

## **Share Your Story (John 4:31-42)**

### **Seven Rhythms • March 24, 2024 • [www.isonrise.com](http://www.isonrise.com)**

Today is the last message in our series on “Telling our Story.” We are walking through the seven essential rhythms of the Christian life throughout 2024. We have set aside seven months in our teaching calendar to cover these rhythms. We are following a “lecture and lab” strategy as we cover each rhythm. We are “lecturing” or preaching on each rhythm and then providing a “lab” or experience at the end of the month, so we can help you put what you have learned into practice. As promised, we are releasing a tool today that will help you have conversations about Jesus with your friends and family members who are not yet following Jesus. This tool will help you do three things. It will help you shape your story, share your story, and see the world around you differently. This morning I want to focus on that last idea, seeing the world around you differently. I don’t believe we will take the time to shape our story or attempt to share our story unless we see the world around us differently. Jesus taught this idea to his disciples in John chapter 4.

Before we get to that passage, let me ask you, “What do you see?” What do you see when you look at the Portland Metro area, your workplace, your neighborhood, your friend group, and your family? Do you see a spiritual desert that should be avoided or a fertile landscape begging for spiritual seed to be sown into it? What you see will determine if you sow.

In our passage today, the closest followers of Jesus, the disciples, didn’t see what Jesus saw when he looked out at a Samaritan village. The Jews, at the time, saw the Samaritans as half-breed heretics who were hostile to them. The disciples didn’t see spiritual soil worthy of the seed of the good news of a savior. To comprehend the disciples’ perspective, we need to understand the history of hostility between these people. When the northern kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians, they repopulated the land with foreigners who then intermarried with the Jews who were not exiled to Assyria. This caused a mixture of cultures, bloodlines, and religions. When the exiles of the southern kingdom of Judah came back to Jerusalem seeking to rebuild the temple there, the Samaritans weren’t happy. They built their own rival temple at Mount Gerizim. Both groups consider themselves the “true Israelites” and the other group as false. When Antiochus Epiphanes sought to attack the Jews in Jerusalem the Samaritans did not help. Later the Jews destroyed the Samaritan temple. In Jesus’ day, Jews used the title “samaritan” as a curse word and an insult. Jesus, in his conversation with a Samaritan woman, in the beginning of John chapter 4, corrected several of the errors in her belief system. He didn’t ignore the errors in her thinking and he saw an opportunity for positive change. He saw good soil. The disciples of Jesus almost missed a great movement of God because they did not share the same vision of Jesus. I pray we don’t miss out on what God is doing around us because we don’t see things like Jesus.

**Big Idea: Seeing leads to sowing.** We will be hesitant to sow spiritual seeds if we only see bad soil all around us. It is true that some conversations will be more fruitful than others. It is true that some of our friends will be more receptive to a spiritual conversation than others. I am not promoting a foolish optimism that ignores hostility and opposition. I believe we will see from Jesus in John 4 that we need to be more optimistic about the opportunities around us to share his love by sharing our stories.

*John 4:31-34, “<sup>61</sup> Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, Rabbi, eat.”<sup>32</sup> But he said to them, I have food to eat that you do not know about.”<sup>33</sup> So the disciples said to one another, Has anyone brought him something to eat?”<sup>34</sup> Jesus said to them, My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.”*

The disciples went into a nearby Samaritan village to get food. In verse 6, Jesus is described as having been “wearied” from his journey. The disciples showed a caring spirit by attending to the physical needs of their great teacher. Jesus’ comments to them show that he was primarily concerned with satisfying a different hunger or appetite. Food was important to Jesus, but he had a higher priority to attend to. Accomplishing his mission was more important than his next meal. Jesus had already demonstrated this perspective when he was tempted in the wilderness by Satan. When Satan tempted Jesus to turn stones into bread to satisfy his appetite, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3, which says, “man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.” Allegiance to God’s plan was more important than attending to his physical appetite. Jesus’ response and the disciples’ confusion is a sign that their perspectives were not aligned at this moment. The disciples didn’t see what Jesus was seeing.

