

## Won by One

John 4:1-42

Several years ago my wife and I were on a flight to Puerto Rico for vacation. I was in the middle seat, she was on the aisle, and the window seat was still open. I was hoping it would stay empty so we could stretch out. But right before takeoff, the last passenger boarded—the guy who ended up right next to me.

He was fidgety, clearly nervous about flying, and pretty rude. He got into an argument with the flight attendant because he wanted five sugars in his coffee and she only gave him two. I was tired and disappointed. My first thought was, “This is going to be a long flight.” But later I opened my Bible and started quietly reading. Then I prayed that the Lord would give me an opportunity to talk with him about Jesus.

Soon after, he looked over and asked, “Is that a Bible?” I said yes. He told me he had tried reading the Bible but couldn’t understand it. I replied, “I get that—there was a lot I didn’t understand at first either. But someone showed me the main point of the Bible, and when I got that, everything changed.

The Scriptures aren’t just a list of rules—they’re a love letter from God so we can know Him and experience a real relationship with Him that meets the deepest need of our hearts.”

Then I asked him, “Would you like to know how you can have a relationship with God that changes everything?” He said yes. For the next two hours I listened to his heart, answered his questions, and kept bringing the conversation back to the gospel of Jesus. As the plane was landing in Puerto Rico, he prayed to receive Christ as Lord and Savior.

When he got back to Chicago, he reached out, started attending church and home Bible studies, and was eventually baptized.

One tired moment. One ordinary conversation. And One life that started shifting. That experience reminded me that I'm not the first person to see God work through a simple, inconvenient conversation. Because long before my flight to Puerto Rico, Jesus showed us exactly how powerful this approach can be.

This morning we are going to consider another ordinary conversation at a dusty well under the midday sun. One tired, thirsty woman with a complicated past. One life radically transformed—and through her, an entire village was stirred to faith. That single encounter changed everything. That's the power of "Won by One."

We are going to consider the greatest and most effective "method" for winning the lost to Christ. It's not a flashy event, a new program, or a complicated strategy that requires a big budget.

Jesus' master plan of evangelism is profoundly simple: God's people are God's plan. JD Greer said it well: "People reach people."

Every believer saved by grace is part of God's master plan for winning the lost and making disciples of all nations. Every single one of us is called to be a worker in God's harvest field of souls.

You don't need a theology degree. You don't need to be an eloquent speaker. You just need a heart that's willing to be used by God—one conversation at a time.

Statistics confirm that this simple approach works powerfully even today. Researcher George Barna revealed that about 25 percent of adults in the United States say they would attend church if a friend would simply invite them and offer to accompany them. Think about that for a moment: One out of every four people around you may be waiting for a personal invitation from someone they know and trust. That is an amazing statistic with huge implications for how we live as followers of Jesus.

The Institute of American Church Growth found that 75 to 90 percent of new believers come to Christ through a friend or acquaintance who

explains the good news on a one-to-one basis. Not through stadium crusades or slick advertising campaigns, but through relationships.

This is not new. The Bible is filled with examples of one-on-one witness. This morning we look at the greatest example of all: Jesus Himself with the Samaritan woman at the well.

**Main Idea:** One lost soul means everything to Jesus. If one soul matters that much to Him, then it ought to matter to everyone who knows Him.

What moved Jesus to go after this one woman—and through her, reach her whole village? That’s what we’re going to examine. What moved Jesus ought to move us as well.

## 1. Compelled by Love

First, we see that Jesus was compelled by love. In the time of Christ, Jews and Samaritans shared a deep, bitter hatred. The Samaritans were a mixed race—part Jewish and part Gentile. After the Assyrian conquest centuries earlier, they had intermarried with other nations. When the Jews returned from exile and began rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem, the Samaritans offered to help but were rejected. In response, they built their own temple on Mount Gerizim and developed their own version of worship.

This only deepened the divide.

Orthodox Jews despised Samaria so much that they would take a long, inconvenient detour around it rather than set foot on Samaritan soil. The prejudice was intense and mutual. Yet after leaving Judea on His way to Galilee, the apostle John records these striking words:

“He *had* to pass through Samaria” (John 4:4).

Jesus deliberately chose the direct route others avoided.

Why? He was compelled by love. Love drew Him to the people others rejected. Love moved Him to cross cultural, racial, and religious barriers. Ultimately, that same love drove Him from the glory of heaven to a manger in Bethlehem, and then to a cross outside Jerusalem to lay down His life for sinners like you and me.

