

## **Personal Evangelism in Biblical Perspective: iShare–Together**

**John 4:1-42**

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*February 19, 2012 – Morning Sermon*

In this study we will go through John 4 but for our initial reading we will look at Acts 18. I want to introduce this study by reading from Acts 18. The Apostle Paul is at Corinth and he has met some success but mostly opposition. They are ready to run him out of town. They are threatening his life. Crispus who was the leader of the synagogue has been converted but now watch what happens as Paul is wavering about being at Corinth. Acts 18:9-11 says [9] And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, [10] for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.” [11] And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

Then I would remind you of Isaiah 40:9 which says [9] Go on up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, “Behold your God!”

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever, by His grace and mercy may this His Word be preached for you.

Now you can make your way to John 4 and keep it there in front of you. I want to walk through this passage with you. I’ve been looking forward to this study of the wonderful revival that took place at Sychar in Samaria under the ministry of our Savior. This year we are studying the matter of personal evangelism that every believer is called to share their faith. So we have taken that passage from Thessalonians where Paul said “We shared with you not only the Gospel but our own lives.” So this is our year of iShare. Personally I’m going to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ so we have been spending some time studying various texts of Scripture.

We started with iShare – who? We share with every believer. Then it was iShare – why? There are multiple motivations but the love of Christ compels us as well as the compassion for those who are lost. Then came iShare –what? We share the Gospel of Jesus Christ which is the power of God unto salvation and the

righteousness of God that clothes us to take us to eternity because we have been given an impeccable holiness from God that wraps us up for eternity and a heart for intentional holiness to live for God with the power of the Gospel in our lives. Then we looked at how we're supposed to share that Gospel by looking at evangelistic encounters.

We looked at an encounter in the last study where Jesus brought Zacchaeus from death unto life. We began to take some lessons on how to share the Gospel with others and now we come to another evangelistic encounter. This one is a very unusual one because not only does it result with a 'Zacchaeus' type salvation, a woman at the well that gets converted but it goes beyond that where a whole city comes to revival. A whole city is brought under the powerful movement of the Gospel.

Do you think the cities of our country need the Gospel? Yes! Amen. There is nobody who loves to get engaged in the matter of politics and elections than me and we desperately need Christian presidents, mayors and leaders. The city of Sychar didn't get turned around because of a mayoral election. I'm sure after the turnaround it affected whatever mayoral elections took place. I believe we ought to be discipling people to go into every sphere of leadership but the answer we need today is that answer of the powerful movement of the Gospel from the harvest fields that are reaped. When men and women are brought to Christ it changes the landscape of everything just like Sychar. It does not start with the election and who you put into office but it starts with you, right here. It starts with me and you.

I share. It's not my preacher shares although I hope you're preacher shares and your preacher is sharing but I share the Gospel. I believe there are many people to be saved in this city. Get up on that high mountain with no fear. He says to Isaiah, "Don't fear, lift it up, get up on a high mountain and shout 'Good News, God saves sinners.'" Then He says to Paul, "I am your protection. I will be with you. Paul stay here for I have many people to be saved in this city." Then we get to see a whole city turned around with personal evangelism.

I want to look at John 4 and draw out some things from this unusual encounter that took place in Samaria by Jesus. It starts with the woman at the well. So let's look at this text together. John 4:1-3 says [1] Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John [2] (although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples), [3] he left Judea and departed again for Galilee. Normally the way a good Jew would get to Galilee is they would not go a straight line from Jerusalem to Galilee. They would go down to the Jordan Valley up the Jordan River because they didn't want to go through Samaria. It was those ten tribes that had apostatized and left the faith. They began to embrace false religion and pull it into their religion therefore no self respecting follower of the Old Testament would even let the dust of Samaria on their feet but here it says that Jesus says He must go through Samaria. He

takes not the safe route but the direct route because He has a stop to make. He has a Divine appointment and it's at a well. It's in a place called Samaria next to Mount Gerizim in a city called Sychar. John 4:4-15 says

[4] And he had to pass through Samaria. [5] So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. [6] Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour (about noon, midday). (Here is the encounter) [7] A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." [8] (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) [9] The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) [10] Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." [11] The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? [12] Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock." [13] Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, [14] but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." [15] The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."