*John 4:35-38, “<sup>65</sup> Do you not say, There are yet four months, then comes the harvest? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest.”<sup>36</sup> Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.”<sup>37</sup> For here the saying holds true, One sows and another reaps.<sup>38</sup> I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.”*

Jesus saw a spiritual harvest that was yielding the “fruit of eternal life.” Jesus was speaking to the spiritual conversation that he had just had with a Samaritan woman at the well near them. Jesus had shared with this woman that he was the Messiah and the one who could grant her eternal life despite her past sins. This conversation with Jesus catapulted her to tell her story of transformation with the people of her town, who previously knew her as a woman of shame. As the woman went back to her town and shared her story, Jesus sought to readjust his disciples’ vision. They didn’t see the spiritual harvest that Jesus saw coming. We will see later many come to follow Jesus from this Samaritan town because of the testimony of the woman.

Jesus quotes two modern sayings to open the eyes of his disciples. First, he referenced the common saying, “There are yet four months, then comes the harvest.” This saying referred to the time between the end of planting and the beginning of harvest,

approximately four months. It appears that Jesus was using this phrase to communicate the immediacy of the spiritual harvest he saw. A farmer must practice patience when he waits for the seeds he has sown to produce a harvest. Jesus saw the seed he had sown into the heart of the Samaritan woman as already producing a harvest in the hearts of her neighbors. Jesus was showing the disciples the urgency of attending to the harvest that was before them in this village.

The second common saying Jesus quoted was “One sows and another reaps.” This phrase was most likely used by others to not only speak of the different roles people had in farming but also to distinguish between the fortunate (reapers) and the unfortunate (sowers). Jesus hijacked this phrase in a much more positive direction. Jesus spoke of the sower and reaper rejoicing together. Taken with his comment on the immediate harvest he saw coming after he had sown the seed of a spiritual conversation, gives us the picture of the sower and reaper enjoying a partnership where they both delight in the fruits of their labor. Jesus was attempting to open their eyes to the teamwork of spiritual transformation. Next week, we will get the opportunity to sow into the spiritual transformation of the city of Nyagatare, Rwanda with our Easter Offering. We will rejoice with those in that city who see spiritual transformation.

Jesus was inviting his disciples to team up with him to meet the urgent need of the spiritual harvest before them. Jesus commanded his disciples to “look” and “lift up” their eyes. He also reminded them that he “sent” them. Jesus was not referring to sending them into the village to retrieve food. He was reminding them that they had been commissioned to do ministry with him. In the beginning of chapter 4, we are told that the disciples were baptizing new followers of Jesus. Jesus wanted them to be prepared to do the same work in this Samaritan revival.

In verse 38, I believe Jesus gave the disciples a gentle rebuke. Jesus said that the disciples were entering into a harvest where others had labored. They were about to “reap” where others had “sown.” Who are the “sowers” that Jesus was referring to? In the immediate context, this must refer to Jesus and the Samaritan woman. It is clear that the disciples were not a part of this group. They did not see the opportunity to sow among the Samaritans. All the disciples went into Samaria and had little effect on the town, whereas Jesus spoke with one woman who then went into the town and brought back an untold number of people to Jesus. Jesus was contrasting the work of the Samaritan woman and his disciples. This “woman of shame” was putting the disciples to shame. She saw her Samaritan village as good soil for the seed of good news about the savior she had just met. Jesus saw good soil in the Samaritan woman. The Samaritan women saw good soil in her city. The disciples needed to readjust their vision. Instead of seeing the Samaritans as enemies, they needed to see them as spiritual orphans who desperately needed someone to bring them back to their loving Father in heaven. **Seeing leads to sowing.**

When we see the world around us like Jesus, our eyes will be open to the good soil that is all around us. When we see that good soil, we must sow the seed of our story. The

Samaritan woman didn't go to Bible college or read through all the Hebrew Scriptures before she shared her story. She probably still had a lot of bad theology, but her encounter with Jesus changed her and she needed to share that with others. Look how one story spiritually transformed a city.

*John 4:39-42, “<sup>39</sup> Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, He told me all that I ever did.”<sup>40</sup> So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days.<sup>41</sup> And many more believed because of his word.<sup>42</sup> 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.”*

I love how verse 39 and verse 41 start. “Many” believed “because of the woman’s testimony” and then “Many more” believed because of Jesus’ words. What a remarkable and unexpected turn of events. I bet the disciples were bewildered and delighted. A group of Samaritans had become some of the first people to embrace Jesus as the “Savior of the world” and on top of that, a woman with a shameful past was the primary preacher that God used to bring this about.

