

A summary of John 4:28-42

- 1. Worshiping God in truth or truthfulness:** God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth (John 4:24). This is a verse that many of us are familiar with and quote often. But it is hard to understand and we often look at the whole Bible to try to understand what Jesus is saying. Actually, within chapter 4 itself, we have an example or model of someone who practices what Jesus says. The Samaritan woman's testimony to the people in her city was seemingly weak and even uncertain. In verse 29 she urges the people to see a man who told her everything she had ever done. She believed because of a miracle. Did she really know Christ? She knew that a man had read her past like a book. But then she says "Is not this the Christ?" On the one hand, she believes; on the other hand, she doubts. There was no pretense with her. This is an example of worshiping the Lord in truthfulness. Wherever we may be at, whatever revelation we may have, even a little bit, we can testify, however weak our testimony may be. We can be true to whatever Christ we may have.
- 2. Worshiping God in spirit:** We often say that we are in spirit or that we need to be in spirit. This may be somewhat abstract and hard to measure. What is the yardstick to know if we are in spirit or not? In the New Testament, the word and the spirit go together. Jesus says that the words that He speaks are spirit and life (John 6:63). An example of worship in spirit is the Samaritan people to whom the woman testified. When they heard her, they came to Jesus (v. 40). Then they entreated Him to stay or abide with them, to spend time with them. Then in v. 41, many more believed because of His word, not the word of the woman. Finally, in v. 42, they declare that they believe because they have heard for themselves, not because of her testimony. The true worship of God is through the word which, when heard, becomes spirit to us for us to experience. To worship in spirit is to abide with the Lord, not to let Him go, not to let His word go, and to know Him personally because of His direct word to us.
- 3. A growing process :** Therefore, we need to grow, from believing in Jesus because of the testimony of a brother or sister. We definitely need the speaking of the brothers and sisters. We should not stop there, however. We need to ask the Lord to abide with us, and we need to abide with Him. The growing process is related to dwelling and abiding with Him. Anytime the Lord speaks to us through the brothers and sisters, we need to personally go to the Lord and to the word to have a transaction with Him, to confirm and strengthen the word that we have heard. In that way, we may have the personal speaking of the Lord Himself, and not just a testimony from someone else. Thus we may be saved from merely quoting what someone else told us, to growing to the point where we can say, "The Bible says..."
- 4. Any believer can preach the gospel:** In John, chapter 1, John the Baptist preached the gospel, and many were brought to Jesus through him. In chapter 2, Mary told the servants to listen to Jesus and do whatever He said. In chapter 3, Jesus Himself preached the gospel to Nicodemus. In one sense, we may not be like John the Baptist, nor the mother of Jesus, let alone Jesus, and we can excuse ourselves by saying that we could never do what they did. But in chapter 4, Jesus found a low, sinful woman who believed in Him and testified. Jesus found us. Who are we? We are just like the woman, sinful, unsatisfied, and thirsty. But God chose us and predestinated us. Because of His salvation, of which He is the source, we can preach the gospel, whatever amount of Christ we may have. We have no excuse. The example of the Samaritan woman levels the ground, so to speak, for all believers to testify the Christ, both small and big (in their experience), that they have received.
- 5. This kind of gospel preaching is food for Jesus (v. 32).** It seems that in Jesus's view, the real food that He enjoyed was not His own preaching but the preaching of the woman. Every time someone like us can testify Christ, the Lord is fed. It is remarkable that this is the only case in the gospels where Jesus speaks of food that satisfies Him. Jesus did so many miracles, healed so many people, and spoke the word to crowds, as well as to His disciples. Yet it is only when a lowly, despised and sinful woman simply relates how a man was able to expose her past that Jesus refuses to eat physical food, declaring that He was already satisfied by food that His disciples did not know about.

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6. **The disciples did not preach the gospel and did not therefore know the food that satisfied Jesus.** Are we disciples? In other words, we may have followed Jesus for a long time, having attended many trainings, and we may think we know His will. We may be experienced. We may even know the word. Do we preach the gospel? Apparently, the disciples had not done so! Yet the poor, lowly, despised woman, who knew practically nothing about spiritual things, testified. Do we really know the will of the Lord? Are we willing to feed Him by going to people?
7. **Many people are ready to preach the gospel:** Verse 35 tells us that the fields are white to harvest. This verse is very interesting. We usually take it to mean that people are ready to receive the gospel and believe. But in the context, it can also mean that many people are ready to preach the gospel, beginning with the newly saved believer. We do not need to wait. Do not wait to be equipped with the word or to attend a training, or to read the Bible once through first and become a disciple. No, we are ready right away to testify the Christ that we have seen and experienced.
8. **We need to lift up our eyes** (v. 35). We need to lift up our eyes to the heavenly realm, and not look at the earthly realm. If we keep our eyes on the ground, all we will see will be our shortcomings, our inadequacies and our failures, and we will find one excuse after another not to preach the gospel. We need to look at people in our city, in our campuses etc. as being ready to be spoken to, and at ourselves as being ready and chosen (the Lord has already chosen us) to speak.
9. **The Lord is the source of the gospel and the One who leads people to Himself. We have nothing to boast about.** One sows and another reaps (v. 36-38). No one can claim that he alone sowed or he alone reaped. Both the one who sows and the one who reaps rejoice together (v. 36). Ultimately, we have no boast whatsoever. The Lord is the One who is the source of salvation. Sometimes, we preach the gospel and someone believes. But then that person says that His grandmother or relative had preached the gospel much earlier to him. Did he believe because of us or because of someone else? Often we reap where many others have labored, but no one can claim credit. All we can do is rejoice for the corporate labor that we enjoy of sowing and reaping.
10. **We preach the gospel not because we expect immediate results but to sow the seed.** Our gospel preaching is a sowing process. We should not base our preaching on the obtaining of results. Yes, we want people to get saved. But we must realize that another will reap. This realization will save us from preaching out of duty, to preaching out of joy. We are thereby delivered from a lot of pressure (e.g. the pressure of producing results). All our sowing is actually food to satisfy the Lord. This will lead us to be humble. If someone gets saved through us, someone else sowed or labored. We merely reaped without laboring (in a sense). If we sow (or labor) and nothing happens, but later someone reaps (the person we preached to gets saved), we rejoice (no pressure and no envy). God is the source of everything, and He is satisfied. Therefore, we need to labor to sow the seed.
11. **There are many ways to preach the gospel.** We can go out to people whom we do not know. This way is usually less frequent. For example, we may go out at special times, with other brothers and sisters, to preach the gospel. At these times, we are together so we have the support and companionship of others to strengthen us to speak to people. At other times, in our daily life (more frequent), we have opportunities to testify to those whom we know, like the Samaritan woman. She must have been well known in her village, probably for negative rather than positive reasons! When she testified, the people must have noticed a change in her life, not just through her words but through her person. Therefore, people can come to know Christ also through our living, of how Christ has spoken to us and changed us. Then when we speak, our words may reflect the way we live.