The woman hasn't gotten it yet but she is on the way. Jesus has set the hook. I have actually been at this well and barely survived from this well. I do not recommend drinking water from this well. The water that Jesus gives I commend to you for it will spring up to eternal life forever. That well in Samaria is 150 feet deep which is 15 stories. So you are this five foot Samaritan woman who comes to the well and let's down the rope. You probably had four buckets and you drew it up 15 stories, 150 feet. Here is this strapping man sitting beside you who says "Can I have a drink of water?" "What are you doing asking me for a drink of water? I have some reasons why you shouldn't even be asking me for water." "Woman, if you knew who it was who was asking you and the gift of God, you'd ask Me for water and the water I give you won't get thirsty again." She is doing some computing here or as my uncle used to say "She's doin some cypherin'." She's thinking 150 feet, never have to drink water, give me that water so I'll never have to come back here and draw water again.

Jesus now turns to her to get to the water she really needs which cleanses her from her sin. John 4:16-19 says [16] Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." [17] The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; [18] for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true." [19] The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Jesus

says “We’re going to get to why you need this Water and that is because you’re a sinner and you need a Savior.” The Gospel isn’t a matter of personal therapy for your self esteem. The Gospel is to deliver you from your sins – the penalty of sin, the power of sin, and the presence of sin by God’s grace that’s at work in your life. That is the purpose of the Gospel. It’s not good news until you know the bad news. So Jesus gives her the bad news “go call your husband.” After she perceives Jesus to be a prophet she decides to ask Him a theological question. John 4:20-26 says

[20] Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.” [21] Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. [22] You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. [23] But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. [24] God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” (now the woman gets it) [25] The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.” [26] Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.”

He tells her He is the Deliverer, the Prophet, Priest and King. He speaks the truth as Prophet. As Priest He intercedes as the Lamb of God to bring the sacrifice for our sins and as King and Lord He takes your life from where you are to where He is going to make you.

That’s the encounter with this woman. When you read the commentaries many of the commentators will tell you that when Jesus starts putting His finger on her sin she decides to change the subject from her immorality to a theological discussion. They say she has raised a question to avoid the issue but I don’t think so. I think she is going right to the heart of the issue. Why did God make you? He made you to worship Him. Why did God save you? He saved you to the praise and glory of His grace. When God saves you what happens? You learn to eat, drink and whatsoever you do you do to the glory of God. Worship is why we have been made, saved and sustained.

She is going right to the heart of the matter but her question is ‘where is acceptable worship given?’ She thinks the answer is here at Mount Gerizim but your fathers say Jerusalem and Jesus says “You can’t be a true worshipper without responding to what has come through us, the Lion of Judah, the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. Salvation comes through this tribe that comes to Jerusalem but regarding the question of worship, you think is where but it’s actually how.” Jesus says twice that the Father seeks true worshippers that seek Him in spirit and in truth. The question isn’t where but how.

There are two dynamics to acceptable worship to God. One is in spirit. Bless the Lord O my soul and all that is within bless His holy Name. Secondly, is to worship in truth. That is God revealing to us those things in worship that please Him. So in this service everything we have done up until this point the Bible has told us to do. From the striking of the chimes to the benediction at the end of the service God told us to do. He didn't tell us where to do it or how much of it to do or how to arrange it but He told us what to do. It's not by our imagination, our preferences, or by acceptable worship. The Bible says that God seeks from you true worship. So when you finish here today you don't have to ask 'how did Harry do or the choir or the praise team or Bruce' but you need to ask yourself 'how did I do?' Worship was not an event I attended. Worship is what I came to do. Did you worship in spirit and in truth?

We not only have the vertical worship, we have the horizontal. It's iShare. We have the horizontal also. Jesus answers her question about worship in order to get her the truth and He brings to her the truth of salvation through the Messiah. Now guess who shows back up? The disciples get back from town where they went to buy some food. Let's see what happens next. John 4:27-30 says [27] Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you seek?" or, "Why are you talking with her?" [28] So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, [29] "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" [30] They went out of the town and were coming to him.

