

Who is Your One?

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- [0 : 00] J.D. Greer is the current president of the Southern Baptist Convention, the pastor of a very large church in Durham, North Carolina called The Summit.
- At the beginning of last year, 2018, he asked every member of the church to identify one person in their life who was not a Christian that they could pray for and then seek to bring to faith in Christ during the year.
- He said the phrase that they kept repeating was, who's your one? Who's your one?
- Over and over again, they talked about that throughout the year. Well, at the beginning of this year, 2019, Greer said this about what happened.
- It's not an elaborate or complicated idea, but this simple idea led to our most evangelistically effective year to date.
- [1 : 08] What an incredible joy it was to have people come up to me at church and say, pastor, this is my one. Now, I want you to think about what he's saying.
- They did not have a campaign, a program in 2018. They just kept it before one another.
- Who's your one? Who's one person in your life that you know and love, who's not a Christian, that you would be willing to pray for and look for an opportunity to share the gospel with.
- And in this very thousands of people, very large church, many people took it seriously. They identified their one and prayed and shared the gospel.
- And it resulted in what he said was their most evangelistically effective year. More people came and confessed their faith in Jesus than any other year.
- [2 : 25] And a lot of those people, people who were already church members, introduced to him the person who was their one.
- On the second Sunday of this year, I preached a message on the importance of us building relationships with people in our lives who are not Christians and sharing the gospel with them in just a normal way in the context of how we know them, a friend, a neighbor, family member.
- On the first Sunday of March this month, I pointed out in a message on God's patience that if you have unsaved family members or friends, it may be that God is patiently waiting for you to share the gospel with them.
- And in that message, I encouraged everyone present that day to ask God to help you to actually share the gospel with one of your friends or family members by Easter Sunday this year, which is April the 21st.
- That was seven weeks away when I pointed that out, asked you to make that commitment. And so now I don't want you to raise your hand, but what have you done to try to reach at least one of your non-Christian family members or friends?
- [4 : 13] Let me ask you this. Did you identify your one? Did you name that person at least to yourself, maybe write it down, talk to someone in your family about your one?

Have you been working on your relationship with them, trying to do more things with them, trying to sort of take your relationship to a deeper level, talk about more serious things than normal?

Have you been praying for that person on a regular basis? Have you shared the gospel with them?

Today, I want us to look at a story of a man who reached out to his unsaved friends immediately after he became a follower of Jesus. It's found in Luke's gospel, chapter five.

And I want you to turn there. We're going to read a short story, verses 27 through 32. And in this story, what I want us to see is that this man reveals what it takes to not only be a follower of Jesus, but what it takes to be the kind of person who encourages other people, people in their life to follow Jesus.

[5 : 37] Matthew, or excuse me, we're talking about Matthew. We're in Luke chapter five. I want to be clear about what I'm talking about this morning. I am not even mentioning you just having a heart for unsaved people throughout the world.

I'm not talking about us thinking about how we could reach unreached people groups in a Muslim country.

I'm not talking about how we could reach people in Florida. The whole focus today is we as Christians. We have people who are already in our lives right now who do not know the Lord.

They may tell you they don't care to know the Lord, but you love that person. I mean, the same blood is running through your veins, or you're the best of friends, or there's someone that you work with or go to school with that you really care about.

This is the kind of person we're talking about investing in this morning, so keep that in mind. Luke's gospel, chapter five, beginning in verse 27.

[7 : 00] After this, he went out, that's Jesus, and saw a tax collector named Levi. In Matthew's gospel, his name is Matthew.

Evidently, he went by both names. Matthew, that's what he called himself. He wrote the gospel of Matthew. This is talking about the way the Lord called him. But both Luke and Mark refer to him as Levi.

After this, he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, follow me. And leaving everything, he rose and followed him.

And Levi made a great feast in his house. And there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them.

And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?

[8 : 09] And Jesus answered them, Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Let's look at Levi or Matthew. And see how he shows us what it takes to reach other people.

