

# The Gospel is For ALL

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As Jesus was visiting Zacchaeus' house, Jesus says that "the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). The New Testament continually displays Jesus' mission to save the lost—a mission that ended in His own crucifixion. Jesus followed His Father's will to completion, He showed compassion, and He left us a perfect example to follow. One such example is found in the story of the woman at the well (John 4:1-42). This story demonstrates the "All" in our one-year theme "The Gospel is For All." Jesus models simple behaviors in His encounter with the Samaritan woman and leaves us several points for consideration.

## **Sometimes we have to go where the lost are.**

In John 3:22-23, we find Jesus and his Disciples teaching and baptizing in the countryside of Judea due to the access to water. In chapter 4, we read that Jesus leaves for Galilee as He learns of the Pharisees' displeasure with His success in spreading the Gospel. To get to Galilee, Jesus had multiple travel route options. Jews of that day would typically travel a longer path to avoid Samaria altogether, "for Jews have no dealings with Samaritans" (John 4:9). The Jews viewed the Samaritans as not true Israelites; the Jews and Samaritans disagreed about various spiritual issues, including the location of worship (John 4:20). Jesus chooses to take the recommended Google Maps path, which takes Him directly through Samaria. While stopping to rest by a well, He meets the Samaritan woman. Jesus chose this unpopular route and unpopular city because He knew the Samaritans needed the gospel. Was this one woman really worth the risk and the effort? "So he told them this parable: "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance" (Luke 15:3-7).

## **Sometimes we have to teach those we wouldn't normally talk to.**

The Samaritan woman was not an idealistic Gospel candidate. She was a Samaritan, she was a woman, and possibly even an outcast amongst her own people. Samaritans were looked down on by the Jews, women were disregarded in many cases, and this woman had a storied past. Yet Jesus meets her where she was to share the Gospel with her. You and I would be deterred and come up with excuses for why a person isn't a good candidate to discuss the Bible with including, "this person looks kind of scary," "they go to that church and believe that doctrine," "they are a big sinner," and "they live

in that neighborhood.” Jesus shows the mistake in that kind of thinking. If Jesus chose to go around Samaria, the opportunity and the positive results would have been missed. “Many Samaritans from that town believed in Him because of the woman's testimony, ‘He told me all that I ever did.’ So when the Samaritans came to Him, they asked Him to stay with them, and He stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, ‘It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world’” (John 4:39-42).

### **Sometimes we have to have difficult conversations.**

Jesus teaches the woman about the Gospel through a discussion about drawing water out of the well. He says in verse 10, “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.” He follows that in verses 13 and 14 with, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” These verses speak of the blessings of following Jesus all the way through eternal life. At this point, it's like listening to a sermon about serving others the day after you've helped someone move. But in verse 16, Jesus raises the issue of her storied past. This woman was married 5 times and Jesus adds the following about her sixth and current relationship: “the one you now have is not your husband” (John 4:18). Peoples' lives are messy and in order to teach them, we may have to discuss those messy subjects and help them see that Jesus is the answer. “The woman said to him, ‘I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.’ Jesus said to her, ‘I who speak to you am He’ (John 4:25-26).

This story exemplifies that the Gospel truly is for all. Jesus' compassion for the lost took him to a place, a person, and a problematic background. Yet through His efforts, many more learned of Jesus and believed in Him, proclaiming that he was the Savior of the world (John 4:39-42). We need to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and take advantage of the opportunities that God gives us even if they appear hopeless.