So the disciples get back from town and she is leaving. She goes back to iShare. She told the people of the town that she had something to share with them. The Messiah showed me my sins and talked to me about Living Water. Can this be the Messiah? The disciples are starting to interact with Jesus. They are marveling at what He was doing. One, He was talking to a Samaritan, two He was talking to a woman, and they probably know she was an adulteress and guilty of all kinds of immorality. Why? When does she get water? She gets it at midday. Normally in that culture when would the women come get water? In this culture the women always went to get the water. The woman would come in the morning or evening but she was there at noon when nobody came. Why? It is because that's when someone like her would be allowed to go to the gathering place of the well.

The disciples ask "Why are you talking to her?" Jesus begins to tell them that He's there to do an iShare. I'm telling her about Life. What is she now doing? She has gone to tell others about life. Then He gives a lesson to the disciples. How do we disciple? We usually disciple by teaching and then if we're really committed we say 'now come with me and watch the way I do it.' That's not the way Jesus did it. Acts 1:1 says [1] In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach. So Jesus would pray and they would say 'teach us to pray.' Jesus is doing personal evangelism and now He is about

to teach them. He did it and now what He did He is teaching. Let's look further at the text.

John 4:31-34 says [31] Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." [32] But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." [33] So the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought him something to eat?" (The disciples haven't gotten it yet either but He is about to define His meal.) [34] Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. My food is the opportunity to engage, embrace and do what the Father sent Me to do. What did the Father send Jesus to do? He came to seek and to save the lost. He has been having a meal beside this well. He has been seeking a lost woman that she might be saved. This is My food. This is My joy. This is what fills me up. John 4:35-38 says [35] Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? (This would have probably been a common statement in the agrarian society back then. You plant and then four months later you get the harvest.) Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. [36] Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. [37] For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' [38] I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

He is saying you sow and then you reap. I know what the common saying is, it's you sow and four months later you get to reap the harvest. The Sower is here for it's Jesus and you don't have to wait for the harvest for the fields are white unto harvest. I think He may be pointing in two directions. Who is coming out of the town because the woman shared Christ in the town? According to John 4:30 the Sycharians are coming out of the town. The time of year it would have been warm, meaning they were probably wearing white robes. Jesus could be pointing in two directions. See the field and the grains ripening for harvest that is what it is like now for I've come and I've sowed the harvest. He could look beyond that field and see the increasing crowd coming out of the town of those who were coming to Him. See the white robes, the Sycharians. Here is a harvest coming to you and you didn't even sow it. I did but you can reap. This is what is coming before you, all of these. Now where are the reapers?

Let's look at the result, the conclusion. John 4:39-42 says [39] Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did." (She shared, they came and they believed.) [40] So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. [41] And many more believed because of his word. [42] They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world." So what has happened here? Jesus shared. The woman shared. Many came. They believed. They shared. Many more came and revival has come from the harvest field into the homes and throughout the village of Sychar. It started

with an iShare. It was personal evangelism at a well. That's when it started. Now I know why He had to go through Samaria. That was that Divine appointment.

I want to give you some takeaways in conclusion. I want you to know something from this text. Here is the first one. Personal joy and fulfillment will inevitably accompany iShare (personal evangelism). When you engage in sharing the Gospel with other people and you see God do a work in other people's life and you have the joy of sharing with them the water of life, the food of life, the bread of life which is Jesus Christ from your own testimony there is personal joy and fulfillment. Most of us just want a job were fulfilled in to have that joy and fulfillment or a marriage or children that we can be fulfilled in. There is a fulfillment factor in all of these things and I hope and pray that God gives you great joy in every job you have and the blessing of God upon your marriage but there is something out there in terms of personal fulfillment and joy when you lay your life, share the Gospel and share yourself with other people to come to Christ. There is a whole dynamic that is outside of what is coming to you in your marriage, in your home, and in your joy but it comes from you to someone else and when you see it get to someone else, you see the lights come on, you see them leave death, you see them leave darkness and come to light and life there is a whole level of joy and fulfillment that you have never tasted until that moment, when God uses you for someone to come to Christ.

There is an unbelievable joy and fulfillment when you are sharing the Gospel and you see the key of the Kingdom slipping into the lock of the cell of their sin. You see that key turn, the gate swing open, you see their chains fall off and they rise up free in Christ. The disciples said "Where did You get that food?" He said "You have no idea of how fulfilling these last moments have been. Food and water has just gone off My radar." To seek and to save the lost and be used of God brings joy upon joy and fulfillment as you pour yourself out.

