

Harvest Time
John 4:31-42
November 2nd, 2025

1. A different kind of _____ (4:31-34)

2. A different kind of _____ (4:35-42)

3. Applying the Word

a. Is your “food” to do the will of the One who
_____ you?

b. Lift up your eyes to see the _____ for
the gospel right now.

Questions for Discussion/Reflection on John 4:31-42

1. Have you noticed an increase in spiritual interest in people you know? If so, what has that been like? What do you think accounts to the rise in spiritual interest among Gen Z (born 1997-2012) today?
2. In what sense is doing the will of God “food” for Jesus? Think about what food *is* and what the purpose is of eating. How does that parallel with the point Jesus is making?
 - a. Read Deut. 8:3 and Matt. 4:3-4. What similar analogy is being used? How is it different?
3. Read John 5:36; 6:38; and 17:4. How is the Father’s will a driving force in Jesus’ earthly life? Is there a sense in which that should be true for us? How is it the same/different for us?
4. Why is sowing/reaping in the harvest an appropriate analogy for the lesson Jesus is teaching in John 4?
5. If we are seeing an increase in spiritual interest today, who or what has God used in the past to sow what we are now reaping? What attitude should that cultivate within us?
6. How does the declaration that Jesus is the “Savior of the world” serve as the culminating point of John 4:1-42? What relevance does that have for us today as we consider how we view the world, the need for missions, etc.?
7. Who are some people in your life that don’t know Christ that you can pray specifically for right now? Try to think of 3-5 names. If God provides the opportunity, how might you take the next step of engaging them with the gospel?

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Big idea: We can join with Jesus in the joy and satisfaction of helping others believe in Jesus as the Savior of the world.

Intro

Last spring the Barna research group has identified four trends in the religious landscape of America since 2020:

1. Gen Z men are returning to church at higher rates.
2. Gen Z teens are more spiritually open than ever.
3. The 30-year rise of the “nones” has plateaued.
4. Bible engagement and sales are up.

CBS News reported the same thing this fall. The Colson Center identified this same trend in England where church attendance among 18-24 year olds has quadrupled since 2018. Justin Brierly released a book called “The Surprising Rebirth of Belief in God” whose title is self-explanatory. Brierly also said that a recent poll of non-Christian Gen Z students showed 75% would consider attending church if invited.

That matches what we have seen at UBC and what I’ve heard from other pastors I know at other Bible teaching churches. There is a unique hunger for spiritual truth and responsiveness to the gospel, in particular among Millennials (1980-1996) and Gen Z (1997-2012).

Kyle Richter, who has served as a college pastor for almost two decades, suggests the following reasons: “Gen Z is spiritually starved. The disorienting circumstances of the last three years (he was writing in 2023) —a global pandemic, countless mass shootings, the woke wars, a contested election, rapid inflation, and widespread abuse scandals—created a famine of identity, purpose, and belonging.”

Sociologically, those reasons make sense. Theologically, what we’ve seen in John is that the Spirit blows where He will like the wind and we see the effects. Jesus will say in John 6 that the Father draws people and they come to Him.

In John 4 we see something of the ordinary human means that God uses to get the gospel to people who need to hear it. He uses people like us who tell others what Jesus has done for us. And we see an urgency to lift up our eyes and see the opportunities.

1. A different kind of **food** (4:31-34)
 - a. “Meanwhile” – while the woman went to the village to tell the people about Jesus – this account is bracketed by her going to the village and returning.
 - b. They were urging Him to eat.
 - i. They must have known that he had known eaten and they were hungry so he likely would be hungry too. Perhaps he seemed deep in thought, reflecting on the conversation with the woman at the well.
 - c. Once again Jesus is using a figure of speech and his audience tries to take it literally
 - i. Ch 2 – destroy this temple and in 3 days I will raise it – *it took 46 years to build this temple*
 - ii. Ch 3 – you must be born again – *can I crawl back in my mother’s womb?*
 - iii. Ch 4 – I offer you living water – *give it to me so I don’t have to come to the well*
 - iv. Ch 4 – I have food to eat that you don’t know about – *who brought him food?*

