

# “ARE WE THERE YET?” SERIES PART 2: STUDY 2

## LIFT UP YOUR EYES - THE FIELDS ARE RIPE FOR HARVEST

### BEFORE THE LESSON

During times of transition, one of the great temptations before us is to “circle the wagons,” become absorbed solely with our own organizational challenges, and forget about the mission that God has called us to. In the Gospel of John, however, where our text this week is taken from, John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, makes it clear that his purpose in writing his gospel was that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing we may have life in his name (John 20:31). Today’s text is taken from the section in John’s gospel immediately following Jesus’ interaction with the Samaritan woman at the well and addresses his own disciples’ confusion following that interaction. The events in this passage involve the people of this Samaritan woman’s village, a people considered anathema to the Jewish community, and also to Jesus’ disciples. But these were the very people streaming out to meet Jesus, and as he saw them approach, dressed in their traditional white robes, it was then that he said: “Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest.” (ESV Translation<sup>1</sup>). The disciples were worried about why Jesus was talking to a Samaritan woman in the first place and were confused by his words about the “food” he had to eat that they knew not of. But Jesus, as always, was focused on extending the invitation of the Kingdom to all, including to the Samaritans. As we look at this week’s text and press into this year of transition, let us too continue to lift up our eyes and see the harvest fields, inviting those we encounter to know the never-ending love of God that we ourselves have experienced.

### STARTING THE LESSON

Have you ever bitten into a perfectly ripe piece of fruit? It can be a truly joyous experience. A lot of people can be involved in the process of taking a seed and turning it into that fruit in your hand. The same can be said about the Gospel. A lot of people can be involved in someone beginning a personal relationship with Jesus, but the result can be even sweeter than the ripest fruit.

Today, we are going to be looking at a passage in John where Jesus talks about how many people are ripe to begin a relationship with Jesus. This section comes just after he shares who he is with the Samaritan woman at the well – a woman who was ripe to receive Jesus. After this passage, many people became believers in Jesus.

#### TIPS TO SHARE WITH LEADERS

Evangelism can be a tough subject for some people. Encourage anyone who shares something vulnerable. Give people space to be honest with their struggles when it comes to sharing Jesus with others. Talking about our challenges can be an important first step in overcoming them. Remind them that evangelism is about sharing the hope and joy of the Gospel.

#### STARTER QUESTION

- Have you ever gone to pick apples or berries at a farm? How hard or easy was it? How was the fruit you worked for different from the fruit you buy in the store?
- What is the best news you ever received from someone? How did it make you feel?

#### OPENING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank you for pursuing us that we might know you, and the hope that comes from walking with you. Fill us afresh with your never-ending love. Help us to see the people around us with your eyes and to

love them out of the love you first showed us. Amen!

<sup>1</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 4:35). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### BIBLE PASSAGE REFERENCE

John 4:34-38 (NIV)

<sup>34</sup> “My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. <sup>35</sup> 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.

### QUESTION 1

- How is God’s work like food?

*It is life-giving and brings deep satisfaction. Later in the book of John, Jesus refers to himself as the Bread of Life, that all who come to him will never go hungry, and whoever believes in him will never be thirsty (John 6:35).*

### QUESTION 2

- How did Jesus finish God’s work?

*He died on a cross as a sacrifice for our sin, thereby redeeming us and making it possible for us to have a never-ending relationship with God the Father.*

### BIBLE PASSAGE REFERENCE (continued)

<sup>36</sup> 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. <sup>37</sup> Thus the saying ‘One sows and another reaps’ is true. <sup>38</sup> 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.”

### QUESTION 3

- What does Jesus mean by “fields”?

*Fields refer to the people ready to receive Jesus as their Savior.*

### QUESTION 4

- What is the harvest Jesus is referring to?

*Saving people by sharing the gospel and giving them the opportunity to accept Jesus as their Savior.*

### QUESTION 5

- How does God ripen a field for harvest?

*He sends the Holy Spirit to prepare people’s hearts to receive Jesus as their Savior.*

### QUESTION 6

- How can you tell if someone is ready to receive Jesus as their Savior?

*Sometimes you can’t tell. We don’t know what God is doing in someone’s heart. However, if someone is struggling in some aspect of their lives, they might be especially receptive to the hope that Jesus can offer. People can also start engaging in conversations or asking questions about God. Sometimes, God highlights people for us. The most important thing is to be willing and available to share Jesus when an opportunity presents itself.*

### QUESTION 7

- What is the “hard work” Jesus is talking about at the end of verse 38?

*The hard work can include teaching people about God, Scripture, and how to live the good life God has for us (discipleship). After people have shared answers, ask them to now consider the importance of children's ministry. Sharing a foundational understanding of God with children is instrumental in preparing them to encounter Jesus as their Savior.*

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#### QUESTION 8

- Why do you think God has one person sow and another harvest?

*That way no one person takes the credit that ultimately belongs to God.*

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#### QUESTION 9

- Read John 4:1-26. What may have made the Samaritan woman especially open to receiving Jesus as her Savior?

*First and foremost, the Holy Spirit was working in her heart. But she also knew about God, Jacob and Joseph. She longed to worship God and meet the Messiah. She was an outcast in her town and had several broken relationships.*

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#### QUESTION 10

- What are some things that keep us from seeing the people that are ripe for receiving Jesus?

*There can be a lot of answers to this question. We can be too busy or preoccupied with our own lives to see what God is trying to show us. We can isolate ourselves and not be open to opportunities to meet and engage with other people. Or, we can limit our interactions to shallow ones on social media instead of multi-dimensional conversations with multi-faceted people.*

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#### QUESTION 11

- What would make you more prepared for God's harvest?

*There are lots of possible answers: spiritual disciplines that lead us closer to the Lord, reading and studying the Bible, forming relationships with people who don't know Jesus are all likely answers, and learning to respectfully answer the questions people have about our faith are some possibilities.*

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#### QUESTION 12

- What are some of the obstacles you have to sharing Jesus with others? How can you overcome them?

*Common obstacles include fear, polarizing perceptions of religion, or being distracted by our own lives. The best way to overcome our reluctance is being filled with God's love ourselves and loving others out of His love. It is good to have an answer for the faith that you profess, which can include both Scripture and also your personal experiences of God.*

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#### PRAYER MINISTRY

- **Option 1: Writing out your testimony**

There is power in our testimony, yet few of us have taken time to really form it into a cohesive story. Have everyone take a few minutes and write out the 2-minute version of either their testimony of when they first gave their lives to Jesus, or one of their most powerful encounters with the Lord. Have a few people share at the end. Before beginning, remind them to emphasize the good they have experienced with the Lord more than the hurt/struggle they had before knowing Jesus.

Close the group by praying over the opportunities God will bring us to share Jesus with people around us and that He will give us exactly the words we need.

- **Option 2: Prayer/Reflection time**

Take some time to be still before the Lord. Start off by praying and asking God to show each of you what He is doing around you. Do any particular people come to mind? Does a physical location pop into your thoughts, such as an area in town, the country or world? Let different thoughts and images float through your mind. Pay attention to anything that especially stirs your heart.

After several minutes of stillness, ask people to share what they saw or felt. Close the group by praying for what people saw and asking for God's provision in being his hands and feet in the harvest field.