

July 18, 2021 – Small Group – Leader's Guide –

Read John 4:27-42

1. As food sustains the human body, purpose sustains our human existence. What are some of the prevalent "purposes" set out by our Western society for the meaning of our existence?

There are a variety of responses: money, power, sex, fame, success, family integrity, legacy, security, comfort, children, relationship, attractiveness, health/athletic accomplishments, travel, etc.

2. According to Jesus, the doing of God's will is food that keeps you going, as one of the primary purposes of our human existence. How does the doing of God's will uphold and sustain a person's life?

Obedience to God's will is the act of lining up with the created order, design, and parameters for which God determined for humans and the world to operate. It is basic wisdom and flourishing to live diligently, righteously, and conscientiously, in regard for others, self, the environment, and for the pleasing of God's will. But obedience does not guarantee safety, security, or comfort. Everyone who seeks to live righteously will be persecuted, will face obstacles, and will be disregarded by a largely unrighteous world.

3. Part of the doing of God's will is the fulfilling of His mission in the world. Jesus points to the ongoing labour in God's harvest. In what ways do we as Christians participate in the harvest of God's field?

We can work as farmers work the ground: to remove weeds and debris, to till and plough the soil, to sow and plant, and then to water and prune while keeping the weeds in check. The analogy is that there are varying degrees of spiritual work in all of our relationships. Some people in our lives are hardened to Christianity because of bad past experiences or cultural misrepresentation. Others are softened by the circumstances in their life and are searching for answers to their questions. A few may be ready to put their faith in Jesus if they are supported and helped by the Christians in their lives.

4. The Western Church may not be presently "reaping" many into faith in Jesus. In hardened ground, how could we as Christians begin to remove debris, plough and till the ground, and sow the seeds of the Gospel?

We must first live exemplary lives, responsible and conscientious, giving no reason for others to be offended by our conduct but leaving the offense instead to the message of the Gospel. We then courageously and winsomely engage in conversation, dialogue, and sometimes debate in the public forum or in the privacy and intimacy of our own friendships and family connections. While this would involve each of us as individuals within our own networks, this is a

collective enterprise--the message of the new creation is a community that invites, welcomes, and hosts every person into the midst of a people who are forgiven and forgiving, loving as they are loved, living righteously and justly, having clear consciences, conducting themselves peaceably and humbly before others and God. And then perhaps, the message of the Gospel becomes compelling to those who are observing.