**Seeing leads to sowing.** What would happen if we saw the world around us like Jesus and the Samaritan woman? Sure, we can find all the ugliness pretty easily. I would agree that we need to see and name the foolishness and evil around us, but we must never lose the lens of spiritual opportunity.

If you are a follower of Christ, I want to encourage you to use the tool that we have created for you to help you shape and share your story with those you love who are not yet following Jesus. We are calling this tool a “Checklist for Conversations about Jesus.” There are ten steps on this checklist. This is not the only way to shape and share your story, but we believe it is a very good way to follow. It is modeled after the example of the Apostle Paul in Acts 22. It is grounded in several of the scriptural guidelines given to us for sharing with others about the good news of Jesus. I personally have used this checklist in my conversations with those I love who are not yet following Jesus. The first step on the checklist is to list those you love who are not yet following Jesus. The reason this step is first is because I believe we need to see things differently before we work on shaping our story and sharing our story. In fact, I believe we will lose energy and motivation in the shaping and sharing of our story if we don’t see the deep need around us. This first step will help you see the good soil that God has placed you in. There are so many people in your life who you share a loving relationship with. Friends love to share their stories with other friends. Don’t miss the good soil that is around you. Your story can cause spiritual transformation for someone.

If you are here today and you would not call yourself a follower of Christ yet, I want to thank you for being here. I am so glad that you are here. I would like for you to entertain the idea that your situation may be similar to that of the Samaritan villagers, who pursued a conversation with Jesus after hearing the woman share her story. John recorded the

villagers saying 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.” Maybe you are here because a friend invited you. Maybe you have heard their story of following Jesus. I want to encourage you to go beyond their story and seek to encounter Jesus yourself. I want to invite you to continue to attend our services and to ask your friend if they would read the Gospels with you. In the Gospels, you will encounter the ministry and life of Jesus. I believe you will be greatly impacted by his love and service to others.

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### Life Level Application

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- 1) **Head:** Read 1 Corinthians 3:6-9. What are the different roles Paul described in ministry? How do these roles work together? Who is ultimately responsible for the work of ministry being fruitful?
  
- 2) **Heart:** Read Romans 9:1-5 and 2 Corinthians 11:24. Describe Paul’s feelings toward his fellow Jews. How is this surprising based on what he shared in 2 Corinthians? How do your feelings toward others compare with those of Paul?
  
- 3) **Hand:** Read Matthew 23:37-39. What are the sins Jesus pointed out in this passage? Does Jesus appear sad in this passage? Explain why or why not. How should this passage inform our prayers for our city?
  
- 4) **Habit:** Thoughtfully set aside time to start working on the “Checklist for Conversations about Jesus.”



how to prep for

# Telling Your Story

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## See

1. List those you love who are not yet following Jesus. (Meditate on Romans 9:1-3 and 2 Peter 3:9 and ask the Lord to give you a heart that aches for your loved ones).

## Shape

2. List the sins you struggled with before following Christ and group those into categories. Examples: anger, bitterness, pride, or drug abuse. (Use these as connection points with your loved ones).
3. Memorize the transitional statement: “I haven’t been through that exact situation that you just mentioned. I have had a similar experience. Can I share something with you that has really helped me?”
4. Write the “before” part of your story. (Share the good and bad in your life before you started following Jesus).
5. Write about your moment of faith. (Don’t forget the essentials of the gospel: Jesus is God. He became a man. He died on the cross and rose again suffering the penalty for our sin. We receive God’s forgiveness by admitting we are sinners, believing in Jesus’ death and resurrection, and confessing him as lord.) Using a verse like Romans 6:23 is helpful at this point.
6. Write how your life has been different after your moment of faith

## Share

7. **Pray:** Pray for opportunities to share your story.
8. **Listen:** Ask questions to dive deep into your friend’s story.
9. **Jump:** When the moment comes, take it.
10. **Offer a next step:** Pick a step that fits the conversation like: invite them to church, ask them to read the Bible with you, or ask them if they are ready to follow Jesus.