

LESSON 5

SHARING THE JOY

John 4:27-38

The sun shone brightly through the church auditorium windows as people sang passionately about the glories of the gospel. It was just one of those days at church—good moods, easy laughter, warm handshakes, spirited singing, and for some reason the coffee tasted just a little better than usual.

The great spirit of the morning was suddenly dampened by a dark cloud: the sermon. Pastor Jim usually handles the Word well. However, today the sermon sounded more like the guilt trip given to a thirteen-year-old who was just caught smoking in the backyard.

“Christians ought to be the most joyful people on the planet,” he bellowed. “Instead, most of the Christians I know sound no different than anybody else. They’re a bunch of sad sack complainers.” Then he ground out this next phrase with angst in his voice, “It ought to be a *joy* to serve Jesus!”

He topped off the sermon with some sad statistics about how many people will end up in Hell unless we get our act together and start telling people about Jesus. Instead of walking out of church encouraged, motivated, and joyful, the people walked out defeated and discouraged.

- I. Name a memorable time that someone tried to motivate you with guilt. What was the outcome?

2. What is the downfall of motivation by guilt?

Sharing Your Joy

There's a better way than motivating by guilt. That better way is natural motivation, something that flows from being human. Here's the bottom line: we don't have to be "guilted" into sharing something we *love*. We naturally, effortlessly, and passionately share things that bring us joy. When something really catches our fancy, turns our crank, stokes our fire, we talk about it. Why? Because talking about it is a natural outflow of the joy we find in that matter.

In our previous studies we've watched Jesus move in a way that only the Son of God could do. He engaged competently with a respected cleric—the elite of society. Next, we found Him conversing without hesitation with a notorious harlot. Jesus lived the truth that God's love is for anybody. He actively led thirsty people to living water and set the example for us.

However, where's the motivation for us for sharing that living water? It's really simple: when we've been satisfied by the endless well of eternal water, it should fill our hearts with satisfaction and joy which bubbles over to everybody we meet. God's love brings substantive, satisfying, and sustaining joy to our hearts, and we naturally share what brings us joy.

3. What are some things that bring you joy, which you have then shared with other people?
4. Did you have to force yourself to share these matters with others?
5. If you aren't sharing the living water with other people, what does that say about your joy in Christ?

Joy in Worship

Jesus had just revealed His identity to the woman in John 4. The disciples were on a mission to get some food in town, where they would inevitably meet thirsty people who were in need of living water. Jesus was about to teach them a lesson.

6. Read John 4:27–30. Discuss some of the contrasts between the disciples and the woman at the well.

The disciples nitpicked

The disciples had been in the town trying to find food. They had to be careful about the food they bought, since they wanted to make sure what they were eating and feeding the Lord was clean, approved, and untouched by filthy Samaritan hands. The last thing Jesus needed was to become defiled by any interaction with these half-breed, pagan-god-worshipping, unclean outcasts of Jewish culture.

As they returned, the disciples found Jesus talking to the Samaritan woman, which was unthinkable to them. However, they had been with Jesus long enough to know not to ask what He was doing. Instead they just stood in stunned silence because Jesus wasn't following tradition. He was doing something socially unacceptable. This was against the religious rules. It was scandalous.

The woman worshiped

We don't have a record of what the woman said during this time. Maybe she said nothing. She could have just sat in silence for a while. If I could imagine, I see this woman sitting there with tears streaming down her face, broken from her sin, yet feeling the grace of God flooding into her soul. I think this encounter crushed her—totally shook her to the core. She was worshipping in that moment, totally in awe of Jesus.

Then she woke up from her reverie. An unspeakable joy surged through her, and the urge to tell people about Jesus overtook her. In that moment, *Jesus took priority over her other pursuits.*

As the disciples held their tongues of criticism, the woman—without a word—left her vessel of water and ran back to town. She had come for water; she had received living water. Suddenly, the normal pursuits of life were no longer important. She was filled with incomparable joy, and she had to share.

7. Why is it that new believers are often the most excited to share Jesus with others?

8. What kinds of preoccupations keep us from sharing our joy about Jesus?

How did this woman share about Jesus? What method did she use? Had she taken a class at her church on effective evangelistic methods? No. She simply shared what Jesus did in her life. Jesus was the subject of her conversation. She used the story of her own changed life to lead others to come to see Jesus.

