



International Bible Study Commentary

Verse-by-Verse Bible Lessons Thru the Bible

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John 4:30-42 Commentary New International Version

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further follow the verse-by-verse [International Bible Study Commentary](#). **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the *International Bible Study Commentary* website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Study Forum](#).

(John 4:30) They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

Because the Samaritans knew and had faith in the first five books of the Bible, the people of the city expected the Messiah to come someday. Based on their faith in their scriptures and the woman's testimony about what Jesus had done, they left the city to meet Jesus. Just as Philip had said to Nathanael, "Come and see," and just as the Samaritan woman said to the townspeople "Come and see," so they went, and they came to believe in Jesus. John recorded only a few of the results when people were invited to come and see Jesus and then believed in Him. Sometimes the best thing we can do is invite people to come and learn about Jesus, because some will heed that invitation and come to believe as they are taught from the Bible.

(John 4:31) Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something."

When the disciples went into Sychar to buy food, either they did not try to tell anyone that Jesus was at the well and that the townspeople should

come see Him, or the Samaritans in the town did not believe the testimony of Jesus' disciples as they bought food. It seems likely that the disciples did not understand that one of the reasons Jesus had to go through Samaria was to save a woman from her sins and to lead her and other Samaritans to faith in Him. Probably, as Jews, they did not look for opportunities to tell Samaritans about Jesus. The missed opportunities of Jesus' disciples make us think about how often we look for similar opportunities when we leave our homes to go somewhere, and how we might begin to pray for these opportunities before we leave home. They knew how hungry, tired, and thirsty Jesus had been, so when they saw the crowd coming from the city to see Him, they urged Jesus to eat something.

(John 4:32) But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about."

In reply, Jesus turned the disciples' attention from physical food to spiritual food. Perhaps they had all drunk refreshing water from the water jar that the woman had left at the well; but now, they thought, it was time to eat. Probably, they had not eaten either, but had hurried back to eat together with Jesus. Within Him, Jesus had "a spring of water gushing up to eternal life," and Jesus was eating spiritual food that fed His soul, food that His disciples did not yet know about. He would soon explain spiritual food to them; for someday as His disciples, they would deny themselves and eat this same spiritual food. All followers of Jesus have "a spring of water gushing up to eternal life" and they often deny themselves and eat spiritual food the world knows nothing about (John 4:14).

(John 4:33) Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?"

Still thinking of physical food, the disciples wondered who could have brought something to Jesus for Him to eat. Notice, they did not expect Jesus to make food out of thin air for himself or for them. As we know from the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness, that was not His way. In Matthew 4:3-4, we read, "The tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.' But he answered, 'It is written, "One does not live by bread alone, but by every

word that comes from the mouth of God.””

(John 4:34) “My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.

Consistent with His reply to the devil who tempted Him, Jesus declared to His disciples that His food or bread was to do the will of His Father and complete the work He had been sent to do. The joy that comes from beginning to obey God, or the joy that comes from being in the middle of or completing the work that Jesus has given us far surpasses the satisfaction of eating physical food. Followers of Jesus are motivated to do God’s will. They commit themselves to completing the tasks set before them by Jesus. For believers, serving Jesus and others is always more important than physical concerns. In Matthew 1:21, we learn that the Father’s will for Jesus was for Him to come into the world and “save His people from their sins.” Though salvation was from the Jews (Jesus was a Jew), the Samaritans were included among those Jesus came to save. Jesus had a whole city of people coming toward Him, and more than eating physical food at that time, Jesus wanted to complete the work of God in the life of each individual Samaritan who would receive Him as Savior of the world.

(John 4:35) 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.

To give an illustration, Jesus again moved from speaking of the physical to speaking of the spiritual. Jesus’ disciples knew the time for planting and the time for reaping, whether for wheat or barley. Perhaps His disciples could physically see around them fields ripe for harvesting, but Jesus wanted them to also see the crowd coming toward Him as a spiritual field ripe for spiritual harvesting. Because of the testimony of the woman Jesus had met at the well, those coming to see Him were ripe for harvesting once they came to know Him. Jesus wanted to do His Father’s will and make himself known to them so they could repent of their sins, believe in Him, and receive the gift of eternal life from Him.

(John 4:36) 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.

As the Messiah, Jesus was “reaping a harvest” of believers—many all at once. His wages included the knowledge that many would be saved from sin by His efforts that afternoon and evening. He was gathering people around Him and teaching them in order to give them an appreciation for and understanding of eternal life. While His disciples were buying food, one woman came to a well. If His disciples had been with Him as a group, when she came to the well, she might well have gone away fearfully. However, God arranged for her to be alone with Jesus. Jesus had sowed words of truth when He spoke to her, and His words took deep root in her and she believed in Him. Now, she had sown a few words of truth into the minds of her neighbors, and they went to see Jesus. After they heard more words of truth from Jesus, that Jesus sowed into their hearts and minds, they came to trust in Jesus too. That very day, the sower and reaper rejoiced together, for both the woman and Jesus had sowed and reaped and rejoiced together each in their own way. Jesus’ disciples would soon sow and reap and rejoice too—that very day.

(John 4:37) Thus the saying ‘One sows and another reaps’ is true.