Ray Pritchard captures the heart of this moment beautifully: “Jesus ‘had to’ go through Samaria because He wanted to reach this one woman, and through her to reach her whole village. What a Savior! He loves the people the world loves to hate.”

Brothers and sisters, this compelling love is often the missing ingredient in the lives of many believers who rarely engage in evangelism. It’s not always that we don’t know *how* to share our faith. Sometimes it’s that we’re simply not compelled to do so. If we are not moved in our hearts for the lost, they will rarely be moved toward Jesus through us.

Charles Spurgeon challenged believers with these powerful words: “The Holy Spirit will move them by first moving you. If you can rest without them being saved, they will rest too. But if you are filled with an agony for them, if you cannot bear that they should be lost, you will soon find that they are uneasy too. I hope you will get into such a state that you will dream about your child or your hearer perishing for lack of Christ, and start up at once and begin to cry, ‘O God, give me converts or I die!’ Then you will have converts.”

Where does this kind of love come from? It comes from the Holy Spirit. It grows in us as we cultivate a deep, daily relationship with Christ through prayer, worship, and immersion in God’s Word. It is stirred up even more as we take small steps of obedience to share His love with those who need it most. When the love of Christ abounds in our hearts, we will be compelled to reach out in sacrificial, inconvenient ways—just as Jesus did.

## 2. Concerned About All People

Jesus was not only compelled by love—He was deeply concerned about all people, regardless of their background. He didn't just pass through Samaria; He stopped and made time for one person. Weary from His journey, Jesus sat down by Jacob's well around noon—the sixth hour. His disciples had gone into the city to buy food, while a Samaritan woman came to draw water.

Jesus initiated the conversation with a simple request: “Give me a drink” (John 4:7). On the surface, this seems ordinary. But in that culture, it was radical. Jewish men did not speak to Samaritan women. Many had such low regard for them that they wouldn't even share a drinking vessel.

Yet Jesus reached across every barrier—ethnic, gender, social, and moral—to reach one broken Samaritan woman—to show her that she mattered.

This woman had a reputation. She had been married five times and was currently living with a man who wasn't her husband. She came to the well at noon, likely to avoid the other women who drew water in the cooler morning or evening hours. She was an outcast among outcasts. But Jesus saw her differently. He valued her as someone created in God's image and in desperate need of living water.

Greg Laurie offers practical wisdom here: “I have seen Christians armed with memorized Bible verses and clever arguments completely overwhelm a person in a ‘gospel barrage.’ They may have even won the debate, but sadly they did not win the soul. One of the best ways to share your faith is to engage a person... Ask questions about their life, their views, their outlook... Don't interrupt them. Instead, try to understand what they are saying. Then, lovingly begin to build your bridge to them.”

Paul Tripp reinforces this relational approach: “I think one of the most powerful means of evangelism is not statements, it's questions... People love to tell their story. They love to have somebody who will

listen... Listen for entry gates. It's just a way of thinking about how to advance that conversation... Maybe in their story is a moment of rejection. Maybe their story is a struggle with depression. Maybe their story is family chaos... Always, there's something for you to grab a hold of. Will you listen long enough, and lovingly enough, to find them?"

Now, in Jesus' conversation with the woman, we see a clear, repeatable pattern that we can follow.

First, **He engaged her in a bridge-building conversation** (John 4:7-9). He started with a simple request: "Give me a drink." (John 4:7) He started right where she was — physically and relationally — and tore down barriers through simple kindness.

Then, **He turned the conversation to spiritual things** (John 4:10). He said, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."

Next, **He told her of His power to give eternal life** (John 4:13-14). He contrasted the temporary water that always leaves you thirsty again with the living water that becomes "a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Then came a very important moment. **He led her to an awareness of her spiritual need** (John 4:16-18). Gently but truthfully, He supernaturally exposed her broken relationships and the emptiness she tried to fill with people. He said, "Go, call your husband and come back." She replied, "I have no husband." Jesus answered, "You are right... You have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband."

This is such an important moment. Jesus was not just pointing out her pain — **He was exposing her sin**. He named the truth of her brokenness and her pattern of looking to people to satisfy what only God can satisfy. But notice *how* He did it: not with harsh condemnation but with gentle clarity. His goal wasn't to disgrace her.

His goal was to bring her to repentance — so she could turn from her sin and receive the forgiveness and new life He offers.

This is vital for us to understand today. Many people are drawn to Jesus because they want a better life now — less anxiety, better relationships, more purpose, or personal happiness. And Jesus does bring transformation to every part of our lives. But that's not the starting point of the gospel.

