

## A Stranger at the Well Vision Lesson #03

*Engaging lost and broken people  
to lead them to Jesus Christ  
in order to find hope, healing, and redemption.*

### **Introduction:**

Today's lesson will be focused on trying to determine practical ways to engage a person or persons you listed in the assignment from last week's lesson. We will look at an example of Jesus' engaging someone outside the "normal circle" of his followers and religious elite, and then try to apply some of the things we learned from this engagement to our own relationships.

### **Text:**

John 4.1-26 (The entire story is 4.1-42)

### **Leader Notes:**

The structure of this lesson agenda may be challenging for some of you and for some of our groups. Often, our group agenda tends to be gather for a meal, circle up and answer questions related to a text, then pray, and be dismissed. We do not often have assignments and expectations of things to do. This week will be one of the odd weeks.

The last couple of lessons have been intentionally crafted in order to move your group members first through a process of identifying ways in which Jesus interacted with people. I hope you collectively discovered that Jesus was always engaging others, especially those outside "religious circles." The second lesson in this series was intended to help group members begin to look for people around them who might be in a position where they need the hope that comes from Jesus Christ. Understand that this is the ultimate goal of the relationship—people growing in their relationship with Jesus—but not necessarily what happens tomorrow. Your group members should have a list of people in their "circle" or perhaps a better way to say this is: sphere of influence or contacts which is the most logical place to start developing relationships with others.

Knowing these people is not the same thing as developing a relationship with them and doing so can be challenging. Sharing our faith tends to be a daunting task because we look at the end result instead of the next step. People who study these things will tell you that in order for a person to move from point A to point Z, they must go through B, C, D, and so on. We too often ask the point Z question instead of the point B one, which may be as simple as a sincere: "How are you today?"

Know going into today's lesson that there will be some expectations listed at the end and let me ask you a favor. If this is completely uncomfortable for you—fake it. For the sake of your group, act like taking the next step is the most logical, easiest, joyful thing in the world there is to do. If you do not go into this exercise leading the charge, no one will follow you. And who knows, once you get yourself excited about this, it may be one of the easiest things you have done.

## **Suggested Group Meeting Agenda:**

Begin your group lesson reminding people that they were to make a list of people they came into contact with throughout this past week. (I realize that if they didn't do it, this moment may be a little too late, but it will at least let them be thinking about it while you go through the study of the text.) Tell your group you will explore this list more after the study of the Bible text.

Read the text and then answer the "Discussion Questions." Because you want to have plenty of time to do the exercise at the end of the lesson, there are fewer questions this week. I would check the questions before hand and do not be afraid to pick and choose the questions you feel would get the best response from your group.

NOTE: I do not assume that you will ask every question on our list of questions each week. I try to make the questions flow, but also try to have questions that allow you to pick the ones you like best. The "Icebreaker Question" attempts to introduce the idea and theme of the text indirectly, so it is always a good question to begin with. The last question (sometimes two questions) tends to be a summary that anticipates some action to come, so you might look at that one/two, but the other questions you can select the number that best works in your group.

After you have had a time of discussion, have your group members pull out the list of people from the past week. Ask the latter questions included in the "Discussion Questions" specifically about these lists. I have included a paradigm from Andy Stanley which will help shape your discussion, but you may have other ways to evaluate these lists.

Finish your time assigning the "To Do for Next Week" section.

Close your time in prayer for the people in your group who are seeking to develop relationships with others, as well as the people they have in mind. If your group is comfortable in doing so, you might go around the circle and have people in your group simply name the person(s) as a prayer that they will be open to a relationship with the group member and hopefully Jesus, at some point.

## **Discussion Questions:**

*Icebreaker Question:* Describe a time in your life when you felt completely cared for and valued by a stranger. What were the circumstances and why did this make you feel so valuable? How did this person(s) actions affect your own actions towards others?

Many people would describe their lives as lonely and without someone who really cares for them? Why is this the case? Why is really caring for someone else so rare today?

- If you were hearing the story of the woman at the well for the first time, what sort of things do you think would stand out to you in the story? Why are they noteworthy?
- Why do you think Jesus asks this woman for a drink? In what ways was his question designed to create a broader conversation than just the topic of "water?"
- Based on this story, what do we know about this woman? What do you think her reaction or feelings were toward this man who asked her for water? How did her reaction or perception of Jesus change through the story?