1. Reasonable in this situation – He could be saying literally that he has food they don't know about, like some left over bread, or maybe something from a villager
2. **John 4:8** For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

d. My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me

- i. Food is a necessary and (usually) enjoyable mechanism to sustain and nourish our bodies. When we don't have it, we are distracted by hunger. It is essential to life. Food is what you need in order to work. Food is what gives you strength for work.
- ii. Doing the will of the Father sustained and nourished Jesus. He is saying, "this is what I need – to do what God sent me here to do." It sustained Him, not physically, but immaterially, spiritually, at the heart level.
 1. All-consuming activity that distracts even from the need to eat
 2. Have you ever been so absorbed in something that you have forgotten to eat? Until someone pointed it out, you may not have even felt hungry.
 3. Maybe it is a fascinating project at work that is finally coming together and you feel like your skills and experience are really being put to good use.
 4. Maybe it is a hobby that pour yourself into – making a quilt, wood working, tracking an elk, beating a video game, finishing a novel.
 5. You find such joy and satisfaction in the task that hunger doesn't exist.
- iii. What did God send Him to do? What was the work for Him to accomplish?

e. Jesus came to seek and save the lost

- i. **John 5:36** "But the testimony which I have is greater than *the testimony of John*; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish-- the very works that I do-- testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me.
- ii. **John 6:38** "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.
- iii. **Luke 19:10** "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."
- iv. **John 17:4** "I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.
- v. **John 19:30** Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

f. That is what Jesus was doing at the well in Samaria – seeking and saving the lost.

- i. He offered the woman living water. When she didn't get it, He pivoted to a specific example of her sin – 5 marriages, currently with a man who isn't her husband. And then He identified Himself as the Messiah.
- ii. Now she is on the way back to the village to tell others about Jesus.
- iii. Jesus says, "this is my food – this is what sustains me – to be about the task of saving people from sin, giving them real life, new life, living water – because that is what the Father sent me to do."

2. A different kind of **harvest** (4:35-42)

- a. "Yet four months, and then comes the harvest" – but the harvest is now!

- i. The time between planting and harvesting grain is about four months on average.
 - ii. Could be that this is in the winter and the spring harvest is 4 months away. Or it could be a general statement that harvest is 4 months after planting. If He were teaching in Idaho, He would say this in April or May when the wheat is just coming up from the ground and the fields have a green sheen to them, but harvest is still a long way away.
 - iii. Either way, Jesus's point is that the harvest is actually *right now* not 4 months from now or sometime in the future.
 - iv. "White for harvest" describes the heads of grain that are on dry stalks and ready to cut. We see them all around us in August each year and a harvest crew comes through town with some burley young men who join us for a few Sundays each summer. The percentage of flannel skyrockets.
 - v. I don't think it is too much of a stretch to imagine them looking up as he said this to see the Samaritan villagers following this woman back to the well.
 - vi. He is saying, look around. There are people ready to respond to the offer of eternal life through faith in Me. Share that good news with that.
- b. Jesus is already reaping – He is the one who reaps, receives his wages, and gathers fruit
- i. Those are all harvest terms – He is saying, I'm already harvesting – it's here!
 - ii. The "fruit" refers to the people who become followers of Jesus, in the first instance the Samaritans – the eternal life is that for which the crop is harvested.
- c. 'One sows and another reaps.'
- i. Some have wondered if this is a proverb about the inequality of life – one sows and another reaps what that person sowed instead of them reaping themselves, but that doesn't seem to fit the way it is being used here.
 - ii. It's a reference to the different roles of farming that are both essential to the outcome – one sows and another reaps, the work of both sower and reaper is essential. The sower labors in anticipation of what is to come; the reaper must never forget that the harvest he enjoys is the fruit of another's toil. (adapted from Carson)
 - iii. Who are those others? In what way have they labored?
 - 1. Moses – the Samaritans only believed in the first five books of the OT, the Pentateuch
 - 2. John the Baptist had come through the area, with his typical calling to repent because the kingdom of God was at hand
 - 3. And they are just about to see the way that a Samaritan woman has been laboring by telling her fellow villagers about Jesus.
 - a. She went back to testified about Jesus and many came to ask Him more questions and ended up believing in Him. The person they likely despised and discounted models what Jesus is asking them to do also.
 - iv. Who are the people who have labored before us today?
 - 1. Parents and grandparents who maybe imperfectly took kids to church, brought them to a VBS, planted some seeds – and when they are 25 they come to Christ.