This woman is the picture of true worship. What is true worship? It's finding supreme value and worth in someone or something. We worship that which fills our heart, takes priority, or is the subject of our daydreaming. What really lights your fire? What do you find yourself thinking and dreaming about? Where is your passion? That is what you are worshiping. For this woman, it was clear: Jesus had changed her life, brought her joy, and now that joy would flow out of her in worship as she told others about Christ.

9. Based on this definition of worship, what are you worshiping?

10. What keeps you from finding ultimate joy in Jesus and therefore keeps you from worshiping as you should?

For this woman, she left what she was doing because suddenly Jesus became her number one priority. Jesus was the natural subject of her conversation because He had brought her true and lasting joy. This was an expression of true worship. I'd go so far as to say worship is incomplete—and really not worship at all—when we fail to share our joy. How can we say we're excited about something or that we've found something to be life changing, yet we never tell anybody?

11. Think of the first day back from Christmas break when you were in elementary school. What was everybody doing on that day?
12. When a woman receives an engagement ring, does she wear gloves on her hands for the next few weeks? Why not?
13. If you were to gauge your worship by how much Jesus fills your thoughts and conversations, how does He rank?

Joy in Serving

Read John 4:31–33. These verses are actually quite humorous—in a sad and ironic sort of way. The disciples completely missed the point and were totally hung up on the physical realm. What the disciples just saw should have astonished them. They should have been asking questions like, Why were You talking to her? Why was she crying? Why did she leave so quickly without even taking her waterpot? What did You tell this woman?

Their minds were so hung up on religious rules and proper decorum that they missed an incredibly moving moment. Instead of asking any of those questions, they said, “Here’s some food for You.”

Jesus confused the disciples

Jesus said He had food His disciples didn't know about. They were still quite obtuse at this moment. They asked each other in effect, "Alright, which one of you brought Him food? Did someone come while we were gone?" They were hopelessly stuck in the physical world, completely missing an occasion of worship.

Sometimes I think we do the same thing. Jesus offers so much more than the physical world. We turn down opportunities to worship and serve because we can't see past the physicality of our schedules, our convenience, or our busyness. How many thirsty people are passing by you every day that you're missing because your mind is so firmly planted in the physical realm?

14. Talk about some opportunities you've missed to share your joy about Jesus.
15. We like to laugh at the disciples sometimes. However, in what ways are we exactly like them?

Jesus challenged the disciples

16. Read John 4:34-38. What captures your attention in these verses?

To understand this next section, we need to dip back to verse 30. The woman told her friends and townspeople about Jesus, and they made their way to the well to see Jesus for themselves. What a scene. A crowd of needy, hurting, lost, and sinful people coming out to meet Jesus, Who sovereignly knew their hearts, their hurts, and their needs. While His mind was on the great need of these people, the disciples were standing there asking about food. In verse 34 Jesus stated that His food was to do the will of God. This does not mean He was self-sustaining and didn't need physical food. He

was saying that ministering to needy people was satisfying to Him just like food is satisfying to the stomach.

17. Have you ever been so excited or anxious about something that you couldn't eat?

18. When this happens, what does it tell you about the item or activity?

So what gets you excited? What is food for your soul? If you find your passion, you'll find your worship. Jesus gives us the example here that living for God satisfies our soul in a way that food, houses, cars, kids, clothing, or anything else never can. Once we find true joy in Christ, we can't help but share it, because we naturally share things that bring us joy.

Joy in Reaping

Watching the joy and evangelism of the woman is convicting. To summarize where we've been and where we're going, we could say it like this: If you're not sharing about Jesus, you're not worshiping. If you're not worshiping, you're not satisfied. If you're not satisfied, you're not rejoicing.

19. Evaluate these statements in light of the woman at the well and show how this was true of her.

20. The goal is sharing what God has done for you. Where do you need to make improvement to achieve the goal?

The harvest

Read verse 35 again. There is some debate on the timeline. Jesus could be stating an actual chronology of harvest, or He could be quoting a known proverb. Either way, His point is the same: Don't stand around worrying about food. There's work to be done.

As Jesus lifted His eyes and said the fields were white already to harvest, He was probably talking about more than the actual agricultural fields in the area. Remember in verse 30 the townspeople took the woman's advice and came to see Jesus. They would have been coming toward Jesus. So perhaps Jesus pointed out the advancing people and said, "Look, these people will be our harvest."

