

Learning to Love Like Jesus

#1: Learning to Notice

10/21/2018

This morning I'm very excited to begin a new sermon series entitled, "Learning to Love Like Jesus." During this 5 week series we're going to look at key ways that Jesus interacted with others and showed them God's love. But this series isn't just about studying Jesus' technique's to communicate love to people – it's about learning from Jesus so that we can apply these principles to the relationships in each of our lives and become far better living breathing communicators of God's love. And these principles are applicable across the board of relationships. You could apply them to your marriage relationship, to your kids, friends, co-workers or neighbors.

To begin today's principle I want to begin by showing you a 36 second video. It's a video to test how well you can pay attention. In the video you'll see several people passing a basketball around. Your challenge is to try to correctly count how many times the players dressed in white pass the ball. Ready get set GO!

- How many of you counted at least 8 passes?
- How many of you counted at least 10 passes?
- How many of you counted at least a dozen passes?
- Anyone count more than a dozen? How many?
- The correct answer is 15 passes.

- But the most important question is – how many of you spotted the gorilla?
- In case you don't believe there was actually a gorilla in the video we'll replay it.

Play the video again.

So, what does that have to do with learning to love like Jesus?

Well, this morning I want to explore the idea of "noticing" others.

The reason most of you didn't notice the gorilla in the video is because you were intensely focusing on something else. Researchers call this "perceptual blindness." Which means we miss a whole lot of what's out there for us to experience because we're pursuing other things.

And we can easily live our agendas every single day and miss noticing the people around us that God has placed there for us to show His love to, because we're too busy living our own agenda. The call this morning is to broaden your horizons and begin to live God's agenda for your life and thereby begin to notice the things that you might normally miss. It's tuning your body, mind, heart, eyes and ears to God's agenda rather than your own.

God is a "noticing" God. David in Psalm 8 marvels at the vastness of the universe and yet the God who created it all, still notices us.

Psalms 8:3-4 (NIV) *When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?*

And in Psalm 119, David talks about how God always knows exactly where we are at all times and David finds tremendous comfort and strength from that realization.

We see that same commitment to noticing in the life and ministry of Jesus. The Gospels mention that Jesus "saw" forty times. And when he "saw" it often mentions that he was moved with compassion to do something. For Jesus, it never stopped with just noticing. Noticing was the prelude to doing something,

making a difference in someone's life. Jesus was never too busy teaching his disciples what it meant to be a follower of his, to ignore the needs of the many around him.

Consider with me several of the ways that Jesus noticed people and their needs and responded.

- Jesus saw **Levi, the tax collector**, sitting at his tax collecting booth and invited him to follow him. Immediately after calling Levi, we see Jesus partying with Levi's tax collecting friends in his house. He noticed the importance of being with the people God wants to show His love to.
- Jesus saw the **faith of the 4 friends**, who lowered their invalid buddy down through the roof and as a result, Jesus forgave the invalid's sins and gave him the ability to walk again.
- Jesus noticed the **grief in the widow's heart** during the funeral processional for her only son. The text says, "*his heart went out to her*" That's noticing with your heart. And he gave her son life again.
- Jesus noticed the **indignation of Simon the Pharisee** when the sinful woman crashed his dinner party and began to anoint Jesus' body with very expensive perfume. My favorite part of this story is the phrase that says, "Jesus turned toward the woman and said to Simon..." (Luke 7:44-48)
Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little." Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." Luke 7:44-48 (NIV) He's saying you ignored me but this sinful woman "**noticed**" me, not only with her eyes but with her heart and actions.
- Jesus **noticed power had gone out of him** when the woman with the medical condition touched the edge of his garment and was instantly healed. But what he did next was remarkable. He called for her to come forward and when she did he affirmed her, after feeling dirty for many many years. And he told her that her faith had healed her.
- Once when Jesus was teaching in a synagogue **he noticed a woman who had been crippled for 18 years** and called her up and healed her. As a result, the synagogue rulers got mad at Jesus because he healed on the Sabbath. They were experts in God's Law, but blind to the real needs of the people right in front of them.
- It says several times in the gospel accounts that *Jesus saw the needy crowds and had compassion on them* (Mt. 9:36).
- Jesus saw the deep hunger for meaningful relationships in the Samaritan woman at the well. And later in the story the people from her town are coming out to see Jesus and Jesus tells his disciples, "*Look, the fields are white unto harvest.*" Orthodox Jews couldn't stand Samaritans, because they considered them half-breed Jews. In fact, that would have never privately interacted with a Samaritan woman and certainly wouldn't have drank out of her cup – because that would have made them unclean. But Jesus looked at life and people differently. And so when the townspeople were coming out to meet him, he was excited with the possibility of showing more people God's love.
- One of Jesus' most well known parables was all about noticing. We've often entitled it, "The Story of the Good Samaritan." What we often don't notice or remember, is that there were three people that noticed the man beaten up, robbed and left for dead on the side of the road. But only one who took the time to attend to him was the hated Samaritan. This would not have been a feel good story for the Jews in the audience because the hero was not one of their own, but rather one of those "dirty" Samaritans.

