
Seeing People as Jesus Sees Them

Recognizing Spiritual Neediness

Matthew 9:35-38

35 And Jesus was going about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

36 And seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd.

37 Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.

38 "Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."(NAS)

1. Describe the needs felt by the multitudes Jesus ministered to. (v. 35) List some similar needs felt by people living today.

2. As Jesus observed their neediness, what did He note was their biggest need? What was the meaning of his sheep-shepherd metaphor?

3. As we see the multitudes around us, it is easy to see and feel only what they see and feel. If we are to see things as Jesus does, what sort of "vision adjustment" do we need?

4. Think about a time that you recognized a spiritual need in someone. How did you know that it was a spiritual need?

5. Do you think everyone has spiritual need that may be seen? Why or why not?

6. What are some things that keep us from recognizing spiritual needs today?

7. Are some people less needy spiritually than others or do they just appear that way? What are some things that tend to make us more aware of spiritual needs? What are some things that make us less aware?

"I feel like a businessman -- who sees an inexhaustible supply and an almost unlimited demand. The demand is the lost state of these tens of thousands -- their ignorance, their superstition, their sinfulness, the need for their bodies, their minds, their souls. The supply is the grace of God to meet this need which will be brought down to them by the persevering prayers of a considerable company of God's people. All I want to do is to bring the supply and demand together." -- J. O. Fraser

8. Read Acts 24:22-27. What was Paul's biggest need on this occasion? What need did he end up talking about? Do you know people in places of authority have spiritual needs?

9. Read Matthew 9:9-13. Why was Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners? What does this have to do with seeing spiritual need?

10. Read Luke 12:16-21. What kept this man from recognizing his neediness? How could such a man be reached to inform him of his real needs?

11. Read John 4:28-35. What was the main focus of the disciples? (v. 31-33). What was Jesus' focus? What did Jesus tell the disciples to do? Is there a modern application to this?

12. Think through the many people you know and list five people you know who have real spiritual need (though they may not recognize them). What can you do to help them see their need?

A poor tramp got lost in the woods in Michigan, many years before that timbered section had paths running through it. The poor fellow had tried his best to get out, but he could not. At length as evening came, tired, he built a fire and sat down by it. After awhile, two men appeared -- a wealthy father and his son. Drawing close to the tramp, the father said, "Sir, we're lost and can't find our way home. If you will direct us out of these woods, you will be well paid for it." The tramp answered not a word. Then the father spoke again, only to be met with silence. The third time he spoke the tramp looked up and said, "Man, I am lost also."

The wealthy man offered \$5,000 if the tramp could lead him out, but the only reply was, "I am lost also." It was decided that the old man would stay by the fire with the tramp while his son made another effort to find a way home. The son eventually did get out and then sought to return with a party to find his father and the tramp, but they searched in vain. In a few months the skeletons of two men were found by the ashes of the fire -- the flesh had all been eaten off the bones by the beasts -- and the only way they could distinguish the wealthy man from the tramp was by some gold lying beside one of the skeletons. There was no other difference. The rich man and the poor man -- both lost! All men and women have the same spiritual need. They are lost. We must recognize this need and reach out to them while there is still time.