- Given the circumstances we know about this woman, I think it is safe to say she was searching—but missing out—for something in her life. How was Jesus able to see what this woman was missing when she herself was unable to do so? How can we as followers of Jesus see the “holes” in individual’s life they are trying—and perhaps unable—to fill?

## QUESTIONS ABOUT LIST OF INDIVIDUALS

Get out your list of individuals with whom you came in contact this past week. As a reminder, here are the questions you were to ask yourself throughout the week:

- Who did you see the most this week? Anyone you saw daily? Anyone you saw only once?
- What do you know about each person on your list, specifically, what do you know about their faith?
- Did you catch anything in conversations you had with them that might indicate they are searching or have struggles in their life they are trying to address?
- In what ways could you perhaps engage in a conversation that helps you better answer the question above?
- If you have someone who is searching, how can you better engage that person in the coming weeks?

Now looking at the list, ask yourself and share with the group your answers to the following:

- What sort of general summary can you make about this list?
- As you look back over your list, is there anything that surprises you about who was on the list or about the specific individuals on that list?

We now want to ask the question: What is it that people on my list are searching for and what needs might they have? We also want to ask: How can a relationship with these individuals be developed? You may have questions you want to ask of yourself to determine the answer to these questions, but let me add a set of questions to your list that you might find helpful.

Andy Stanley and North Point Community Church focus on what they call the “Three Nots” as they think about the people they come in contact with throughout the week. Specifically, they ask:

When you visit with someone, do you hear them say one of these three things:

- I am NOT in church anywhere.
- Things are NOT going well.
- I was NOT prepared for that.

The idea is that if someone you are talking with expresses one of these “Nots,” they may be open to an invitation to talk more about faith matters and perhaps accept an invitation to your One Group or a worship service.

As you look at your list, did any of the people on this list express one of these three “Nots.” If so, these people may be open to further conversations.

Not everyone on your list will have expressed one of these three “Nots,” but my guess is there is someone on this list whom needs to know Jesus better.

Let's start simple.

- Who on your list can you begin to develop a relationship with in order to one day hopefully help them know Jesus better?
- What specific things can you do to develop that relationship? (Hint: What do you do to develop a relationship with anyone?)
- What are some ways you can be looking for people who perhaps are not currently on your list, but you may come in contact with this upcoming week?

### **To Do For Next Week:**

This week, your "To Do" assignment is to begin to follow up with someone off your list OR to find someone whom you can place on your list with whom you can begin to develop a relationship.

Let's reiterate. You are not looking to convert them or baptize them or even get them to come to church today. You are simply beginning a relationship with them. When you think about your faith journey in coming to follow Jesus, my guess is that a relationship with someone was a key factor. If we are not developing relationships with people who are searching (even if they do not know it or do not express it), then the chance is good we will not be in a position to help them strengthen their relationship with Jesus. (Remember, you miss 100% of the shots you do not take.)

So, start by identifying someone(s) today with whom you can begin to develop a relationship.

By the way, you may not even know this person's name. They may simply be known as "The checker at the lunch place I frequent." That's a place to start. Introduce yourself so that next week, she is known as "Mary, the checker at the lunch place I frequent." In time, you will begin to know her and have a better idea of ways you can encourage and bless her.

If you are having a difficult time deciding on what "next step" you might take, imagine this person as a new co-worker or someone who has just placed membership at South Plains. What sort of things might you do to get to know someone in that position? The things you do for these people will be very similar.

What if that person looks very different than you: has different values than you do, likes different things, perhaps even voted the opposite side of the election as you? It can be more challenging to develop a relationship with someone completely opposite you, but remember these things. First, your goal is to simply develop a relationship with this person. You are not trying to "fix" them or convince them of the errors of their way. You simply care about their spiritual well-being and that is worth the investment in time and awkwardness to accomplish. Second, that goal of getting to know them will hopefully lead to them strengthening their relationship with Jesus. This should be more important to you than making sure you are around people who are only just like you or people with whom you feel most comfortable. The last reminder is this: think of the types of people Jesus most often engaged. More often than not, they were different and probably opposite the types of people church leaders would hang out with. (Who's the last preacher you know who *wanted* to be called a glutton and drunkard?)

You may want to write the name of the person(s) you selected on a piece of paper and place it somewhere so you can see it often to remind you of your desire to know them better in hopes they will someday know God better.

Come next week prepared to share your experiences with the group.