2. Church planters that came to southeast Idaho 60 years ago to plant Pocatello Bible Church.
 3. Maybe someone heard a Billy Graham message on tv 20 years ago and it stuck with them.
 4. Maybe someone watched a 2-minute Charlie Kirk video on Instagram after he was killed and they decided to go to church.
- d. The harvest is modeled – demonstrated (4:39-42)
- i. Many believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified
 1. What does this woman know at this point? Not much.
 - a. She hasn't gone to Bible college. She doesn't have a masters degree. She hasn't been discipled. She hasn't attended Sunday school.
 - b. She has just become convinced that Jesus is the promised Messiah who knew her sin and yet offered her living water – and she believed in Him.
 - c. She told people what she knew.
 - ii. The normal pattern of the gospel going out is by normal Christians telling others what they know.
 1. **John 15:27** and you *will* testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.
 2. **John 17:20** "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;
 - iii. Many more believed because of His word
 1. They asked Him to stay and He did for two days.
 2. The animosity between Samaritans and Jews went both ways, and yet they were so taken with Jesus and His teaching that they asked Him to stay.
 3. I would love to know what He said during those two days, wouldn't you?
 - a. We don't know and God in His providence didn't see fit to include it in scripture so we don't need to know, but the result is that "many more believed because of His word."
 - b. They didn't disparage her testimony but rather confirmed it.
 4. Savior of the World
 - a. All 42 verses of chapter 4 build to this declaration – Jesus is the Savior of the world.
 - b. Why is this taking place in Samaria rather than in Judea? Why a Samaritan woman and her village rather than Jews in their village? To show that Jesus is the Savior *of the world* not just of the Jewish people.
 - c. The Messiah came through Jewish lineage and fulfilled Jewish prophecy but God had told Abraham, the Jewish patriarch 2 millennia earlier, that all people would be blessed through His descendent. Jesus said earlier in John 4 that salvation is from the Jews. It's another reminder of why antisemitism is a particularly vile type of hatred that Christians of all people should avoid.

- d. Jesus would save people from every nation, tribe, and language. Every people group, every culture. There is no other Savior. Not that all people would be saved but *all types* of people.
- e. Of the world's major religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam), Christianity is the one that has moved most significantly past its geographic point of origin.
- f. McLaughlin, "today, Christianity is the most diverse belief system in the world, with roughly equal numbers of Christians living in Europe, Latin America, and Africa, and with a rapidly growing church in Asia."
- g. Those who heard the gospel in Acts 2 were from modern day Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Egypt, and Italy.
- h. Over 60% of the population of sub-Saharan Africa identifies as Christian.

3. Applying the Word

- a. Is your "food" to do the will of the One who **sent** you?
 - i. Jesus' joy and satisfaction that filled Him like food, was to do the Father's will and complete the work on the cross to save you.
 - ii. And those He saves He also sends.
 - iii. **John 17:18-20** "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.¹⁹ "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. ²⁰ "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;
- b. Lift up your eyes to see the **opportunities** for the gospel right now.
 - i. **Matthew 9:35-38** ³⁵ Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. ³⁶ Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. ³⁸ "Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."
 - 1. What is it that showed the need for workers in the harvest? The response but even more it was the need. We seem to be seeing a response to the gospel right now, time will tell, but we definitely see a need.
 - 2. An article in The New York Times summarized the research this way: "Nearly three in five teenage girls felt persistent sadness in 2021 ... and one in three girls seriously considered attempting suicide."
 - ii. Invest, engage, explain, invite



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