The second takeaway is the problem is not the lack of a harvest but the lack of reapers for the harvest. The harvest is plentiful. What is our issue? Where are the reapers? So what are we doing today? We decide because we're not winning people to Christ we will redefine worship and make worship an evangelistic event. I want you to know that every time we gather the Gospel will be preached and people will be invited to Christ but what we are doing is we're finding an excuse not to go out there and share the Gospel. We think we'll let the preacher do it from the pulpit. When in reality you and I ought to be doing it everywhere we are going.

A man said to me one time "Pastor where is your church?" I said, "I don't know." He said "How can I visit your church if the preacher doesn't know where it is?" I said "Oh you're asking where the church that I pastor meets? We meet at 2200 Briarwood Way, right off Acton Road but I have no idea where my church is. It could be there at the mall, at school, in downtown Birmingham, in airplanes. They are scattered everywhere." What would happen when we scatter if we took the

Gospel seven days a week, 24 hours a day, everywhere we went, sharing it at wells, not just synagogues but in towns, at the marketplace?

Here is a third takeaway. iShare or personal evangelism is reaping or reapers are those who iShare. The reaping is when you are sharing the Gospel, when you're giving that testimony to others. Jesus sows the harvest from the cross. Jesus is the Sower and He has assured a harvest. You and I are using our testimony with our witness sharing the Gospel and we become the reapers that the Lord is using to bring people from death unto life.

I want to be very practical here. If you and I were together and you were with me in sharing the Gospel there are about four things I would want you to know about sharing the Gospel. The first one is when you're sharing the Gospel share your testimony. Don't you love the blind man? I was blind but now I see, He did it. All I know is I was blind now I see and He did it. That's my testimony. I can just tell you, I grew up in a Christian home and I've shared my testimony with you. Then God allowed me to meet Cindy.

God allowed the Gospel to come into my life. God brought me to a funeral where I saw people live the victory of Christ in the face of death. It was an unbelievable situation and I said "I don't have that." I get the chance to share that all over the place almost everyday and in that I share the Gospel, just like that woman. He told me everything I ever did. He knows about all of my 'husbands' and me living without the benefit of clergy right now. He knows all that stuff so come and see the Messiah. Come and see the Christ who knows I'm a sinner. He has invited me to salvation, full and free.

That's what you and I get a chance to give away to people. You are not going out there to convince people to get into your religion or a certain regiment. You are going to people with this unbelievable message. There is a God who hates sin and loves sinners. There is a God who sent His Son, went to the cross, died for your sins and if you come to Him, turn from your sin and receive the gift of eternal life, He will save you from your sins and there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. What a great thing to share, but you can't share your testimony or be a witness to something that you don't have. Maybe today God has moved you seeking and I want you to be able to share but you can't share until you come to Him. I want to invite you to Him. He died for your sins and He'll live with you forever.

I'll close in a moment and maybe you want to pray with someone at the end. You can contact us here at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200. If you don't know Christ as your Lord and Savior and I have invited you to this eternal gift in Christ and you decide you don't want that I would like for you to contact me and tell me why you would not receive the gift of eternal life. I would love to hear whatever reason it is as to why you wouldn't receive the gift of eternal life. I long for you to know Him and to spend eternity with Him. We don't need cul-de-sac Christians, when it all



comes to us and we meet dead ends. No, we need thorough fare Christians. When the Gospel comes to us it doesn't come to a cul-de-sac or to a dead end but it goes to us and through us to somebody else.

The first thing the woman at the well said was "I have to tell you something. I have to share this with you." Then the men say "Now that we've heard Him we don't believe because of what you said although that got us to Him but we believe because now we've heard Him." Faith comes by hearing the Word of Christ. Then they went in and started sharing with more people. So there was a woman, then many, then many more and this thing is multiplying because they are sharing that testimony. I encourage you to have a two minute testimony or a quick one and then a little bit longer 'lunch or dinner' table testimony.

