

# Installation Challenge to the Church

## John 4:31-38

[www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=john+4:31-38](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=john+4:31-38)

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### Walking with Jesus

When you walk with Jesus you end up in strange places. The Jesus encounter told in John's Gospel is an uncomfortable story. Jesus and his disciples are in Samaria. No good, self respecting Rabbi would be in Samaria, yet Jesus is there. Jesus is talking with a woman at Jacob's well in the middle of the day. No good, self respecting woman would be at the community well at midday. Only the outcasts would ever come to the well in the heat of the noon day sun. So this Jesus encounter is with an outcast woman in an unclean country where Jesus should not be in the first place. But, Jesus is there! Jesus leads us into uncomfortable, novel, challenging situations way beyond our comfort zones! When you walk with Jesus you can find yourself in strange places.

Jesus' disciples are in the Samaritan village buying what food they can while Jesus talks with the outcast, unclean Samaritan. When they return, Jesus is refreshed and no longer in need of their food. When they question him, Jesus tells them that he has been filled up by something far greater than physical food. To the quizzical looks Jesus receives from his disciples, he responds with a challenge for them to open their eyes and see the work of God all around them. The harvest is ready, Jesus tells them and they need to get to work. Forget who planted! Forget who watered! Forget who weeded the fields! God has a harvest to be reaped among the outcasts and unclean people of the world! Jesus challenges his disciples need to get to work!

And, Jesus challenges us today in the same way. You cannot hold onto the past. You cannot hold onto the way we have done it before! You cannot hold onto personalities or leaders! When you walk with Jesus your focus is only upon Jesus! The Apostle Paul captured Jesus' teaching in his writing to the Corinthian Church when he said;

*"Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. What I mean is that each of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Peter," or "I belong to Christ." Has Christ been divided? (1 Corinthians 1:10-13, NRSV)*

<http://www.devotions.net/bible/00bible.htm>

The spiritual harvest is indeed ready for reaping! Our unity in Christ matters! It does not matter who planted! It does not matter who watered! It only matters who will walk with Jesus and reach out to share with others God's spiritual food; the love, joy, and peace of Christ!

So the question comes to us all—how do we share in God's harvest? Let me suggest three incredibly simple ways!

### **1. Accept Jesus' continual challenge to walk in strange places!**

D.J. captured Chilson people very well with his first sermon about a peculiar people. During their 2 year search process the Pulpit Committee found out how peculiar we really are! We are different because we have continually sought to follow Jesus leading into new ways of being and doing church. The process we have followed, that I challenge you to continue, is to honestly evaluate everything in the light of Christ's leading so that you can continually get better at building up God's community of life! One example of this process toward peculiarity is the fact that Chilson was one of the first churches in Southeastern Michigan to have an AED unit on site. We had it because we followed the evaluation process that moved us outside of the normal. When we needed that AED unit, we had it available! And, we saved a life! Following Jesus we honestly evaluate, then make the necessary changes to build up God's community of real life!

### **2. Both/And is the key to Christ's rich life!**

Jesus is very good at challenging his disciples to live within a "both/and" world. They were to be God honoring Jewish men who accepted and loved Samaritan people! We are to be Christ loving, God honoring, moral people who accept and love each and every person the Holy Spirit brings into our community! Chilson has resisted the major church marketing movements to create niche worship services for each age group! We have resisted the church marketing trend to create a church that is homogenous. So, Chilson is a church who welcomes all people—the rich, the poor, the educated, the uneducated, various nationalities and races! Jesus challenges us to step outside our comfort zones and allow new people to teach us new ways of living God's peace, joy, and love! It is a "both/and" world when you walk with Jesus.

### **3. Continue to live in the circle of God's Grace!**

God's grace is all we have! At Chilson we acknowledge that not one of us is good enough to declare ourselves righteous! The American Church trend over the last 30 years has been to play the "we are righteous—they are not" game. Lead by the media oriented ministries the focus in the American Church has been to demonize the outsider! At Chilson we have stood firm on Jesus clear directive to not only love the Samaritan, but to accept them and even to eat with them! We can only practice Christ like hospitality when we begin with the clear acknowledgment that the ground at the foot of Christ's cross is level! All of us are sinners in need of grace! None of us is righteous by our own making! Grace is all there is. When God's amazing grace abounds, then God's community of peace grows! Jesus challenges you to keep growing in grace while you continue to reach out, accept, and love the strangers in our community!

My friends, we share in God's harvest, walking with Jesus and eating spiritual food when we acknowledge in every way that we are resurrection people! Jesus walked through Samaria and defeated religious bigotry and self righteousness. Jesus walked the lonely valley of the shadow of death and Jesus Christ defeated sin and death.

We are blessed to know that we live life with Christ now and we will live with Christ for all eternity! Within the context of real life now and eternal life after death we can celebrate life with Christ

each day as a joyous journey! We do not need to be caught up in negativity. We do not need to judge others. We do not need to exclude anyone. The joy of Jesus is our gift each day!

The Apostle Paul accepted Jesus' challenge to joyously walk in strange, novel, and creative ways. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit Paul wrote to the Philippi church and to the Chilson Church this challenge:

*"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things...for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."* **(Philippians 4:4-13)**

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### **LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS**

**For Sunday, January 9, 2011's Sermon**

**Foundational Scripture: John 4:31-38**

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**Featured Scripture Reflection:** "Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. 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." (John 4:37-38 NIV)

**Opening Icebreaker:** What causes you to skip a meal unknowingly?

#### **Scripture Questions**

##### **What is the scripture saying?**

- What are the reasons the disciples are surprised to find Jesus with a woman at the well?
- What do you think Jesus means when he talks about spiritual food?
- What is so unusual about Jesus being in Samaria?
- How does the parable of the harvest apply to the disciples?

##### **How is your life touched?**

- What is spiritual food for you?
- What can you do to celebrate God's changes?
- What can you do to work in God's harvest?
- What do you learn about Jesus from this encounter with the outcast woman?

##### **What is God's invitation to you?**

- What can Jesus be asking you to do in Chilson's time of leadership transition?

##### **What can you pray for?**

Pray that Chilson Hills will be a joyous, faithful, praying community of God's resurrection power celebrating The Christ's transforming hope and love in the midst of our individual lives, our families, and our church.