Number one, if we're going to reach other people, we must genuinely be committed to Christ ourselves. Before you ever think of anyone else, if we're going to be effective at sharing our faith, we've got to make sure we've got a real commitment to Christ as our Savior and Lord.

Levi demonstrated that he did. He demonstrates by the way he responded to the Lord's call, that he made a wholehearted, costly commitment.

Look at verse 27 again. And leaving everything, he rose and followed him. Levi was a tax collector sitting at his tax collector's booth. Two things stand out about a Jew working for the Romans as a tax collector in the first century.

[9 : 28] A lot of you know this. He was considered a traitor by his fellow Jews because he is working for their enemy. Rome had conquered the people of Israel.

Rome, Roman soldiers were occupying Israel. Every place they looked, there was a Roman soldier. There was something written that reminded them they were no longer a sovereign nation.

They were living under the iron fist of Rome. Matthew, or Levi, is working for those people.

Well, he was also considered a thief. The Roman government, Roman authorities, when they picked, chose a Jew to become a tax collector, he was told how much he needed to collect.

He was told how much he needed to deposit in the Roman treasury. As long as he collected taxes, made the Romans happy with the amount, he could actually charge whatever he wanted to do.

[10 : 45] And most tax collectors did. A lot of you know the story of Zacchaeus. He was a tax collector. And when he was converted, he told the Lord he'd give back up to four times, basically what he had stolen, what he had taken from people.

So it's like the Romans, they told the tax collectors, this is how much we want. But you can give yourself a commission. You can charge more. And the Jews knew that, and so he was considered a thief as well as a traitor.

We can think of Levi as having traded the respect of his fellow Jews for the financial security of a stable but corrupt foreign government.

That's what he did. Now, that makes his commitment or his response to Jesus' call stand out even more than some of the other disciples who followed Jesus.

For an example, Peter, James, John, Andrew. They followed the call of Jesus, just like Levi did.

[11 : 59] But they followed or they left a career as fishermen. James and John were working for their dad. This is the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

They don't know a whole lot about him. Peter, Andrew, James, and John, they left their fishing business to follow Jesus. And it had to be in the back of their mind, if it doesn't work out, we can go back.

We can go back and fish. In fact, they did go back and fish after Jesus had been crucified and before the resurrection. They were not stepping out as far as Levi was.

Think about it. He was leaving his government job without even giving a notice. If things didn't work out for him, he couldn't go back to that job.

And nobody would want to employ him because he had been a traitor. He'd been a thief. And so for Levi, he was taking a giant step of faith and commitment in leaving that tax booth to go and follow Jesus.

[13 : 12] Now, I want us to think about this. In all likelihood, Levi knew who Jesus was. He'd had interaction with him before this day.

Most likely, he had heard Jesus preach. Probably had numerous conversations with him. And I say that because if you read through the Gospels, the beginning of the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, you find that Peter and Andrew and James and John and Nathanael, they all had encounters with Jesus before he called them to follow him like Jesus called Levi.

The other disciples that we can read about in the Gospels, they heard Jesus preach. They had conversations. They knew something about what was involved, who they were getting involved with before they answered Jesus' call to follow me.

Another reason I say that, Jesus taught people. Jesus instructed people. You count the cost involved before you start out to follow me.

That's in Luke's Gospel, chapter 14, verse 25 and following. Jesus talked about, you wouldn't go out and build a tower and just start out. Excuse me, I'm sorry.

[14 : 38] Just start out and build a tower if you didn't know you had enough money to finish it. I mean, if you just started out and built something and didn't finish it, you'd look foolish.

So you wouldn't do that. You've got to learn to count the cost of everything you do, including following me. Jesus does not want blind followers.

So my point is, Levi did not make a spur of the moment decision to follow Jesus. He had taken time to think it through.

Therefore, when he got up from that tax booth that day to follow Jesus, he knew what he was doing. He understood that he was leaving everything literally behind him.

