

How the Woman at the Well Inspires a Nonprofit to Rescue Trafficking Victims

Inspired by the account of the woman at the well in the Gospel of John, Jeanne Allert named her nonprofit organization “The Samaritan Women.” But was the name too “religious” for their work with human trafficking victims? The Holy Spirit clearly confirmed the name, partly through the New Testament story of the woman at the well.

Several years into the ministry, Allert sensed the Lord telling her to re-read John 4.

“The Lord kept saying, ‘Go read it again. Read it again.’ My goodness, I’ve read John 4 so many times. And yet the Spirit said, ‘Go, read it again,’” recalls Allert. “This time, the Spirit had my eyes rest on verse 39: ‘Because of her testimony, many believed.’ That made it so clear to me that the work that we were doing was not about the baggage that she brought to the well. It’s what she needed to let go of—her burdens—so that when she returns one day to her own Samaria—whatever that is for her—her testimony will be life-changing for many.”

With the Word and the Spirit confirming the name, Allert moved forward in full confidence that God would continue to use The Samaritan Women to rescue women from the bondage of sex trafficking. Not only has He done so, but the Baltimore-based organization is also being used to educate other groups on how to start their own shelters through its Institute for Shelter Care. The number of beds available in shelters is very limited and nowhere near what is needed.

“As of February 2020, we have identified 136 shelter programs, programs that offer some form of housing, across the United

States," Allert says. "Of those, 39 programs serve minors. Fourteen programs serve men and boys. Our greatest need is still for programs that serve women with their children. That's a very tough population to place."

Shelters are usually small, averaging six to eight beds.

"Most of them are operating out of a residential home," Allert says. "These are not institutional structures. This might be the house in your community on your cul de sac, and that's a great thing. People shouldn't be afraid of us as neighbors. These victims, often younger women, are someone's daughter, working hard to rebuild her life and find a place where she can belong. So what better place than in a home in a community, in a family setting?"

Allert believes that shelter care is a call to the church to step up and serve.

"Oftentimes, these are individuals who have nowhere else to go," she says. "We can't expect that rescue solves their vulnerability. Often they don't have job skills, employment, housing, etc. This is an important role for the church: to help people get back on their feet and re-enter society with greater stability.

"When we ask, 'What do you most want more than anything?' the answer is almost always the same," Allert says. "It's to be normal." She believes that what these women are really saying is "'I want to belong. I want to fit in somewhere.' And to be normal means I belong."

Allert believes others in the church who want to serve this population will have their own "verse 39 opportunity," referring to John 4. She sees this as "an exciting time for the church to engage in this issue in a strong way."

Listen to this *Charisma Connection* podcast interview to find out what victim services are available in the U.S. and how the

church can help. Visit to learn more about the work of The Samaritan Women.