- Jesus saw the people's emotional pain at the death of Lazarus and *wept*.
- Jesus saw the disciples trying to **keep children away** from him and rebuked them (Mk 10:13-16)
- Jesus noticed the hated tax collector, **Zacchaeus**, up in a tree and invited himself over for lunch.
- Jesus saw **Peter deny him 3 times**, and yet after his resurrection he put him in charge of leading the early church.
- Jesus saw the **faith of the thief on the cross** and told him he'd see him soon in heaven.
- While dying on the cross, Jesus noticed **his mother** and turned her care over to John.
- When teaching his disciples about the end times, Jesus makes "noticing and responding" one of the determining factors as to who gets into heaven and not. (**Matthew 25:31-46**) Please listen to Jesus' words this morning. The act of "*noticing*" and "*not noticing*" is a pretty big deal when it comes to where we will spend eternity. It's not just enough to notice a need – you must also strive to meet that need.

In 2004 a movie came out entitled "**Shall We Dance**" starring **Richard Gere, Susan Sarandon and Jennifer Lopez**. In the movie, Susan Sarandon is thinking her husband might be cheating on him and so she hires a private detective to follow her husband. Later in the movie, she's talking with the detective and informs him she will no longer need his services. There's a key moment in their dialogue when they are discussing people so often being unfaithful in their marriages. And he asks her, "**So, why then do people get married? Romance?**" Susan Sarandon has a very insightful response. She says, "**No, people get married because they need a witness to their lives. There's a billion people on the planet... I mean, what does any one life really mean? But in a marriage, you're promising to care about everything. The good things, the bad things, the terrible things, the mundane things...all of it, all of the time, every day. You're saying 'Your life will not go unnoticed because I will notice it. Your life will not go un-witnessed because I will be your witness.'**"

As Christ followers, we are called to be a witness, to "notice" people's lives.

Philippians 2:3-4 (NIV) *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.*

1 Corinthians 10:24 (NIV) *No one should seek their own good, but the good of others.*

Living a life filled with "selfish ambition or vain conceit" is living life on your agenda with only you and your needs and success in mind.

Living life God's way, involves "noticing" the needs of others and showing them God's love in creative ways throughout every day. I'm not talking about one more thing to add on to your already busy schedule. I'm talking about living every day differently. Live every day realizing that you are called to be a witness of God's love to people who need someone to "notice" them.

The good news is that we live in a society full of people wanting to be noticed. Consider Facebook or Twitter or other social media platforms. How do you know if you're a success? By how many followers you have. The more the number of followers the more successful you've become and worth following. You may never meet some of those people but that doesn't matter as long as they confirm your value as a human being by following you.

Many of us are simply like **Eeyore** – we just want to be noticed. Many people feel invisible and that nobody notices.

As we close: Let me give you six important points in becoming a person who “notices” others.

Steps to becoming a “Noticer”:

1. **Notice God first** (Jesus spent valuable time communing with his Heavenly Father, which fine tuned his skills in noticing others and determining every day what to do.

Spend time alone with God in order to fine tune your senses to perceiving what the Father is doing and what He wants you to do every day.

2. **Strive to understand and live God’s plan for your life.**

John 5:19 (NIV) Jesus gave them this answer: *“Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.*

3. **Ask God to help you see people through His eyes, His mind and heart.**

God already knows every person you’ll see each and every day. So, tap into God’s divine knowledge about them and ask Him for help seeing them as He sees them. In all of their beauty and uniqueness.

4. **Ask God to develop a heart of compassion inside of you.**

5. **Learn and remember people’s names you interact with and call them by name.**

Calling someone by their name communicates that they mattered enough for you to remember their name. It says that you “noticed” them.

6. **Compliment the person or ask if you can pray for them**

A Challenge to “notice”

Noticing doesn’t happen by accident. So, I want to leave you with a challenge every day this week. Make a personal goal at the beginning of every day to notice _____ number of people. You determine the number. And then keep that in mind throughout the day. And then at the end of the day, rehearse the day and see how you did. Maybe keep a record of who you intentionally noticed throughout the day and how you showed that they were noticed. And I think what you’ll find is that if you do this every day for a month, you’ll begin to crave doing it every day and it will give you more energy and a greater sense of anticipation to live each and every day. And I’d encourage you to begin at home. Sometimes those we live with and are closest to can easily get overlooked and feel unnoticed and that’s a horrible way to feel and live.

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Jesus “*noticed*” a lot of things and people.

Which examples of Jesus noticing stands out to you?

Why?

Who is a “*witness*” to you life? Someone who makes you feel wanted and needed.

Who are you a “*witness*” to?

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6. Compliment the person or ask if you can pray for them.

Daily Step: I am going to “notice” __ (pick a number) people today.

Reflection: How did you do, and how did you “notice” them?

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