Typically, a farmer will sow his seeds and then after a time that same farmer will reap a harvest in his field. Jesus said that in spiritual matters that is not always the case. At the well, Jesus sowed seeds of truth in the life of the woman and then He reaped the harvest when she received Him and the gift of eternal life that He offered. In Sychar, the woman sowed seeds of truth among her neighbors. After they went to see Jesus, He reaped the harvest from the seeds she had sown. Of course, Jesus sowed additional words of truth when speaking to the townspeople. In general, quite often in spiritual matters, one sows, and another reaps; especially when someone comes to faith in Jesus Christ. For the Samaritans that day, the first seeds sown in their lives were the words of God in the five books of Moses that their ancestors and teachers had taught them. Then more seeds were sown by those who taught them about the coming Messiah. Before they met Jesus, they believed God would send the Messiah to them to teach them all

things. In John 4:25, the woman told Jesus, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.” Christians can often recollect the times when some seeds of truth were sown into their lives before they came to full faith in Jesus—seeds from a loving father or mother, seeds from a Sunday school teacher or preacher, or seeds from a friend or stranger. Then, perhaps someone else harvested and helped them publicly confess their faith in Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. Day-by-day Christians know that Jesus reigns as Lord in their hearts and directs their thinking.

(John 4:38) 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.”

In John chapter 4, we read for the first time about the disciples as a group beginning to work with Jesus to lead groups of people to faith in Him. During their ministry, the disciples reaped the results of the words of God sown as seeds through Moses, the prophets, the Hebrew Scriptures, John the Baptist, and Jesus. They harvested those they met who heard their words, repented of their sins, believed in Jesus, and received Jesus and His gift of eternal life. We enter into the labor of others who have labored before us when we teach someone the Bible, for many labored to preserve the Scriptures over hundreds of years, and from one generation to another many have labored to teach the Bible is true. That very day in Samaria, the disciples began to reap with Jesus those who were being saved.

(John 4:39) Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I ever did.”

Many in the city believed Jesus was a prophet and the Messiah because the woman told them that Jesus had told her everything she had ever done (presumably that meant they had talked frankly about her sins). However, when she talked about Jesus, she was not gloomy and guilt laden. If she had looked like someone Jesus had changed for the worse, they would have been repelled and stayed in the city. No. They saw her as a woman totally transformed, forgiven for his sins, joyful, free from addiction to sin for the

first time, excited and not withdrawn, and with “a spring of water gushing up to eternal life”—her new life inspired them to want to meet Jesus too. They wanted what she had! Imagine living as totally changed as she was, and others seeing the difference! Because of her testimony, many came to believe in Jesus up to the level of their first understanding, but this initial believing was only the beginning of a growing faith that would become “a spring of water gushing up to eternal life” within them.

(John 4:40) So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days.

After the Samaritans initially came to believe in Jesus, they strongly desired to learn more from and about Him. In John 4:22, Jesus told the Samaritan woman, “You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.” The whole town of Sychar needed to learn more about the true God so they could rightly worship the true God, the God they had not known. They did not know God was their heavenly Father and Jesus was the Son of God. They did not know what it meant for them to become and live as children of God. (In John 1:12, we read, “But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God.”) After they came to know Jesus, they wanted to know Him better, and Jesus wanted to teach them all they could learn from Him over the next two days. The Bible reveals the simple fact that those who truly receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior will want to learn more and more about Him so they can love Him more, serve Him better, and become better prepared to help others believe in Jesus too.

(John 4:41) And because of his words many more became believers.

People believe in Jesus because of His true words. Millions have come to believe in Jesus because of Jesus’ words and actions as they have studied the Gospel of John. These Christians are the harvest of the seeds that John sowed when he wrote his book almost 2,000 years ago. (In John 21:30, we read, “But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.”) We learn of Jesus and come to believe in Jesus from reading

or hearing words from the Bible. We believe in Jesus and come to know Him because He makes himself known to us spiritually by the Holy Spirit who helps us grow in knowledge of Him from the Bible. Jesus spent two days teaching the new believers in Sychar how to know Him and talk to Him (pray) in His absence. Jesus also showed His disciples what and how to teach new believers after they came to faith in Him.

(John 4:42) 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.”

After learning more about Jesus from Jesus, just as believers today learn more about Jesus from the Bible as the Holy Spirit helps them understand the Word of God (often by using preachers and teachers), these Samaritans came to **know** that Jesus is truly the Savior of the world. As believers in Jesus pray and study the Bible with the help of the Holy Spirit, they can move beyond simply believing the truth about Jesus to **knowing** Jesus, to **knowing** Jesus is truly the Savior of the world and their Savior, and to teaching others how to believe in and **know** Jesus too.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Knowing a crowd was coming soon, why do you think Jesus did not make some food out of thin air to eat?
2. What is the spiritual food that Jesus ate? Can or should His followers eat this same food?
3. What are two fields ripe for harvesting that the disciples might have seen?
4. How do Christians normally sow and reap a harvest? Why can both sowing and reaping be times of rejoicing for Christians?
5. Why did the villagers first come to believe in Jesus? After talking to Jesus, what did they come to know about Jesus?