I'm not going to use the illustration that Bruce used. Bruce says you need a testimony where if you were on a plane and it was going down in flames that you could lead someone to Jesus before it crashes. I am much more sensitive than that. My illustration is that you are on an elevator and you have three floors to share with someone about Jesus. Isn't that better than a plane going down in flames? I love EE (Evangelism Explosion) because they make you write out that short testimony. I can't tell you how many times that has helped me in my Christian life. I get a chance to reap by bringing the Gospel into the harvest field. Then you should have a little bit longer one when you have a meal with someone where I'll pull out a napkin and ask them some questions. I'll start writing out some things and we'll talk our way through this. Go to work on that testimony because it's an instrument God has given you just like He gave to this woman at the well.

Secondly, learn to ask question. Treat people with dignity. Find out where they are. Do you have some water? Where is your husband? Start learning to ask the questions of life.

Thirdly, learn to use the common language of the day. In this text Jesus has used an old agrarian statement. I'm sowing and the harvest is now. He uses water, food, bread, reaping, harvesting, laboring and all kinds of things. There are all kinds of ways that you can establish with people and converse with them. Some of you know that I use history. I use it when I get invited to go to colleges to talk about Civil War history. Those people would never come hear me preach but I get a chance to sneak up on them in a battle field sometimes and ambush them and take them for Jesus. Golf is one of my favorites. I don't even have to ask questions. All I have to do is wait until about the third or fourth hole when they miss a three foot putt and I know right where they are spiritually. What is in the heart will come right out of the mouth. I don't need any diagnostic question because it's already there. Just learn to ask questions.

One time I was playing golf with this man who had already declared himself spiritually by the fourth hole because of a missed putt. I said "Hey what do you do

for a living?" I used to go and sit on the tee until someone came along playing by themselves and then I'd go play with them. Then I would get a chance to talk with them. This man began to tell me about his job and I really wanted to know. The other reason I asked is because he would then probably ask me about mine. He did say to me "Now what do you do?" I said "I have a great job. You would not believe my Boss. He would give His life for me." He said "Your boss would lay down his life for you?" I said "Not only would He but He did. You wouldn't believe the benefit package I have. It's out of this world." After about three or four of those comments he said "Who is your boss?" I said "Before I tell you I want you to know that He's hiring right now."

Just build the bridges and use the language of the day. Use your interest in life. If you have a testimony, learn to ask questions. Learn to be conversational but most of all bring people to Christ. Bring them to church and we'll share Christ with them and that is part of it but the point is not to get people to church. The woman at the well said "Come and see Christ." She didn't say "Come to the well, you wouldn't believe what happened at that well." We are sharing Christ to bring people to Christ who is the Savior of sinners.

I want to do a verbal illustration in conclusion before I close in prayer. I want my wife Cindy to come join me. I want to give you a picture of this about revival, awakening and what might happen if you decide to share Christ this year with just one person. Cindy have you ever shared Christ? Yes. Has anybody you ever shared Christ with become a Christian? Yes. Who? It was you, Harry. Thank you. What if Cindy and I this year decide we're going to ask God to allow us to win one person to Christ each? So at the end of this year how many do we have? We will have four people who know Christ. Now part of our training of them is that next year all four of us will go out and so at the end of that year you'd have eight. I know some will check me on the calculator on this but if just me and Cindy started that this year or how about just you and one other person? If you and one other person go out and share Christ and then the two people you two win to Christ go out and win two people to Christ and the four of you the next year, etc then in 34 years we'd win the whole world to Christ. Over eight billion people would be brought to Christ in 34 years, in less than a generation.

So let's share. There is no problem with the harvest. We just need the reapers. Pray for them. Come and join the reapers. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together. Thank You for the Lord Jesus the Savior of sinners. Thank You for the privilege to be engaged in the harvest. Thank You that You have secured a harvest because of the victory at the cross. Now O Lord, send us into the world to share Christ, just like the woman at the well. Jesus, thank You for speaking to the woman. Thank You for the woman who spoke to the men and the men who spoke to many more men.

Thank You Father that You're still speaking through Your Son Jesus. Jesus thank You that You're speaking through us because You're with us. We will share You with the world and join the reapers. At this next Mission's conference we're not just going to send missionaries out there to the cities of the world, we're going to go to this city, to our homes, to our neighborhoods, our place of business, our families, our schools and our teams and share Christ with all the reapers, in Jesus' Name who is the Lord of the Harvest, Amen.

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