

Lift Up Your Eyes

Bible Study • Leader's Guide

Please provide a copy of this study, a hymnal, and a Bible for each participant.

Opening Prayer: We come to You to study Your Word and for You to lift up our eyes to Your truth so it will fill our hearts with love and understanding. In Jesus' name. Amen.

When you first saw the title for this Bible study, were you thinking, "Okay, I bet it will be about lifting my eyes to Jesus, or to the hills, or to the cross." These are typical Bible study themes for sure. However, this phrase is dropped into John 4:31–37 where the focus seems to be more about food, not eyes.

Read John 4:31–37. How many food references are there for each item below?

Eating **3** eat (v.31, v.32, and v.33)

Food **2** (v. 32 and v. 34)

Harvest **2** (in v. 35 twice)

John sets up this section in verse 30.

What does he say?

They went out of the town and were coming to him.

Do you know who is coming? This passage follows the story of the Samaritan woman at the well. She has told the townspeople, "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" (John 4:29). Now they are heading out to see for themselves. However, before the townspeople reach Jesus, John tells us about Jesus' discussion with the returning disciples.

The disciples have been in town buying food (John 4:8). They were not there when Jesus explained the gift of Living Water to the woman. When they returned, *They **marveled** that he was talking with a **woman**, but no one said, "What do you seek?" or "Why are you talking with her?"* (John 4:27). They must have been thinking it or John would not have recorded it. Do you wonder why they seem so reticent to ask Jesus questions? Maybe they did not think she was worth the trouble. Instead, they began urging Jesus to eat. After all, they had just returned with the groceries.

The disciples' interaction with Jesus is formal. Their request addresses Jesus as Rabbi. Even though Jesus calls them brethren, or brothers, on multiple occasions, the disciples seem to keep a respectful social distance, and He is not exactly addressed as one of the gang.

In the Greek, aorist (φάγε) is the word that indicates to “eat and finish” in urgency. Since they were in Samaria, they may have wanted to hurry on to their next stop.

Samaritans were not **friendly** to the Jews. **(A little background on Samaritans/Jews rivalry is appropriate here.)**

When Jesus tells them, “*I have food to eat that you do not know about*” (John 4:32), the disciples don't know what to do.

If this were a play, the disciples would be whispering in asides on stage:

Volunteers could act out possible disciple concerns.

“Did you give Him something?”

“No. Did you?”

“He didn't have anything when we left?”

“Do you think that lady gave Him something?”

“I don't know. Maybe.”

Notice that no one comes out to ask Jesus directly about the source of this food. It is reminiscent of verse 27 when no one asked about Him talking with the woman. In modern times, it is almost like a person who refuses to ask for directions. Did the disciples think they were just going to figure it out themselves without their “Jesus GPS” spelling it out for them?

Jesus, of course, knows everything the disciples are doing. So he addresses the unasked questions with another head-scratcher:

My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work (John 4:34).

What work is Jesus to accomplish? The same “accomplish verb” is used in John 17:4.

Redemption that He finished on the cross.

This is the first time Jesus speaks of a great sender, but He uses this motif again and again afterward. Here are two other examples:

Matthew 10:40

John 12:44

Then Jesus turns his rhetoric to the harvest. In Palestine, harvest happens in April, which means this conversation probably took place in December to allow for the four months' reference.

What is harvested in your area? I challenge you to find something for each letter of the alphabet.

Sample answers below.

A — apples, apricots

B — beans, blackberries

C — corn, cantaloupe

D — dates, durum wheat

Therefore, when Jesus said, “Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest” (John 4:35), where do you think He wanted the disciples to be looking?

Accept any answer for now.

Are they looking for the typical crops in Palestine, such as olives, figs, dates, and wheat?

It is okay to lead them to this conclusion for now.

To say “lift up your eyes” is another way of saying “pay attention.”

What happens if God’s people do not pay attention? What happens in the passages below?

Exodus 9: 20–26: Ex. 9:20–26 **plague of hail**

Jeremiah 6:17–19: **disaster**

Zechariah 7:10–14: **provokes God’s anger**

Have you ever neglected to pay attention to urgent matters in your life? Maybe you have forgotten to file or renew a legal form for home, work, or school. Maybe you have failed to pay attention to the warning signs of an impending illness or health concern. What, if anything, have you learned from these experiences?

Did you “pay attention?” An agricultural harvest won’t be ready for four months in the text! Do you remember who was coming in verse 30?

The townspeople

There is a spiritual harvest heading this way. On the horizon is a throng of townspeople ripe for spiritual harvest. They are fruits Christ is gathering for His eternal kingdom.

R. C. H. Lenski’s commentary on St. John says, “The wages of the spiritual reaper are the souls gathered for life eternal.” [R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St John’s Gospel*, (Augsburg Publishing House, 1943), page 332.]

The rejoicing is for both the reaper and the sower together (John 4:36)! It does not matter which one you are!

According to Paul, how is this supposed to work?

God gave the **growth**. So neither he who **plants** nor he who **waters** is anything, but only God who gives the **growth** (1 Corinthians 3:5–7).

Jesus invites us to join Him in His redemptive work, now that His redemptive work has made us family. The Holy Spirit guides us to walk with Him each day as we **Lift Up Our Eyes** with Him.

So, **Lift Up Your Eyes** so you don't miss your opportunity to sow the Gospel truth to those God has placed in our lives.

One more thing.

Were you paying attention to the harvest time of Palestine? What time of year did the harvest come?

April

What is celebrated every year in late March or April?

Passover/Easter

This is a season when we are directed to pay attention to the cross, when Jesus finished the work He was to accomplish (John 17:4).

Pay Attention!

*For the word of the **cross** is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the **power** of **God*** (1 Corinthians 1:18).

Closing Prayer: Lord, You place so many things before me, yet I often choose to ignore them. Lift up my eyes so that I do not miss the eternal harvest opportunities before me. Redirect my attention to the message of the cross so I can share it with everyone. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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