And he made a conscious, intentional, life-changing commitment to follow Jesus as his Lord and Savior. He didn't know what all that would involve.

[15 : 39] But he counted the cost and did it. Now, that is the kind of commitment that Jesus calls every single one of us to make when he calls us to follow him as Savior and Lord.

There's only one kind of commitment that Jesus over and over again required, a total. Be willing to die. Take up your cross and follow me, he said.

He's saying, be willing to die. You've got to be willing to die. Put it all on the line if you're going to follow me. Now, the circumstances of our lives are different from Levi's. The commitment is the same, but the circumstances are different.

The Lord does not call most people to quit their jobs or leave their community to follow him. I want you to understand that. There may be someone in this room that God's going to call you to leave Pickens, your family, and serve him as a missionary in the Middle East one day.

But in the big scheme of things, God rarely calls that many individuals to do that. Most people he calls, he calls to follow him where they are in life.

[17 : 02] He calls us to be his disciple and stay in your family. Stay in your school. Continue to work your job.

Remain in Pickens County. You've got to be totally committed. You've got to live for me. Pay a cost if necessary in your community, in your family, at your job, with your friends.

But he calls most people to stay where they are. A good example of this is down in Mark chapter 5. Jesus healed a demon-possessed man. He was totally changed. He was like an animal before Jesus changed him, cast out the demon.

Well, as soon as this happened and the man came to himself, it's natural. He wanted to follow Jesus. Jesus had totally transformed his life. So he wanted to follow Jesus, go wherever he was going to go.

I want you to look at how Jesus responded. It's on the screen. Matthew 5. As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him.

[18 : 13] Jesus did not let him, but said, Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy on you.

So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed. That man's life was changed.

He made a real commitment to Jesus. How do you know? He obeyed Jesus. He did what he was told. In this case, Jesus called him to go home and tell his own people.

Tell your family. Tell your friends what the Lord has done for you. And he did. And when he went back to his people that he'd not been able to be around because of the animal-like condition that he had been living in as a demon-possessed man, when he went back, people saw he has changed.

There's nothing about him that's the same. They sat up and took notice. That's radical life change.

[19 : 20] But what I want us to see in this, the testimony of a changed life is powerful. Some of you, your spouse may think at some point you've been demon-possessed.

Some of you, your parents may think you've acted like a demon-possessed person. But most likely, none of us in this room have ever been demon-possessed. Most likely, most of us in this room have never been the embodiment of just plain meanness and evil.

But still, if we're Christians, the Lord works in us through his spirit and through everything that happens.

And it should be that you and me, as people are around us, they see that God has and is doing some good things in our life to change and develop our character and make us more Christ-like in our character.

And as we're involved with people, as you're involved with people, and they see you're not perfect, but you certainly are someone that's a little bit different from somebody who's not a Christian.

[20 : 40] You're someone in whom God is working. You're not the same this year as you were two years ago. There's something happening in your life.

It's the result of what God's doing, but they may not understand what that is. But they see your changed life. You can be a powerful tool in the hands of God to get people's attention and to show people the difference, the good difference that being a follower of Christ makes in your life and can in theirs.

Let's return to the story. Levi shows us next what it takes to be a faithful witness. Look at number two. We must be genuinely concerned for our unsaved friends and family members.

The next section, verses 29 through 32. Levi demonstrated that he was serious about being a follower of Jesus. He was serious about his relationship with Jesus because he wanted to introduce his friends to Jesus.

Look at verse 29. And Levi made him a great feast in his house. Jesus had called Levi.

[22 : 07] Levi made a commitment. He was excited about it. And so he threw a party at his house. Jesus was the guest of honor.

And he invited his tax collector friends and some other probably lowlifes in the community to meet Jesus. Now, let me show you how that's normal.

When we have a special relationship with someone, we want other people to know that person.

Most people in this room, you are married, you have been married, or you would like to be married. What do you do when you first get engaged or you get real serious about the guy you're dating or the girl you're dating?

