**Rivers of Living Water**

*God’s Eternal Plan for Spreading the Gospel*

*John 7:37-38*

**Introduction**

1. Much time is spent in considering effective approaches to evangelism. (These efforts can be fruitful.)
2. However, without the fundamental understanding of God’s design for bringing others to Christ, we will consistently fail.
3. Jesus spoke words which demonstrate this plan in a beautiful way – **John 7:37-38**
   1. God’s eternal plan for spreading the gospel is for those who have received and benefitted from its blessings to bring it to others.
   2. God blesses us to bless others – the life-giving water we take in is meant to flow back out into the world in abundance.
4. If we do not grasp this biblical concept of an organic, genuine evangelism as a natural result of true faith, we will fail to bring others to Christ.
5. Genuine Encounters with Jesus Result in Sharing Him
6. John the Baptist
   1. Divine appointment:
      1. **John 1:6-9** – bring others to believe true Light through witness.
      2. **John 1:23** – the harbinger of **Isaiah 40:3-5**
         1. **Luke 1:16-17** – turning people to the Lord. (**cf. Malachi 4:5-6**)
         2. Great, honorable position, but one of deference to Jesus.
   2. His encounter with Jesus:
      1. **John 1:31-33** – Jesus came to Him, and God identified Him as the Messiah.
      2. John’s work was to prepare the way for Him for the wellbeing of others, but John himself was in need of His offer – **John 1:9; Matthew 3:13-14**
   3. His humility leading to acceptance of Jesus, and receding into the background, pointing others to Him:
      1. He understood his place – **John 1:19-21, 26-27**
      2. He pointed Jesus out consistently – **John 1:29-30, 34-37** – they stopped following John, and started following Jesus.
         1. **John 3:30** – after disciples came to him concerning a question about Jesus’ baptizing.
   4. When John encountered Jesus, it was to his benefit, but he knew his purpose was to share Him.
      1. This required full humility, which only a genuine encounter with Jesus can produce.
      2. Yielding to Him fully, meaning compelling others to go after Him, not John.
7. Early Disciples
   1. Andrew and another (John?) – Eagerly sought the One John was to point out – **John 1:35-39**
      1. **(v. 39)** – remaining with Him, they heard from Him.
      2. Implied teaching by Jesus – **(v. 45)** – Philip to Nathanael.
   2. Andrew to Peter – **John 1:40-42**
      1. **(v. 41)** – the first thing he thought to do was to tell His bother.
         1. His words imply Jesus’ conversation convinced Him.
      2. Having received such convincing proof, he felt obligated to give it to another – his start was close to home.
   3. Jesus convinces Philip, who goes to tell Nathanael – **John 1:43-49**
      1. **(v. 45)** – shows this was not a blind leap, but the encounter with Jesus, the conversation they had, fit what he knew was true.
      2. **(v. 46)** – Nathanael’s skepticism is met with an invitation to encounter Jesus himself.
         1. **(vv. 41-42)** – even Andrew did more than just mention his conviction, but brought his brother to the same source of conviction.
      3. **(vv. 47-49)** – Nathanael believes.
   4. These men experienced overwhelming joy met with an urgent sense of responsibility to share Jesus with others.
8. Samaritan Woman
   1. Jesus’ offer to the Samaritan woman – **John 4:10-14**
      1. **(v. 10)** – something only God can give, and that Jesus is authorized to give.
      2. **(vv. 13-14)** – not something physical, but spiritual – “everlasting life”
   2. The woman’s request, and Jesus’ reply – **John 4:15-18**
      1. **(v. 15)** – she is not fully aware of what Jesus’ offer is, but wants it.
      2. **(vv. 16-18)** – Jesus’ response was not a subject change, but an effort to lead her further to the living water He can provide.
         1. Conviction of sin – effort to bring change.
         2. Miraculous knowledge – effort to incite faith.
      3. **(vv. 19-26)** – whatever her motives were in bringing up the place of worship, Jesus’ response persists in getting her to realize, not only the coming changes, but the need to change herself, and grants further proof of who He is.
         1. She had not been worshiping in an authorized way – **(v. 22)**
         2. She would need to fully yield to God’s word to be a true worshipper – **(vv. 23-24)**
            1. Samaritans rejected all revelation except the Pentateuch.
            2. Therefore, rejected God’s prescribed place of worship.
         3. His knowledge of unknowable things, as well as the authority with which He spoke was leading her to conviction – **(vv. 25-26)** – she asked, and Jesus told her plainly.
            1. This is an important moment.
            2. Accept Him as the Messiah based on the insurmountable evidence?
            3. Reject Him because of the requisite of change?
   3. The woman’s actions imply an embrace of the truth, and the changes which it brought, and demanded – **John 4:28-30**
      1. Left her waterpot, but that’s not all.
      2. Change in focus from physical water.
      3. Left with excitement about Jesus to tell others – not an action indicating a stubbornness to stay in her sinful relationship **(vv. 17-18).**
      4. Not an action indicating a resentment about Jesus’ words concerning Samaritan’s place of worship.
   4. She went and told all she could – **John 4:39-42** – they believed as well.
   5. Rather that chafing at Jesus’ exposure of her sin, and false worship, she embraced the change He demanded because of the offer only He could provide – **(vv. 10, 13-14)** – she eagerly told others because she had a genuine encounter with Jesus.
9. True Conversion Results in the Spreading of the Gospel
10. True Conversion is a Transformation
    1. True conversion demonstrated by Jesus to Nicodemus – **John 3:1-8**
       1. Sincerity of Nicodemus – **(vv. 1-2)**
          1. **(vv. 1, 10)** – a knowledgeable spiritual leader/teacher in Israel – that he came to Christ speaks volumes about his character.
          2. **(v. 2)** – He is understanding by the recent signs performed by Jesus that He is no ordinary man – what message of truth might He have for Nicodemus?
       2. Jesus’ assertion of conditional entrance into the Messianic kingdom – **(vv. 3-8)**
          1. **(vv. 3-4)** – Jesus seeking to impress upon Nicodemus the spiritual nature of the kingdom, and entrance into it.
             1. **(v. 4)** – Nicodemus thinks of the kingdom physically, and as a Jew as one already in it.
             2. ***“born again”*** – *anōthen* – from above; by analogy, from the first; by implication, anew (STRONG) ***(“above,” v. 31)***