Throughout this story the disciples are contrasted with this woman. They *knew* who He was but went to town and told nobody. The woman found out who He was and went to town to tell everybody. She worshiped, while the disciples were apathetic. There was work to be done, but the disciples couldn't see it because Jesus wasn't yet a high enough worship priority to them. One day this would change.

21. Read Acts 2:1-12 and 42-47. After the resurrection, the disciples realized true joy in Jesus. What was the result?

22. Read Acts 2:47 again. Was evangelism something contrived or a natural result of joy in Christ? How does that challenge you?

The wages

John 4:36-38 is encouraging to any Christian who is busy serving Christ. In vocational work, you get paid for work when it is done. In the work of the Lord, sowing and reaping happen simultaneously. You can reap where you didn't sow. You can sow and not reap. Jesus was telling the disciples that others had sown and now they would reap. In the Lord's field, there's joy in both sowing and reaping.

What keeps you from leading thirsty people to living water? At its root, it is a worship problem. *Find your passion, and you'll find what you worship.* We all have different

passions, and that's not bad. However, where does Jesus fit into those passions? Is He number one or further down the list?

The point of this text, and therefore the point of this study, is not to feel guilty about failing to share Christ with others. The point is to ground you in the source of your joy—Jesus Christ. If you go back to Christ to find your joy, worship will follow as a natural result. And then we naturally share that which brings us joy. God's love brings ultimate joy and satisfaction.

To find that joy, we must first realize we are lacking that joy. Before salvation, we were hopelessly separated from God, desperately thirsty, attempting to quench the thirst of our souls with things that will never satisfy. Jesus offers us living water through His death, which paid the penalty for our sins.

That joy is complete when we trust in His death and trust that His righteousness fully covers us. As we stand clothed in the righteousness of Jesus, we are redeemed, adopted, and accepted by our Heavenly Father. That is the only source of joy that matters, and it is the only source of joy to which there is no end. Have you found it?

23. Every Christian needs to continually increase his or her joy in Jesus. What are some substantive ways to increase your joy in Jesus?

24. What role do God's Word and God's people play in increasing our joy?

Verse to Memorize: John 4:34 and 35

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the salvation You've provided in Jesus. Please fill my heart with Your joy and give me courage to share that joy with others.

THE GOSPEL

What is the gospel? Modern culture associates the word with truth, as in “gospel truth.” Truth it certainly is, but the word translated “gospel” in the Bible means “good news.” So it naturally follows that we ask, Good news about what?

According to the Bible, the good news of the gospel counteracts the bad news of our sinfulness. The first book of the Bible, Genesis, tells us that God’s original creation was perfect (Genesis 1:31). God created humans as perfect and sinless beings. He created a perfect place where humans could live in perfect fellowship with Him, eternally enjoying His glory and goodness. Unfortunately, Adam and Eve (the first humans) had different plans. They rejected God’s design and sought to find satisfaction outside of Him (Genesis 3:1–7). In short, they disobeyed God. Because of their disobedience, sin was introduced into the world, affecting the planet and every living creature. Mankind’s sin resulted in pain, suffering, and death (Romans 5:12).

Because of sin, our relationship with God was broken. Unless God intervened, mankind would die and spend eternity separated from Him. What could people do to repair this relationship? The truth is this: God only allows perfect people to have a relationship with Him and to get into Heaven (Matthew 5:48). But no one is perfect, so nobody can ever do enough to earn a relationship with God or enter Heaven (Romans 3:23).

The gospel, the Good News, is that God *did* intervene. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, Who was fully human and fully God (John 1:1–5, 14). Because Jesus is God, He is perfectly sinless. Even though He lived a perfect life, He was condemned to death by means of crucifixion. Why was an innocent Man killed for crimes He didn’t commit? Because Jesus took the death penalty in our place. He not only took our death penalty, but He also offers His perfect righteousness in exchange for our sinfulness (2 Corinthians 5:17). He didn’t stay dead but rose victorious three days later to give us salvation.

If only perfect people can have a relationship with God, how can you claim the death of Jesus and His righteousness on your behalf? The Bible is clear that you cannot earn this salvation. It is a gift. People are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8, 9). You must *know* this truth in your mind, and *believe* this truth personally (Romans 10:9, 10, 13). Do you believe Jesus is God? Do you believe He died to take the penalty for your sins, and three days later rose from the dead? Have you asked Him to forgive your sins? Are you trusting in His perfect righteousness applied to your account? If so, God no longer sees you as sinful, but as having your sins forgiven, covered by the perfect righteousness of Jesus. To God be the glory!