What do you do in relation to your friends maybe that you don't see all the time? Don't you want to introduce your fiancé to your friends?

[23 : 14] I mean, some people probably don't. Some people may think, well, they're ashamed. This is the best I can do, but I don't want anybody to know it, so they keep it low-key. I can guess who might have done that in this room, but I'm not going to.

Lisa is not here now, so I'm not going to worry about that. But you do. When I started dating Lisa and we were getting serious, I wanted her to meet all my friends and all my family.

I was proud of her. And I'm sure you did the same thing. And if there's other people in your life that's special, you're proud of, you want people to know.

You don't hide it. You're certainly not ashamed. Levi made such a commitment to Jesus. He was so proud of that new relationship with the Lord.

He threw a party for his friends to come and meet Jesus. That's exactly what happened here. And it's normal. That's what I'm showing you.

[24 : 23] Now, he invited his friends who were like him, not well-respected members of the community. He knew that was the only way that he was going to be able to introduce them to Jesus because they weren't going to go and hear him in the synagogue preach.

They wouldn't have been welcome in the synagogue, number one. But number two, they probably didn't want to go. They weren't religious type people. They were sellouts, the tax collectors. And so Levi's friends, they came to his house for the gathering, the close fellowship around the table.

And it's all because Levi wants them to meet Jesus. Now, look in the story again. There's a third group. The party crashers, we'll call them.

The Pharisees. Look at it in verse 30. And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples saying, Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners? They were the self-righteous or self-appointed religious overseers of the day.

And they were the Pharisees in the eyes of the average Jew. They were the most morally upright men they knew. And they were hypocrites, a lot of them.

[25 : 46] They were jealous of Jesus. Always trying to make him look bad. Always trying to find something wrong with him. And they found something wrong they thought here. And so they confront his disciples.

But Jesus hears about it. And so they condemn Jesus and his disciples for associating with these low-life tax collectors and sinners.

Now, let's pause here for a moment. Where do you fit in this picture? Where would you be in this setting? We have Jesus and his disciples crowding around a banquet table with some of the roughest people in town.

And then we have the religious leaders of that day standing in the doorway criticizing Jesus and his followers for being in such bad company.

Now, you be honest. Where would you be? How do you live today? Where are you the most comfortable?

[26 : 53] Where do we find you most today? Are you most comfortable being, or would you be most comfortable being with Jesus? Talking to those unsaved people?

Because you cared. Or would you be with those religious leaders criticizing Jesus for developing relationships with such repulsive characters?

Whether we're comfortable or not, whether we like it or not, we need to be building relationships with people in our lives, outside the church, who do not know Christ.

They may not talk right or live right. Why would we expect people who are not Christians to talk like Christians or act like Christians?

You may have people where you work, you go to school with, people that you know, that you like, you have a relationship with, you have some things in common, they're rough as they can be.

[28 : 03] They like to cuss and tell foul stories. Why would you expect better when they have no relationship with God, maybe no consciousness about doing sinful things?

If you really care about them, you're ever gonna reach them, you don't have to get on their level and talk like them, but you've gotta relate to them. You can't be offended at every little word you hear, every little thing that you think's off color.

Do you think these guys were sitting around at Levi's house singing hymns and drinking soft drinks? You know, one place in Scripture, Jesus is described as a friend of sinners.

Jesus never sinned, don't misunderstand here, but I'm sure Jesus was in some settings and he heard some rough talk and I'm sure he didn't shy away from it.

He related to people. People are related to him. The idea here is this man Levi, he felt comfortable enough about who Jesus was and how he was to invite his rough social outcast friends to be there and he wasn't worried about Jesus being offended.

[29 : 28] He was more concerned about those people listening to Jesus, hearing the truth, hearing the gospel.

He was more concerned about there being a spiritual awakening in these guys as a result of being around Jesus. We need to learn to do the same.

