

John 1:45-49
The Importance of One

Main idea: Every “one” you bring to Jesus is seen by God and valuable in His eyes.

As I mentioned last week, this series of sermons was sent to me by J.D. Greear and Johnny Hunt. So if you hear something this week that really makes you think and inspires you, that’s probably because one of them said it first.

I want to talk to you this morning on this subject: One. I’m preaching on One. Last week, we asked the question, “Who’s your one?” Who’s the one person you’re praying for that they would know Jesus, who you want to share Jesus with, who you want to invite here to join us in worshipping Jesus? Who’s your one? If you haven’t done so yet, I invite you to text me the name of the one person that you’re really focused on praying for, and who you want to make a priority in your life to invite to church and share Jesus with this year.

Because it’s really easy to say, “Oh, I just want to be open to sharing Jesus with anyone and everyone,” but until you get really focused on making sure you pray for and seek to reach one specific person, you’ll likely just keep pushing it off.¹ Because you can’t really be serious about reaching everyone until you make it a priority to reach one.

We see many examples of this in the Bible, but the one example that we’re going to look at this morning is found in John 1. In this passage we see that after Jesus called Philip to follow Him, Philip then went and found one person, Nathanael, and said to him, “We’ve found him.” Follow along on the screens because we’re going to go through several passages this morning, starting with John 1:45-46. It says:

Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.” (John 1:45-46)

You see, prior to this, Philip had already went and seen,² so he knew what he was talking about. He didn’t completely understand everything, but he knew Jesus was the One who they had been waiting for. So after Philip went and saw, he immediately went to Nathaniel and said, “Come and see.”

Jesus told two parables that describe what’s going on here. One is called the Parable of the Pearl of Great Value. It says:

“The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.” (Matthew 13:45-46)

Very plainly, it describes how once you receive Jesus, you joyfully give all of yourself to Him. This illustrates what ought to be our individual response to the gospel. The other parable I want to mention is the Parable of the Leaven. It says:

“The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened.” (Matthew 13:33)

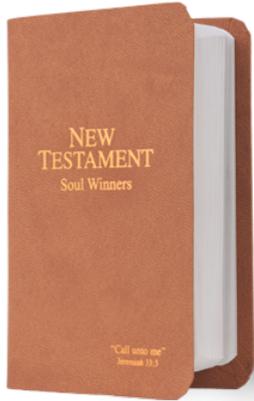
¹ Make it a habit to share the gospel all the time. 2 Timothy 4:2.

² John 1:40-44

This parable describes not just the individual's response to the gospel, but also the widespread effects of the advancement of the gospel.

Johnny Hunt tells a story about how when he first became a Christian, his church gave him one of these small pocket New Testaments, and this specific one that he received was called a Soul-Winner's Edition.

[Picture of New Testament]



It was called that because the New Testament had been pre-marked with verses that would help him to lead someone to Jesus.

Now, I found it interesting that prior to coming to faith in Jesus, 40 years ago Johnny Hunt was a hustling pool player and a gambler. But when he became a Christian, he left all that behind. Well, one day, Johnny's friend Marty called him up and said, "Hey, come over to the pool hall and let's make some money." Marty would often put the money up for Johnny to hustle with, and then they would split their winnings.

So anyway, Marty called him up and said, "Come over to the pool hall. There's some easy marks that I know you can beat, and we can make a lot of money!" But Johnny replied, "Marty, haven't you heard? I got saved, and I just don't do that kind of thing anymore."

Now, it's interesting that nowadays, 40 years later, less and less people seem to be coming to Jesus, and those that do keep going to the pool hall to gamble and hustle. And I wonder if there's a correlation there. Of course, we're not saved by our works, but by the grace of God through Jesus's death on the cross,³ but in order for us to have an effective witness to the world, our lives need to be different from that of the world.⁴

So anyway, Marty said, "I just don't understand this religious thing. I mean, why can't you still come and gamble? We can win some money!" So here's what Johnny Hunt did. He went to Marty's house, opened his New Testament, and simply shared the gospel with him walking through the Romans Road:

all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23)

the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

³ Ephesians 2:8-9

⁴ Matthew 5:16, Philippians 2:14-15

God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

Whosoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” (Romans 10:13)

because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. (Romans 10:9-10)

So Johnny actually didn't try to convince Marty to become a Christian using his own thoughts. Johnny shut up and let God's word do all the talking. Because, listen, it's not about how eloquent you can be with your words. It's not about your words; it's about God's word. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation.⁵ So as Johnny shared the gospel with Marty, Marty and his wife Betty began to weep, and they said, "What do we need to do?"

