**Commissioned Mission Series**

**Nov 17th | Grant Wright**

**Sermon Title: I Started With One**

Today we are continuing our Series, “Commissioned”.

A question I want us to explore today is, “Where does Mission Begin?” Let’s open our bibles and look at our passage for today. It’s in Luke 15.

(4:30 min)

# **Luke 15 New International Version (NIV)**

### The Parable of the Lost Sheep

**15**Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. **2**But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

**3**Then Jesus told them this parable: **4**“Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? **5**And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders **6**and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ **7**I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

This is a powerful parable about the importance of the ONE. It’s easy for us to stay with the 99 as that is our comfort zone and our safe place but Jesus is painting a picture of His Fathers heart. His Fathers heart desires that the ONE lost sinner should be found and come to know him.

I want to point out here that Jesus has a reputation. Verse 2 says, “But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

Here is a 2019 translation of what that means… Word on the street from the righteous Jewish leaders, is Jesus hangs out with some sketchy people. Dude, I heard he hangs out with political traders and people that betrayed our family. He is always out partying with the wrong crowd.

Who Jesus Hangout with was one of the profound aspects of this ministry. We have this flannel graph Jesus image for our Childhood or Leonardo de Vinci’s Jesus at the **Last Supper** picture but if the Jewish leaders were painting a picture, I think we would get a very different portrait not often portrayed.

But Jesus is modeling to the Jewish leaders what he is teaching about the Fathers Heart. He is saying very clearly, “This is the right thing to do! You and I need to be with lost sinners. God’s heart is for them to know Him and follow Him.”

Right before Jesus tells this parable, he even instructs the Jewish leaders,

*“When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”* (Luke 14: 12-14)

Jesus did exactly this! He is hosting parties and gatherings that included people that nobody else loved and who everyone else ignored. He gave people attention that were **dying, destitute, poor, dirty and diseased**. Jesus very clearly models leaving the 99 righteous, time & time again, to go after the ONE lost sinner.

I am ONE sinner who has been found, you are ONE sinner who has been found. Now we Go after other lost sinners who need to be found.

(2 min)

So today I want to tell you a story about ONE of our members that was willing to leave the 99 to go find the ONE. I was fortunate to do ministry alongside her these last few years as she made a **huge eternal impact** in just this short period of time. This was our very own, Ms. Nelda Gay.

Nelda, passed away just a few months ago. And if she was sitting here with us today, she would be embarrassed and probably a little upset that I am talking about her right now. Because she never wanted to be in the spotlight or the center of attention. She was **simply a dedicated follower** of Jesus that wanted to make sure people know the truth. She always wanted Jesus to be the center of attention.

I began working with Nelda several years ago as she got involved in our local FriendSpeak Ministry. This is a program where we teach English to people in our community using stories from the Bible.

Over the years, she had taken on numerous FS readers from the community. Some she read with of 1 yr, some 2 yrs and some 3 yrs! In fact, some of the people she has worked with now attend our Services regularly with their families. With **each person Nelda give**, ONE hour, ONCE a week and she made an eternal impact.

This past year Nelda signed up to go on her first STM trip with our church at the young age of 83. She felt the Lord calling her on this mission to GO to Cucuta Colombia. She knew this 7-day trip to unfamiliar urban jungle, with extreme heat, where they only speak Spanish would bring many challenges. The Challenges ahead were not enough to overcome her call by the Lord to GO.

(2:30 min)

This trip started on a Sunday where we had time to meet and worship with the local church. Our mission task for the week was to partner with the local church, go out into their communities with the church leaders, sharing the gospel, invite people to Christ and invite them to learn more about Jesus in a Bible Study hosted at the church.

**Monday morning** Nelda is ready to go. She has her backpack filled with water, extra evangecubes to give to the church, extra bibles to give away. And her special Spanish & English Bible she meticulously spent time in highlighting and making key scriptures she wanted to reference.

Like all 10 trip participants from our church, Nelda only spoke a little Spanish and was in need of an interpreter.

Let me introduce you to Eric…

Eric was a handsome young Colombian man. He loved to party and dance and by the end of the night all the ladies wanted to be on him arm. One place you were not likely to find Eric was in Church. That want really his thing as he was pretty sure God did even exist any way. He was a kind and polite young man who for this week volunteered his time to help interpret for the Texans. Eric was exited to speak with Texas and improve his English.

As **Arron was for Moses in the OT** so Eric was for Nelda as he spoke for her and was her mouthpiece. Everywhere Nelda went, Eric was right there with her.

As they left the church together that morning, Nelda was praying for God to be with them as they went out door to door visiting each house on the street. In the morning she was able to visit with 3 families and that afternoon 4 more. She can back to the hotel that evening so excited about how Gods spirit was working and how the people in Cucuta were so hungry and receptive for Jesus. She was full of energy and ready to go again on Tuesday.

(2:30 min)

**Tuesday morning** Eric met Nelda at the hotel, and they sat together in the van talking for all 30 minutes as we drove to the church. The streets were steep hills and Eric would give Nelda his arm and escort her with care from house to house.

Every house Nelda entered, she had 3 main focuses.

1) Share the Gospel.