By the way, Jesus defends his actions. He's not hiding. He doesn't give a rip what the Pharisees think. Look how he defends himself, verses 31 and 32.

And Jesus answered them, those who are well have no need of a physician. It's those who are sick who do. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. We need to guard against spending all of our time with other Christians.

If we're serious about being a follower of Jesus, we need to get serious about finding time to spend with people who are not Christians just like Jesus did.

[30 : 38] Think for a moment. Do you have a genuine heartfelt concern for some specific people in your life who are not Christians?

They don't live like Christians. They don't care to live like Christians. Do you really care? Do you care enough to get involved with them?

To do something with them? To try to reach them? Are you trying to build a relationship with them? First, are you seeking to live a consistent Christian life before them?

Jesus never compromised. He was who he was. You need to not compromise. You need to be who you are as a child of God. But are you trying to live a faithful life before them?

Are you praying for them? Are you looking for opportunities to share the gospel with them? If you have not been I want to ask you right now will you beginning this moment?

[31 : 47] I want to encourage you if you've not done so if you're not doing this identify one person in your life who is not a Christian. Name them.

Write it down. Start praying for them. You and your spouse can do it together. You and a friend can do it together. Then strengthen your relationship with them.

Talk to them start talking to them about something more than sports or politics. Sort of wade into a little bit deeper water and start talking to them more about what's going on in their life.

Some things they really care about have concerns about show interest. And then as you're praying for them you really do care. We're not talking about playing a game here.

You really do care. You're trying to grow in your relationship with them. Look for opportunities that would you make a commitment to look for the opportunity to share the gospel with them because you care enough to take a risk.

[33 : 00] You care enough to be shunned. You care enough to be turned away because you care enough about where they're going to spend eternity.

You care enough about their life today where it is. Levi gives us a great example of what it takes to be a faithful witness. He really did have a genuine heartfelt commitment to Christ that caused him to care about the people around him, their spiritual condition.

And he saw reaching out to them as his responsibility and he did it on his own. There's a Christian ministry called Nine Marks that is focused on helping churches be biblically sound and healthy.

It's a part of the ministry of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. where Mark Dever is pastor. In a recent article, they pointed out how effective evangelism most often occurs.

Look at this. The New Testament book of Acts records that believers would meet in one another's homes and share meals. Much of our evangelism occurs as we simply occur, occurs as we, we're simply living intentionally in our spheres of influence.

[34 : 30] Most of our evangelism, or much of our evangelism, occurs as we're simply living intentionally in our spheres of influence. That's what J.D.

Greer emphasized at the Summit Church last year. It's not a program. It's not a program. It's about relationships. One more time, let me ask you.

Who is your one? And if the honest answer is I don't have one, well, who will you make your one right now?

The truth is if we have a genuine relationship with Jesus, we will have genuine concern for our unsaved family members and friends and people we know in our spheres of influence.

So I want to encourage you. Identify your one now. Pray for him or her every day.

[35 : 37] Develop, deepen your relationship with them so that you can talk about more serious things. and then ask God to help you to share the gospel with them as soon as possible while you have the opportunity, while they are able to hear and respond to the good news of Jesus Christ.

Let's pray together. dear God, help every one of us in this room right now to do what we're talking about, to identify their one and pray for them, develop a relationship with them and prepare and seize the opportunity to share the gospel with them.

Lord, help us to do this because it's just within us. Give us that desire. Help us to do that because we truly care about these people, about the quality of their life now and about where they're going to spend eternity.

Lord, help us to demonstrate the kind of commitment that we see in this passage this morning. And help us to see that if we truly do have this genuine commitment to Jesus, we can't help but have genuine concern for the people in our lives that don't know Jesus.

You respond to the Lord as He speaks to you in just an attitude of prayer. prayer. If I could pray with you during this time, I'd be happy to do that. Let's just use this time to make the commitments we need to make about reaching our one or about you coming to know Christ as your Lord and Savior or to get serious about your commitment to Him.

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