And Johnny said, "Repent and give your life to Jesus Christ."⁶ And they did.

Now, as far as witnessing goes, that was a pretty easy one. Johnny Hunt presented the gospel, and immediately they received Jesus and were saved. But most of the time, it doesn't go that way. In fact, most of us are usually afraid to share our faith because we're afraid the person we're talking to is going to ask hard questions that we don't know the answer to. In fact, the happened to Philip. As we already read:

Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:45-46a)

Now, that's a hard question. You see, to the Jews, who knew all the prophecies about the coming Messiah, they knew that there was nothing special about Nazareth. In fact, there's nothing at all about Nazareth in the Hebrew Scriptures, or in the Jewish Talmud, or even in the Apocrypha. It's just not a significant town. It was so insignificant that some Jews even seemed to disdain the town and those from the town to the point that they assumed that nothing newsworthy could ever happen there. That's why Nathanael asked the question, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"

Now, at this point, Philip could have tried to convince his friend. "Nathaniel, Jesus teaches with authority,⁷ and He confounded the rabbis at the temple at age 12,⁸ and when He was baptized the sky opened and God spoke and declared from heaven, 'This is my beloved son, with whom I'm well pleased.'"⁹ Philip could have said all that. But instead, he simply said to his friend:

"Come and see." (John 1:46b)

Now, certainly we should be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks us for the reason for the hope that we have.¹⁰ But could it be possible that we've actually talked people out of coming because we allow them to sit back and be the judge of all our theological arguments? Maybe instead of debating with people who are

⁵ Romans 1:16

⁶ Mark 1:15, Acts 3:19

⁷ Matthew 7:29

⁸ Luke 2:46

⁹ Matthew 3:17

¹⁰ 1 Peter 3:15

antagonistic, who just want an argument, who just want a reason not to believe, we should simply say, “Come and see.” Taste and see that the Lord is good.¹¹

I read that 96 percent of the people that come to faith in Jesus are people who were just invited to come and see. That means that almost everyone who receives Jesus does so because someone invited them to a church service, where they heard the gospel, and saw their need for forgiveness, and repented of their sins, and it all started because a friend, or a relative, or a neighbor, simply told them, “Come and see.”

According to Thom Rainer’s book, *The Unchurched Next Door*, research shows that:

“Only twenty-one percent of active church goers invite anyone to church in the course of a year. But only two percent of church members invite an unchurched person to church.” - Thom Rainer, *The Unchurched Next Door*

And yet, they also find that most unsaved Americans have never even been personally invited to church, and that 82% of them are at least somewhat likely to come if only someone would personally invite them.¹²

Now, I’ve crunched the numbers lots of times. I’m a numbers guy. When you combine the total weekly attendance of all the churches in Nokomis, and even if you assume that 25% of our town are leaving town to go to their church, which I’m sure happens some, but probably nowhere near 25%, that would still mean that there are over 1,000 people in Nokomis not in church on any given Sunday. And the vast majority of them are not even being invited to come! And the vast majority of them, according to research, would come if you simply said, “Friend, I love you, and God loves you, would you come to church with me this week?”

Church, if we have any compassion for lost people around us, we need to at least tell them to come and see.

But you might ask yourself, “But what can I do to impact so many lost people? I’m only one person.” Yes, but it starts with one. Philip was only one person, but he began by inviting Nathanael, just one.

How many of you know the name Albert McMakin? Albert McMakin was a farmhand and he noticed that one of the teenage boys on the farm was straying from the way that he was raised. So Albert invited the boy to a church service, and that boy got saved, and that boy’s name was Billy Graham.

You see, Albert McMakin was just one man, who reached one boy, and that boy went on to lead millions to trust in Jesus.

