

Lesson 2

What Do You See?

Group Icebreakers:

- What makes people different from you?
- How would you go about trying to change someone's mind?

Introduction:

The world outside a baby's home is strange and different to him. It is an uncomfortable place, lacking the security of home. Baby cries easily, everything is unfamiliar and foreign. But it is into this hostile environment that his parents bring him. He needs to become acquainted with the surroundings and people that his parents so easily mingle with. Jesus takes His new disciples there too.

Jesus' disciples are Jews from the Galilee, along the northern shores of the Sea of Galilee. They are a provincial people. Three times a year they make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to attend the feasts of the Lord. Their customary route takes them the easy way, through the Jordan River valley. The valley is wide, well watered and fertile. And the route takes them around the land of the Samaritans, which lies between their homes and Jerusalem. To them, the land of the Samaritans¹ is the home of detestable people, who don't know the true God and with whom Jews have little dealings.

In early spring, the disciples go with Jesus to the feast of Passover in Jerusalem. There they remain for a while, in the friendly environs around Jerusalem. The area is Judea, the southern part of the land of Israel. They minister to the provincial people of the area and baptize some. This period probably lasts until the time of the second feast of the year that they attend in Jerusalem. The feast is called "Weeks" because it occurs seven weeks after Passover.

The time is late spring. It is getting hot. Jesus suddenly decides to return to the Galilee. This time he takes the disciples by the shorter route, through Samaria. The journey through the mountains is arduous and unfamiliar. Compared with the valley route, it is an arid region of rocky, wind swept hills with little shade and water. They stop at the village of Sychar. Gerizim, the Mount of Blessing and Ebal, the Mount of Cursing rise above it to the west. It is the place of the patriarch Jacob's well. It's noontime. It's time for a lunch break. It's time for Jesus to have an encounter with a woman who comes to the well. It's time to change the way His disciples view the world.

Reading the Scripture:

The Woman at the Well

John 4:1-42

Scripture excerpts from "Follow Me: A Message from God"

When therefore the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were), He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee. And He had to pass through

¹ When the Kingdom of Israel, consisting of the northern ten tribes of Israel defeated by the Assyrians in 721 BC most of the people were taken into captivity and sent to different areas of the Assyrian Empire. About 677 BC, the Assyrians under Esarhaddon brought people of other nations into the land vacated by the northern ten tribes to keep it from turning back into a wilderness. Those non-Israelites became known as "Samaritans."

Samaria. So He came to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph; and Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the **sixth hour**.² There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. The Samaritan woman therefore said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you **living water**.³" She said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water? "You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?" Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty, nor come all the way here to draw." He said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly." The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this **mountain**⁴ and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father. You worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in **spirit and truth**,⁵ for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us." Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He." And at this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He had been speaking with a woman; yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why do You speak with her?" So the woman left her waterpot, and went into the city, and said to the men, "Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?" They went out of the city, and were coming to Him. In the meanwhile the disciples were requesting Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." But He said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." The disciples therefore were saying to one another, "No one brought Him anything to eat, did he?" Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work. 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. Already he who reaps is receiving wages, and is gathering fruit for life eternal; that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. "For in this case the saying is true, 'One sows, and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labor." And from that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all the things that I have done." So when the Samaritans came to Him, they were asking

² **Sixth hour.** About noon.

³ **Living water.** The term means running water from a spring or stream. It speaks more of a continuous supply rather than stored water.

⁴ **Mountain.** Mount Gerizim.

⁵ **Spirit and truth.** "Glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh" ... Philippians 3:3.

Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. And many more believed because of His word; and they were saying to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world."

The Command:

- ❖ Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest.

The Lesson:

The lesson Jesus teaches deals with the powers of observation. The disciples are used to seeing, understanding and applying physical laws in the natural world that surrounds them. Jesus challenges them to see differently. He wants their powers of observation to extend to the spiritual.

Jesus opens His teaching with the statement. "*Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest.'*" The disciple's worldly thinking processes take over. It's May, the people have recently planted their cotton, it will take four more months for the crop to grow and they will harvest it in September. But then Jesus says, "*Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest.*"

As the disciples turn to look at the fields they don't see a cotton crop ready to be harvested. But in the distance they see men, dressed in white robes running towards them, across the fields. Jesus is talking about men, not cotton, a harvest of men's souls. The harvest is beginning now, not at the end of the age during the final great harvest. The disciple's minds struggle to make spiritual connections.

Jesus continues. "*Already he who reaps is receiving wages, and is gathering fruit for life eternal; that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this case the saying is true, 'One sows, and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.*"

The disciples begin thinking about sowing and reaping. Put a seed in the ground and a plant comes up in its place. A person plants and a person harvests. The plants always contain more seed. We save some of the seed to sow for the next crop and use the rest for food and other things. It's all very familiar to us.

Slowly the Scriptures come to their minds. They had seen men running across the fields to Jesus. Yes! It was in the scroll of Isaiah concerning Messiah. "*Behold, you will call a nation you do not know, and a nation which knows you not will run to you, because of the LORD your God, even the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified you.*"⁶ And the part about sowing and reaping is in Isaiah too. Only it's about God's word. "*For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth, and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.*"⁷

Now the disciples are beginning to understand what Jesus is talking about. Those who had come before Messiah, the patriarchs, Moses, David and the prophets, sowed the seed of the word of

⁶ Isaiah 55:5

⁷ Isaiah 55:10-11

God concerning the Messiah. They **sowed** by speaking of the coming of Messiah, His kingdom and the salvation of men. Everyone who comes after the Messiah is to reap the harvest of souls. They **reap** by witnessing that Messiah, His kingdom and the salvation of men has come. And both groups of people will rejoice together in the kingdom of God.

Group Discussion:

1. What barriers might we have to overcome to see fields ready for harvest?
2. What are some ways that a person might initiate a spiritual conversation from observing people in their daily routines? (An example: A person looks at his watch to see what time a day it is. Asking any of the following questions would initiate a spiritual conversation. “Will a time come when God judges people? When will the world end? Can a person live forever? How many years do you have left in your life?)

The Point of the Lesson:

Be observant of people around you it may lead to a spiritual encounter.

Application:

1. Observe people in their daily routines. Think of some things that you might ask them in order to initiate a spiritual conversation. Write down your observations and the questions you could ask them. Share them at the next group meeting.
2. Take someone at the church you don't know well to lunch or dinner.