

Challenging Discipleship (Abridged)

By Berry Kercheville

Jesus and his disciples arrived at Jacob's well outside Sychar after walking about fifteen miles. Tired and hungry, Jesus sat by the well while the disciples went into town to buy food. As he waited, a Samaritan woman came to draw water. Perhaps she came at midday to avoid others. Her immoral lifestyle may have made her the subject of stares and whispers. Whatever the reason, she probably had little concern about the Jewish traveler resting nearby.

But Jesus spoke to her, and she was startled: *"How is it that you, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?"* We know what followed: Jesus' offer of living water, the exposure of her sinful life, a discussion about true worship, and finally his revelation that he was the Messiah.



As the conversation ended, the disciples returned, astonished to see Jesus talking with a woman. She immediately left her water pot and hurried into the city, excitedly telling others to come see the man she believed was the Christ. The harvest was beginning.

Then the disciples interrupted Jesus' thoughts: *"Rabbi, eat!"*

Jesus answered, *"I have food to eat that you do not know about."*

Two contrasting pictures emerge. First, there is an excited woman who has discovered living water and becomes so consumed with sharing her discovery that she forgets the water she came to collect. Then there are Jesus' disciples, astonished that he is talking to a woman, seemingly unconcerned about her spiritual needs, urging Jesus to return to the business of "real life" and eat lunch.

"I have food to eat that you do not know about."

Jesus challenges them to recognize that he possesses something they do not. He wants to transfer his way of thinking to them. He wants them to hunger for what fills him.

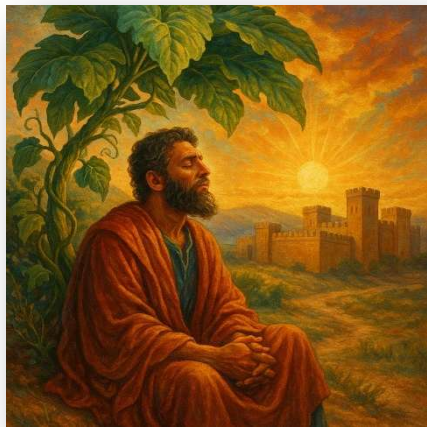
Wouldn't spiritual thinking have led the disciples to ask, "Were you able to teach her?" Shouldn't they have rejoiced as she hurried into the city? Instead, they ignored what had happened and immediately turned their attention to food. This mentality had to change if the kingdom message was going to spread.

Jesus explained: *"My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work."*

His words reveal how far his thinking was from theirs. But we must ask, *"Is Jesus' food my food?"* Consider four lessons.

First, we must not allow our excitement for living water to fade. It is tragic when longtime Christians become less passionate about God and souls than new Christians. Such spiritual indifference suggests we are no longer eating the "food."

Second, like the disciples, we can become consumed with personal comfort while remaining relatively unconcerned about souls around us. Jonah did this.



He grieved over the loss of his plant while caring little about thousands in Nineveh facing destruction.

Third, we easily compartmentalize our lives. We have "spiritual times" for worship, Bible study, and teaching, and then "personal time" when spiritual concerns seemingly disappear. The disciples were simply traveling through Samaria. They apparently were not expecting opportunities to serve God there. Yet God's work was standing directly before them.

Finally, spiritual food involves more than consuming Scripture. Certainly, God's word nourishes us, but Jesus says here, *"My food is to do the will of him who sent me."*

Spiritual nourishment therefore comes not merely from learning God's word, but from doing it—serving Christ and caring about the spiritual welfare of others. Our nourishment is found in doing, not merely consuming.

The harvest was Jesus' food. It must become ours as well.