

LEADERS ARE INVITERS

“Nothing annoys people so much as not receiving invitations.” - Oscar Wilde

There is great power in being asked.

In the classic leadership book, *The Serving Leader*, author John Stahl-Wert highlights five things successful, assertive leaders regularly do. Leaders blaze new trails. They raise the bar for others. They view themselves as serving up in an organization rather than lording down. They regularly remove impediments from others’ jobs. However, the most important thing leaders can do for others, according to Stahl-Wert, is to invite others to “run toward a great purpose”.

People are inspired by doing things with their talents that make a difference. Good leadership leverages this inspiration by inviting others to join in bringing to reality a worthy vision — a great purpose. In order for leaders to inspire others to work together toward a common goal, the leader must first invite people into this great purpose and to mobilize and organize them to work toward bringing this vision into reality. When achieved, leaders bring meaning and purpose into a person’s life. Who isn’t inspired by achieving something that makes a difference in an organization, a family, a community or the world? Leaders, therefore, are regular inviters of people into this difference-making process.

The Bible is rife with examples of this basic leadership trait. At its essence, Jesus invites each of us into a vision of obtaining eternal life through a relationship with him. So powerful and significant was this vision that Jesus shared, no other great purpose in human history comes close to the action and movement this vision generated among those who grabbed hold of it throughout two millennia.

In this short discussion, let’s look at Jesus himself in an interaction he has with someone very different from himself, and how his invitation changes this person’s life. Perhaps we might be encouraged today as we strive to invite others to be a part of our LeaderImpact group, and to run to a great purpose of growing personally, professionally and spiritually.

Read John 4:1-30, 39-43 (split the reading up among a few group members)

Q: Based on what you might know about the time Jesus lived in, why would verse 4 be viewed as controversial? (see verse 9) Why would the Jews of that time avoid traveling through Samaria to get to Galilee?

Q: What areas in your city would you avoid traveling through? Why? What type of people do you encounter there? What does the fact that Jesus does not avoid Samaria tell you about him?

Q: What is significant about the well at which Jesus stops? Who built it long ago (verse 6)? Despite the Jews being at odds with the Samaritans, what common ground between these two ethnicities is realized with this well and who built it?

Q: Where might you find common ground when having conversations with people very different from yourself?

Q: Based on what you might surmise about the ancient culture, what is so remarkable about Jesus (a male, Jew and a rabbi, teacher) asking the Samaritan woman for a drink? Women of that time avoided the heat of the day and drew water first thing in the morning. What fact about this woman might have led her to draw water around noon, in the hottest time of the day? (hint: see verse 18)

Q: Is there anyone you are fearful to engage with because they are so different or operate on a different standard of morality than you? What might we learn from Jesus here?

Q: What vision does Jesus paint for the woman about what he offers in verses 10-15. What does Jesus say he offers for those who know him and ask? (see verse 14)

Q: What is the woman's natural response to being invited to partake of "living water" in verses 28-29? What was the town's response in verse 30? What is remarkable about the town's response, given the woman's lowly societal position?

Q: If Jesus invites people to himself and an adulterous Samaritan woman found joy in inviting the town to come to meet Jesus, how might you be inspired to do the same today? How might inviting people to your LeaderImpact group be a first step in having a positive impact in their life?

Q: What are all the ways Jesus intentionally built relationships with the Samaritans in this passage, and how might you do the same as you reach out to others in your place of employment or community?

Q: What did you learn about the power of an invitation from this discussion?