savior, We Must be Attentive to His Work**

In verses 31–34 the disciples are worried about Jesus getting something to eat, *“Rabbi, eat something.”* Meanwhile, a revival

is beginning to take place in town. As Jesus often does, he responds to the disciples in a mysterious way, *“I have food to eat that you know nothing about.”* “Ok, who brought Jesus a lamb sandwich already?” they said to each other. Jesus says his food *“is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.”* The second lesson we learn from this passage is because Jesus is the Savior, we must be attentive to his work.

Here we see Jesus using the circumstances to teach his disciples something about his own priorities. Jesus is echoing the words of Deuteronomy 8:3, where Moses tries to explain God’s way to Israel, *“He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.”*

Jesus came to do the Father’s will, period. His works were the very works of God. For Jesus, there was no greater food and satisfaction than living obediently to the will of the Father. Later in John, Jesus will pray, *“I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do”* (John 17:4).

Jesus is not saying that a faithful evangelist or preacher should not eat lunch. His point is doing God’s will and finishing God’s work is so satisfying and such a great joy that it takes priority. Have you ever been so engrossed in a project and before you know it you’ve completely missed dinner? Jesus is showing us the joy of doing God’s work can give us energy and excitement. But, there is also a warning here to not be distracted from God’s work by things of secondary importance, “Who brought Jesus food?”

Obedying the Father and completing the work God gave him was Jesus’ most deeply satisfying task. What about us? Are we attentive to God’s work? Do we long to obey the Father? Do we know the work he has given us to do and are we doing it?

Charles Spurgeon, a British preacher in the 1800’s was concerned about this for his congregation as well: “Some of you good people, who do nothing except go to public meetings, and Bible readings, and prophetic conferences, and other forms of spiritual dissipation, would be a good deal better Christians if you would look after the poor and needy around you. If you would just tuck up your sleeves for work, and go and tell the Gospel to dying men, you would find your spiritual health mightily restored, for very much of the sickness of Christians comes through their having nothing to do. All feeding and no expending makes men spiritual dyspeptics. Be idle, with no one to care for, no sinner to pray for, no backslider to lead back to the cross, no trembler to encourage, no little child to tell of a Savior, no grey-headed man to enlighten in the things of God, no object, in fact, to live for; and who wonders if you begin to groan, and to murmur, and

to look within, until you are ready to die of despair. Let us have practical Christianity."

I can relate to what Spurgeon says. I spent the last year of seminary at Fuller's main campus in Pasadena. My wife and I lived in literally the only ghetto of Pasadena right off Lake Avenue and Orange Grove Blvd. It was a community that you didn't walk around late at night. We were so busy studying, working, getting to class, writing papers, and raising our son that we really did not do anything to make an impact in that community. I lived in an apartment complex with 30 other seminarians and we were not attentive to the work of the Savior. There was no practical Christianity. We just wanted to graduate and move on.

### **Because Jesus is the Savior, We Must be Aware of Our Opportunities**

Because Jesus is the Savior, we must be alert to people's needs, attentive to his work. Let me give you one last lesson. We must be aware of our opportunities. In verses 35–38 Jesus reminds his disciples of a farming proverb to point out the limitless opportunities to share the Good News with others. I am not a farmer, but I did go to Hayward High School, home to the fighting farmers! There are several points Jesus is making about evangelism in these verses. First, there is no wait time for the harvest; it has already begun, *"the fields are ripe!"* Second, Jesus himself is involved in the harvest and it's part of the work the Father gave him to do, *"Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life"* (v. 36). The "crop" Jesus refers to are the people who become followers of Jesus. Here it's the Samaritan woman and the townspeople who are on their way to meet Jesus.

Knowing Jesus is involved in the work of evangelism should take all the pressure off of ourselves. Jesus is actively searching for worshippers and our job is to work with him to reach people. God wants to use you in the process, but it's not our job to save anyone. Only Jesus can.

Another thing we learn from these verses is that the work of evangelism is a team activity. Some sow the seed and others reap the harvest. Both are important and necessary. There is a time for sowing and a time for reaping and there are people gifted for each job. Some of you are gifted at sowing spiritual seed. You know how to gently share your faith with others and you do it often. Some of you are not afraid to tell someone that you'll pray for them when they share with you a problem or an illness. Others of you are great at reaping. You courageously ask people about their eternal destiny. You have no problem sharing your faith and asking for a decision.

Recently I was in the Dominican Republic with Mark Mitchell training pastors and we spent a considerable amount of time with John Martinez, an American missionary with G.O.

Ministries. He is the executive director of field partnerships and has an amazing ministry with Dominican and Haitian pastors. Every single time we went out to eat, after the waiter brought us our food, John would explain to the waiter that we were going to pray for our food. John would then ask the waiter if there was anything we could pray about for him. Most often the waiter would say something like, "Yes, pray for my family" or "Sure, pray for my health." At first, I was kinda annoyed thinking to myself that John was showing off or something. But I soon realized that John was wired and gifted in such a way that he couldn't help himself. He was always looking for opportunities to sow spiritual seed or reap a harvest. John's heart for people was both encouraging and challenging to me.

What opportunities has God placed before you? Are you fully aware of the incredible opportunities the Lord gives you every day at your school, work, community, or even at a restaurant? What would happen to our church and to our community if we would simply lift up our eyes and see the opportunities God places before us?

### **What's Your Story?**

What we've seen in this story is that you don't need to be a pastor or professional for effective ministry in Jesus' kingdom. The Samaritan woman was neither educated nor sophisticated, and her presentation was neither refined nor polished. She simply had the right heart and motivation. She was impacted by Jesus, willing to share with others, caring, and open to taking a risk. As a result, she could not be stopped and many believed in Jesus because of her testimony. The disciples came back from Sychar with lunch; she came back with the entire town.

While following Jesus does require us to improve our evangelism techniques, to become more biblical and more effective, we also need to be careful. Our desire for a better method should never hurt our enthusiastic testimony for Jesus. If it does, we have lost our way. We miss opportunities God places before us. This woman simply shares her story with the town. In verses 39–42, they come because of her story, but after being with Jesus for only two days, many more come to know him as the Savior of the world.

The power of this passage still continues today. When irreligious people meet Jesus, he uses them and their story to reach others. After becoming a follower of Christ at 17 years old, I was very enthusiastic about my faith. God used me to reach several of my own family members and close friends. Just this week I got to share my faith story with a young man in our church. God used it to encourage him. Don't ever underestimate the power of your story. It doesn't matter if you grew up in a Christian home with two loving parents or in a broken home with a drug-addicted mother.

What's your story? You don't need to be a professional to share your story with someone. It's as simple as telling them what your life was like before you met Christ, how you came to know Jesus, and finally, what your life looks like now as a follower of Christ. Like the woman, our invitation is simply, "Come and see." Come and experience Jesus for yourself. Come all who are thirsty.

Come let me tell you what he has done for me. Come and listen to the Savior of the world.

*This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.*

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300 Piedmont Avenue | San Bruno, CA 94066 | 650 349.1278 | [www.cpcweb.org](http://www.cpcweb.org). Additional copies available on request.