2) Teach people how to use their bible

3) Teach people to pray.

When we got back to the hotel Tuesday night, she was again thrilled at seeing Gods hand at work as she encountered divine appoints throughout the day, in these home. But then Nelda told us of the last family she met late that afternoon who didn’t own a Bible. As she reached down to grab one out of her backpack, like she had done all day, but this time her heart sunk as the bag was empty.

Nelda gave them her word, that she would be back tomorrow with a Bible for their family.

**Come Wednesday** morning Nelda had ONE focus… Get this family a Bible!

It was not an easy hike to get to this home as Eric escorted Nelda step by step up and down steep inclines to get to this home. She was Hot and tired by the time she arrived but her focus never wavered. That family received their very own Bible that day thanks to Nelda & Eric.

Each evening we would host a Bible study at the church and every home we visited were invited to join us. Well guess who showed up Wednesday night at the church… this dear family that Nelda had spent time with the past two days. They were there with BIG smiles on their faces as they proudly held their new family Bible.

(3 min)

By the end of the week I think Eric must have heard the gospel and presented the gospel over 30. He had been a part of over 10 bible studies, and he been praying Nelda’s words of blessing over Colombians for 5 straight days.

On the last day of the trip, Eric give Nelda this letter, and he asked me share this with the church. Eric if you are watching today, Nov 17th 2019, We are reading your letter together as a church!

* Hi Nelda. Thanks for the Bible, I appreciate that. As something to be told in your church I wasn’t believing in God before meeting you all, now I do believe and I know this is because of Him, I was doubting about Gods existence and feeling proud. You all are doing a great Job. Erikc.

Isn’t that beautiful! In 5 days, Ms. Nelda was able to bring ONE lost sinner back to his Father. Let’s Celebrate that today!

As our team of 10 traveled back home, we spend time share what the Lord had taught us through our experience and Nelda shared this: She said,

**“I know I am not done yet. I still have a purpose!”**

I love that coming from an 83 yr old saying I am still Called by God and Commissioned with purpose. I am still useful and have so much to give.

Eric’s experience was not uncommon. In fact, ALL 14 interpreters, that were volunteers recruited by a local English Institute, had very similar experience. These young teens,16-22 yrs old, had either turned their back on God or they were saying God didn’t exist. Well after this week on mission with us seeing God show up and do amazing things, All of them confessed that God is real. Now they were faced with a new question… Am I going to follow this God as Lord or continue to turn my back on Him and live for myself.

These relationships we built with these young adults were deep even though we had only known each other a short time. Because of the mission experience, had grown very close together. We were faced with a tough situation as **We had to leave but the work wasn’t over.**

(2 min)

Remember when Nelda said, **“I know I am not done yet. I still have a purpose!”** Well she was right, she wasn’t done yet.

We knew through the blessing of technology we could still keep in relationship with our new friends even though we are 1000’s miles way.

From this beautiful mission experience, I am proud to say, FC is a Flagship church that developed and started a new ministry called “FriendSpeak Colombia”. We are now hosting FS session, through the aid of technology, in Cucuta Colombia.

We are the only church in the US doing this. Session are just like what is done here at our building each week except now you meet through an online video chat for ONE hour, Once a week.

Well, guess who was one of our Flagship members… that’s right… 83 yr old, Ms. Nelda Gay. I taught her how to use Online video chat and she was off to these races.

Along with Eric there was another young interpreter named Nicolas. Nic was one of the 14 interpreters, that when we were leaving was still eager to learn more about the Bible and Jesus.

His schedule was open Monday nights FS Colombia conversations. And do you know who wa on the ther end of that video chat, as she shared the gospel to Nic, taught Nic to use his Bible and prayer. It was MS. Nelda Gay. She spent every Monday night with Nic doing this until she passed away.

Nic is another young man that has come to know God on a deeper level because Nelda’s willingness to leave the 99 and go find the ONE. In fact, at her funeral Nick wrote a eulogy for her detailing the impact she had on him.

(3 min)

Just as Nelda was not done, we are not yet done.

We assume Mission is a cross continental experience with passports, visas flights, time changes, but with Nelda we have learned that Missions can be done anywhere, anytime. For her this past year it was Eric and then Nic. To be on mission you do not have to be on a mission trip.

But like Jesus & Nelda, we do have to be willing to leave the 99 and go after the ONE. Weather lost in Colombia or lost in SL we are called to be in relationship with these people. The Father heart is for the Lost to be found!

So church, where does mission begin? Its starts with ONE. Jesus had Peter & Paul had Timothy. Nelda had Eric. Who’s you ONE?

I want to close today with a Video of Nelda as she shares her life and wisdom she learned after her first STM Trip. Let’s listen in.

**Nelda Video: 3:45 minutes**

**Praise the Lord for the life of Nelda Gay.**

Let’s Pray…

**Closing prayer?...**

Lord, may we never retire from working for your Kingdom. We submit our lives to you and the calls you give us. We listen to your HS as we ask the question, “Who is our ONE”. As we go this week and are sent out, who is the ONE you want us to give our time and attention to. Lord we are yours! We pray this in the powerful name of Jesus, and all the church said, Amen!