

Message Discussion Guide

THE GOSPEL DEMANDS RADICAL URGENCY

The Church at Brook Hills,

Chris Nichols

September 28, 2008

John 4:27-42

This guide is to help you facilitate discussion with your Small Group. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering and owning the truths of God's Word. There may be questions you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on their relationship with God. Your role is to facilitate this experience not to complete the discussion guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid teaching task list.

Connect...

Use one or both of the following options to introduce the discussion time to follow.

Option 1

Write on a poster board or whiteboard the following: "URGENT". Ask everyone to brainstorm the first things that come to mind when you think of the word "urgent". (Answers may include: family, kids, to-do list, priority, job, finances, parents, children, etc.)

- Why are these things urgent?
- What makes them urgent?

Explain that we will be talking about radical urgency today in our small group.

Option 2

(this option is designed more for groups who have been a meeting a designated amount of time and have earned some level of "trust")

Explain: This week we will be discussing the radical urgency that the gospel demands of us. We will look at the needs that surround us and our role in helping to fulfill those. But before we do that...

Ask: In your life, right now and present-tense, what is most "urgent and pressing"? What can we be praying for as a community, for you?

(In a group setting, it is easy for members to speak in "3rd person" instead of "1st person". Encourage your group members to speak about urgent matters in their own lives.

Example: 3rd person, "Sometimes, people get overwhelmed when their kids are not doing well in school." 1st person, "This week, I am feeling overwhelmed because my youngest child is struggling in school.")

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The Big Picture...

Before reviewing the current message and discussion points, it might be helpful to give a broad picture of the current message series entitled "Radical". The lesson we are doing today is a part of a larger series called "Radical: What the gospel demands". In your own words, sum up the last few weeks and how this series has been impacting you. How have you been processing the teachings and scriptural challenges? Share those to transition to the next section.

Review the Message...

Setting the Passage in context...

The primary passage to be studied is John 4:27-42. Understanding these verses can only happen in the context of the larger passage. Take some time to read over and study all of John 4 to be able to understand verses 27-42.

The Samaritan Woman...

When the disciples encounter Jesus in verse 27, he has been at Jacob's well. Jesus had been in a conversation with a Samaritan woman. Jesus provides a real-life example of the teaching he gives in verses 27-42. Jesus chooses to talk with her about the urgent needs that exist in her life. The woman may have thought that "thirst" was her most pressing need. In reality, her "spiritual thirst" was her most pressing need. As she encountered Jesus, her deepest, most pressing needs were met.

NOTE: In John 4:4, there is an interesting phrase "had to go through". Geographically, Jesus did not have to go through Samaria. In fact, it was the Jewish custom to go around Samaria in order to avoid the "unclean Samaritans". So, why was it "necessary" for Jesus to go through Samaria?

Jesus does not have an urgent interest in a contest over converts with John the Baptist, nor does He seem interested in a political fight.

Jesus shows radical disregard for the opinions and prejudices of men.

Discussion/Application

- Based on Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman, what prejudices did Jesus disregard?
- What were the Jewish "opinions" of Samaritans? How were they treated?
- What current prejudices exist in your life? (racial, economic, etc.)
- Is your life shaped more by the prejudices of our culture or the radical demands of the gospel?
- How is the scripture this week currently confronting your prejudices?
- Are you willing to go through your own "Samaria" in order to reach and minister to a lost person or person in need? How are you doing this?

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Read John 4:27-42 aloud

The following discussion and application questions relate to this text

His radical urgency for the lost person trumps all our cultural and religious traditions.

Radical urgency does not come from what we know; it only comes from who we know.

Jesus' radical urgency flies in the face of our devotion to our career plans and personal life schedules.

Seeing with the urgency of the gospel results in action.

Discussion/Application

- What aspects of religion or religious traditions have kept you from knowing God?
- How have your career plans and personal life schedule taken on an "urgent" status in your life? How is that unhealthy?
- True biblical knowledge involves applying the truths of God's word. "What we know" becomes secondary to "who we know". How does knowing God through Jesus Christ affect the urgency in which you share with others?

At one point in the teaching, Chris Nichols shared a personal experience of taking a hard look at his own career plans and personal goals. He shared about the 2 teenage boys that his family adopted from the Ukraine. Last fall, the second teenager lost his older brother who was 18 years old from tuberculosis. Chris made the trip over to the Ukraine with his adopted son to attend the funeral and take care of family matters. While there, he was walking to the government building one day when God confronted his own prejudices and life-goals. Chris saw the poor and helpless on the streets and God convicted his heart. God asked him: "Will you spend the rest of your days fueling your own life goals and career plans or will you follow me? Are you willing to give up and sacrifice your career plans and personal life schedules to follow me?" This encounter changed Chris' life and direction forever.

- Based on the personal experience above, ask group members if they have experienced anything like that. Have 1 or 2 share that experience.
- What would it look like for you to sacrifice your own life-agenda and plans to follow Christ? What keeps you from doing that?

This harvest is a celebration with God Himself.

We have lives that may appear full, but they are urgently empty!

The fields don't have any appeal to us because we don't see the reality of the harvest.

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Is it four months and then the harvest for us, or is the urgency of Christ in us to pick now?

Discussion/Application

- Jesus uses the term “harvest” in verses 34-38. Why did Jesus say “open your eyes and look at the fields?”
- Based on what had just happened with the Samaritan woman, what “harvest” was Jesus referring to? What connection was Jesus trying to make for his disciples?
- The phrase “four months and then the harvest” refers to our “putting off” what needs to happen now. It describes the procrastination that exists in many of our lives. There is little urgency to reap the harvest. There is little urgency to share the gospel truth with others. How is your life reflecting these statements?

NOTE: Chris Nichols made one point that is especially pertinent to parents. He said “our kids pick up on what is urgent to us.” If your group is made up of parents, this would be a great statement to talk about. What kind of message are we sending our children? What “urgencies” exist in their lives due to what they see in us?

Summary Thoughts and Questions

This teaching and discussion guide has focused on the radical urgency of the gospel. Your group time has brought some questions to the surface that need to be asked. More than likely, as you approach the end of your small group time, group members will be contemplating many things. In order to help guide them as they leave, share the following...

- Earlier we talked about the phrase “had to go through”. It was “necessary” that Jesus go through Samaria. This was his mission and calling. Today’s lesson highlights 2 key things for us...
 1. As an individual, where is God calling you to “go through”? Who is He calling you to reach in your workplace, neighborhood, or family? Who is He calling you to disciple? What fears do you face about doing these things?
 2. As a small group, where is God calling us to “go through”? Are we to consider serving the homeless and the hungry at a local food shelter? Should we plan to go on a global trip together in the coming year? Should we put together a plan for discipling others in our community or starting a new small group? What is stopping us from doing these things?