Now, you can’t know whether your one will become an evangelist, and I’m certainly not saying that it only counts if they do, because when you allow God to use you to reach one, that one’s eternity could be forever changed because of your obedience to the Great Commission.¹³

When Albert McMakin invited Billy Graham to church, he didn’t do it because he knew what Billy Graham would go on to be. No, he just saw a rowdy 16 year old boy who needed to know Jesus.

¹¹ Psalm 34:8

¹² Source: <https://albertmohler.com/2005/08/08/the-unchurched-next-door-a-new-look-at-the-challenge/>

¹³ Jude 1:22-23

Think about the rowdy teens you know. Or the struggling single mom. Or just your neighbor who's constantly depressed. When you give them a simple invitation to come and see, Jesus could change their lives forever.

I still remember the first person I led to Jesus. I don't even remember his name, I think it might have been Alex, but I can picture his face, and I can picture exactly where we were. I gave up my freshman year spring break in college to go on a mission trip to Texas, and I was helping with a Backyard Bible Club outside in an apartment complex. And I can remember that there was one particular hispanic boy of about 11 or 12 years old who was paying very close attention to everything we said, and when I asked if anyone would like to receive Jesus, he said yes, and he prayed for Jesus to forgive him of his sins.

Now, some of you have wanted to go on a mission trip, but you haven't because you'd have to use your vacation time. Let me just encourage you with this: I'm sure Alex was glad I gave up my spring break that year to share Jesus with him.

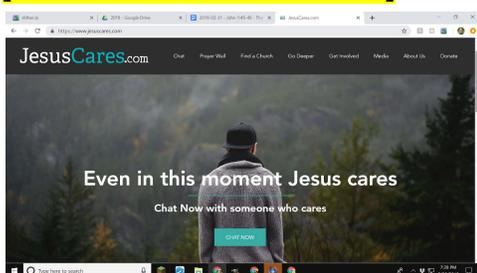
Listen, being faithful to the Great Commission doesn't necessarily mean you have to get up on a table and start preaching. It just means making yourself available to God to reach one at a time for His kingdom.

Can I ask you a hard question? Can you name one person in your spiritual journey that has come to Christ through your invite or witness? Just one. Maybe you can name one. That's great! Can you name one in the last year or two? I want to encourage everyone to always have at least one person they're praying for and seeking to share Jesus with this year.

Maybe you're shy about talking to people face to face. There are other ways. Technology today allows us to communicate without every saying a word out loud, it's amazing. Texting, facebook, snapchat, and whatever else can all be used for evil, or they can be used for good to let people know that God loves them and that they're welcome to come and see.¹⁴

Abby has gotten involved in this awesome counseling ministry online called Groundwire.

[Picture of JesusCares.com]



How it works is that people who have spiritual questions go to JesusCares.com, and they click a button to start chatting with a Christian. Recently, Abby was chatting with a 17 year old boy in Minnesota named Tom who just had some questions about faith. Tom said that he had never read the Bible, but that he believed in God, but didn't know if he was asking God for forgiveness the right way. He was ready! So Abby shared 1 John 1:9 with him, which says:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

¹⁴ Genesis 50:20

Then she prayed with him, all through a chat window remember, and he received Jesus as his Savior! Then she shared Romans 8:38-39 with him, which says:

For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)

And she directed Tom to download the Bible app, and to start reading the Gospel of John, and he said that he was downloading it right then. And Abby encouraged him to get plugged into a church, and he said that he would text his Christian friend that night to ask where he went so he could go with him. And by the end of the conversation both of them, Abby and Tom, were rejoicing in God's love for sinners.

Listen, anyone can do this! In fact, after Abby told me this story, I signed up to start doing it, too. I mean, think about how often you're just sitting at home watching TV or just wasting time, how you can redeem the time by making yourself available to God to reach one.

"But I don't know enough, Pastor!" You don't have to know anything. Here's what Paul said about that:

For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. (1 Corinthians 2:2)

It's not your words that save a person. It's the gospel. The gospel is the power of God for salvation. Paul said, "I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."¹⁵

You see, Jesus is the One, the only One, that really matters. What you do with Him will determine where you spend eternity.¹⁶ So don't be ashamed of Jesus.

I looked up the word "ashamed" in the dictionary and it means "reluctant to do something through fear of embarrassment or humiliation." You know, we will generally talk about anything and everything but the One Person who really matters most.