The gospel begins with rescue from sin's power and penalty, namely separation from God. Until we see our sin clearly and our desperate need for forgiveness, we'll never drink deeply of the living water that truly satisfies the soul. Jesus was full of both grace and truth. He loved her enough to tell her the truth about her sin so she could experience real freedom and relationship with God.

Finally, **He refused to be sidetracked from His purpose** (John 4:19-26). When she tried to shift the conversation to religious debates about worship locations, Jesus kept the focus on the heart of worship and revealed Himself as the Messiah.

Notice that in both my flight to Puerto Rico story and Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well, the conversations led to conversion in that same moment. God can certainly work that quickly when He chooses! But we should also remember that building bridges often takes longer.

The goal is never simply to get someone to pray a prayer so we can check a box. The goal is to reach their hearts with the gospel. Be prepared to continue the conversation. Bridges are not built overnight. Sometimes it takes multiple conversations, patient listening, and faithful presence over time before a person is ready to trust Christ. Keep sowing the seed. Keep loving. Keep pointing them to Jesus.”

You don't have to wait for a church program or special event to show people they matter. You are the program. Every time you walk out of these doors, you step into the mission field. Be a bridge, not a barrier, so people in your life can come to Jesus.

### 3. Consecrated to His Father's Will

Finally, Jesus lived fully consecrated to His Father's will. After her life-changing encounter with Jesus, the woman left her water jar behind and rushed back to her village with excitement: "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" (John 4:29).

Many Samaritans believed because of her testimony.

Meanwhile, the disciples returned with food and urged Jesus to eat. His response reveals His heart: "I have food to eat that you do not know about... My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work" (John 4:32, 34).

While the disciples were focused on physical bread, Jesus found His deepest satisfaction in spiritual obedience. There's something powerful here: **when you're on mission with God, you experience a joy, a strength, and a sense of God's nearness and presence that you simply won't find when you're sitting on the sidelines.**

Obedience in reaching others opens your eyes to see the harvest that others completely miss.

Warren Wiersbe observed: "The harvest was ready and only needed faithful workers to claim it. For some reason when it comes to witnessing for Christ, it always seems the wrong time and the wrong place! It takes faith to sow the seed, and we must do it even when the circumstances look discouraging."

Jesus looked at the fields and said to his clueless disciples, "Lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest" (John 4:35).

Think about this: The Samaritan woman — far from a trained theologian or polished speaker, went back to her village and simply shared what Jesus had done for her. She was still brand new in her faith, yet her fresh joy made her bold. That's one of the beautiful things about new believers: they often have a contagious excitement that doesn't wait for perfect knowledge.

“She didn’t even think about her past. She was so overwhelmed by the eternal life she had just received that her past shame didn’t cross her mind. The woman who moments earlier had been hiding from her neighbors was now running to them, completely free from the fear of what they would say about her.” Eric David

One of the best ways to keep that kind of joy alive in your own walk — or to reignite it if it’s grown cold — is by joining Jesus in His rescue mission.

Greg Laurie reminds us: “New believers are the lifeblood of the church. They also are the lifeblood of the Christian... You show me a church that does not have a constant flow of new Christians coming in, and I will show you a church that is stagnating. We in the church have a choice: evangelize or fossilize!”

The same is true for us individually. When we commit to the Father’s will — knowing Jesus and making Him known — we experience His presence, joy, and power in fresh ways. Our joy is not complete until we share it (1 John 1:4).

## **Conclusion**

Who is *your* Samaritan woman? Who is the “one” God has placed in your life?

If each of us became committed to reaching one person with the gospel—if each one reached one—we could see a great harvest of souls in our generation. Don’t just pray for opportunities. Obey when they come. Labor faithfully. Work diligently.

Some of you already know the person God is calling you to reach. So here’s a very practical way to begin — what Ron Hutchcraft calls the **Three Open Prayers**. These simple, biblical prayers (based on Colossians 4:3-4) can become your daily commitment for that one person:

- **Lord, open a door** — Give me a natural opportunity to talk about You.
- **Lord, open their heart** — Prepare them to be ready and receptive to hear the gospel.
- **Lord, open my mouth** — Give me courage and the right words when the moment comes.

Pray these three prayers regularly for the person or persons God has laid on your heart. Then watch and be ready.

One conversation. One life at a time. One Savior who is worthy of it all. Let us who have been won by One-go and win others by the same amazing grace.