**“from above” (NKJV, fn)**

* + - * 1. Not all Israel who are of Israel – **Romans 9:6; 2:28-29**

To truly be God’s child, and to see that kingdom requires more than physical circumstance.

It requires a spiritual birth.

* + - 1. **(vv. 5-7)** – This is Jesus’ commentary on what He said in verse 3, that Nicodemus may have better insight into what He meant by ***“born again”*** (from above).
         1. ***“water and the Spirit”*** – pointing to baptism.
         2. From above – **John 1:12-13** – born of God.
         3. **1 Peter 1:22-23** – “through the word of God”
         4. I.e. fully yield and submit to heaven’s revelation, following God not in mere physical outward relation of national ritualism, but in faithful living. (Starting at baptism.)
         5. **(vv. 7, 10)** – do not marvel, is not the OT filled with exhortation to true inner commitment of faith, and looking forward to the time when God’s people will ONLY be those who have undergone such transformation?
      2. **(v. 8)** – this birth/transformation is not physically observed, but is spiritual – however, its effects are observable.
         1. (**vv. 18-21**) – part of which includes coming out of darkness to walk in the light of truth.
         2. SHARING JESUS IS A KEY EFFECT OF THIS TRUE INNER CHANGE 🡪
  1. The outflow of living waters is dependent upon the inflow **– John 7:37-38**
     1. Not physical water **– John 4:13-14**
     2. ***“come to Me and drink” = “believes in Me”***
     3. Such commitment not only means blessings for self, but such an abundance that it overflows to others.
     4. This is the nature of truly receiving Christ’s gift – it is too abundant, too powerful, that if one truly embraces it, for them to keep it to themselves. (**cf. Jeremiah 20:9**)

1. Inner Change Overflows to Others
   1. It is God’s design for the gospel to transform us, giving us life, that we might bring others to that life – **John 7:38-39**
      1. **(v. 39)** – John’s inspired comments on Jesus’ words.
      2. Represents the time where God’s word is in the process of revelation, but this is God’s means of bringing the truth to all – **Acts 2:17-18** (fulfillment of Joel 2)
         1. In action – **Acts 6-8** – Stephen and Philip (not apostles, but those who had drank of that water of life, and it became in them rivers of living water coming out of them.)
         2. **Acts 8:4** – all those who believed.
         3. Today we do not have the spiritual gifts, but we have their product – the complete revelation of God – and as they took it to the world, it is God’s design for us to take it.
         4. They were transformed and therefore moved to evangelize!
   2. Citizens of the kingdom fully yield to God’s law, and direct their energy and resources to the Lord’s will – kingdom growth **– Isaiah 2:1-4**
      1. **(v. 2)** – the church.
      2. **(v. 3a)** – new birth – He teaches, we walk in it.
      3. **(v. 3b)** – out of Zion goes forth the Law.
         1. **Acts 1:8** – apostolic preaching of the gospel by the HS.
         2. But then, those who are converted by it 🡪
      4. **(v. 4)** – those who become kingdom citizens transform to carry out the work of bringing others to the Lord.
         1. From weapons of war, but tools for sowing and pruning.
   3. Having submitted to the Lord’s will, and transformed into His image, we now assume His work – **Galatians 2:20; Luke 19:10**

**Conclusion**

1. If we drink in the life-giving water Jesus offers, and allow ourselves to be transformed into His image, we will be sharing Christ with others.
2. While reaching others with the gospel has its challenges, and involves skills which can and should be honed for more effective efforts, it begins with genuine faith in Jesus, which itself includes a focused love of souls that manifests in a sharing of the good news of salvation in Christ.