All of you know that I'm not really into sports. Sometimes I'll go to sports games just to be with people, and because I know that people I care about will be there. But can I tell you something? And don't get angry at me. I don't really care about the game. Apparently, we generally have some pretty good teams here in Nokomis, and sometimes some of my pastor friends from neighboring areas will say, "Hey, so you must be pretty excited about the playoffs." And I'm like, "What are you talking about?" And they're like, "The Nokomis basketball ball team won regionals!" And I'm like, "Oh, I didn't realize it was basketball season."

Now, I'm not saying it's sinful to talk about sports. It's not. But who won the championship in football or in basketball this year won't matter on the other side, but who you win to the Lord, that one, that will matter! Sports fans, keep talking about sports if you want. That's not the issue. But if you know Jesus, learn to talk about Him.

You've got a pearl of great price. Michael Youssef says that back then pearls were the most precious commodity. Not one of the precious commodities, but the most precious commodity, more highly valued in that

¹⁵ Romans 1:16

¹⁶ Ephesians 1:7

day than diamonds. Pearls were greatly valued because diving for the oysters that contained the pearls was an extremely hazardous exercise. There were many people who lost their lives diving for these oysters.

Both the beauty and the scarcity of the pearl made it extremely valuable, and people often gave all their money and belongings to possess just one priceless pearl. And it was on the cruel Roman cross that the only perfect God-man suffered, bled and died.¹⁷ It is only through His grinding death on the cross, and His ultimate resurrection from the dead, that the priceless pearl of salvation is made available.¹⁸ Nothing can be compared with this pearl.

Only through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ can we be assured of heaven. Only through Him can we find forgiveness of sin. He's the only one who provides true peace of mind, security, identity and rest for our souls. If you're a Christian, you have found the pearl of great price. And if God can use Nathanael once he came to Christ, He can use you. After Philip brought Nathaniel, just a few minutes later, it says this in John 1:49:

Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" (John 1:49)

One moment he's critical and distracting and deferring, and the next moment he's praising Jesus. One moment he's a doubter, and the next moment he's a disciple. And as we saw last week, those who accept Christ's identity, who He is, will also embrace His mission: sharing Jesus with others.¹⁹

You see, leading others to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior is the greatest expression that we really believe who He is. So, with whom will you share Jesus? You see, as disciples of Jesus, we will find someone to whom we will say, "Come and see."

Last week, I encouraged you to think of just one person to start praying for and seeking to invite. This week, I want to give you a specific goal to invite your one by Easter. That's three weeks from today. You can invite them this week if you want. Or you can pray for increased boldness over the next two weeks to be able to invite them to come on Easter Sunday. You can encourage them to come to our big breakfast that morning and then stay for the service. You can pick them up and bring them if they need the ride. Heck, tell them they can hunt for Easter eggs with the kids if they really want. That's fine. We just want them here so that they can hear about the good news of Jesus dying and rising from the grave, and how through Him, they can have their sins forgiven and an abundant eternal life.²⁰

I want you to look around you right now. If there's an empty seat next to you, raise your hand. There's hands up everywhere. We have room. Maybe not for all 1,000 people in Nokomis not going to church, but we have room for 100. And even if we have to cram in here, it will be worth it to the one person who will hear about the One Savior, the One Name under heaven through which we must be saved.

Jesus is just One Man, but through Him, through His sacrifice, forgiveness is provided to all the world.²¹ If you've never received Jesus as your Savior, I invite you this morning to trust in Him. Right now, you're the one that I'm talking to. You might ask yourself, "Does God really love me?" And the answer from Scripture is

¹⁷ 1 Peter 3:18

¹⁸ Isaiah 53:5

¹⁹ Matthew 28:19-20

²⁰ John 10:10

²¹ 1 John 4:14

absolutely yes! God is love, and He loves you!²² No matter who you are, or what you've done, Jesus died for you so that you would know Him and be saved from your sin, saved from hell, and experience abundant life in Him forever. I invite you to believe that. I invite you to receive Jesus this morning and just thank Him for what He's done for you. If you've never done that before, I invite you to pray with me right now.

God, I admit that I'm a sinner, and I need You to save me. Thank You for sending Jesus to die for my sins. Thank You for loving even me. In Jesus's name, Amen.

²² 1 John 4:8, 19