

Seeing People Through Jesus' Eyes



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Mark 8:22–26; John 4:3–34; John 1:40, 41; Mark 12:28–34; Luke 23:39–43; Acts 8:26–38.*

Memory Text: “Then He said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.’” (*Matthew 4:19, NKJV*).

Jesus is the Master Soul Winner. By watching the way Jesus worked with people, we learn how to lead others to a knowledge of salvation through Jesus Christ. Journeying with Him through the crowded streets of Jerusalem, the dusty paths of Judea, and the grassy hillsides of Galilee, we discover how He revealed the principles of the kingdom to seeking souls.

Jesus saw all men and women as winnable for His kingdom. He saw each one through the eyes of divine compassion. He saw Peter not as a rough, loudmouthed fisherman but as a mighty preacher of the gospel. He saw James and John not as quick-tempered, fiery radicals but as enthusiastic proclaimers of His grace. He saw the deep yearning for genuine love and acceptance in the hearts of Mary Magdalene, the Samaritan woman, and the woman with the issue of blood. He saw Thomas not as a cynical doubter but as one with sincere questions. Whether they were Jew or Gentile, male or female, a thief on the cross, a centurion, or a demon-possessed madman, Jesus saw their God-given potential and viewed them through salvation's eyes.

* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 18.

The Second Touch

There is only one miracle in the entire Bible that Jesus worked in two stages. It is the healing of the blind man at Bethsaida. This story provides timeless lessons for Christ’s church today. It illustrates God’s plan of using each believer to bring someone else to Jesus. Scripture declares, “Then He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him” (*Mark 8:22, NKJV*). The two key words here are “brought” and “begged.” The blind man did not come on his own. His friends saw his need and brought him. He may not have had much faith, but they did. They believed that Jesus would heal this man’s blindness.

There are approximately 25 distinct healing miracles in the New Testament performed by Jesus. In more than half, a relative or friend brings the individual to Jesus for healing. Many people will never come to Jesus unless someone who has faith brings them. Our role is to become an “introducer” and bring people to Jesus.

The second word that is worthy of our consideration in Mark 8:22 is the word “begged.” It can mean “beseech, implore, or exhort.” It implies a softer, kinder, gentler appeal than a loud, boisterous demand. The friends of this man kindly appealed to Jesus, believing that He had both the desire and the power to help this man. The man may not have had faith that Jesus could heal him, but his friends did. Sometimes we must carry others to Jesus on the wings of our faith.

Read Mark 8:22–26. Why do you think He healed the blind man in two stages? What lessons does this story have for us today as witnesses for Jesus?

Is it possible that we, too, do not see people clearly? Do we sometimes see them more like “trees walking” in vague shadowy forms rather than as candidates for the kingdom of God? What do you think leads us at times not to see people clearly?

Besides the obvious lesson that God uses us to reach people, what else can we learn from this story? What might it teach us, for instance, about how both the medical and the spiritual can have a part in healing and in ministry to the lost?

A Lesson in Acceptance

By modeling for them what it meant to see each individual from a new perspective, Jesus taught His disciples how to see people through heaven’s eyes. His view of people was radical. He saw them not as they were but as they might become. In all of His interactions with people, He treated them with dignity and respect. Often He surprised His disciples by the way He treated people. This is especially true in His interaction with the Samaritan woman.

The Archaeological Study Bible makes this interesting observation about the relationship between the Jews and the Samaritans: “The rift between the Samaritans and the Judeans dates from an early period. According to 2 Kings 17 the Samaritans were descendants of Mesopotamian peoples who were forcibly settled in the lands of northern Israel by the king of Assyria in the wake of the exile of 722 B.C. They combined the worship of Yahweh with idolatrous practices.”—*The Archaeological Study Bible* (Zondervan Publishing, 2005), p. 1727. In addition to these idolatrous practices, they established a rival priesthood and a rival temple on Mount Gerizim. Considering such theological differences with the Samaritans, the disciples must have been perplexed when Jesus chose the Samaritan route to Galilee. They were surprised that Jesus did not allow Himself to be drawn into a religious debate. He appealed directly to the Samaritan woman’s longing for acceptance, love, and forgiveness.

Read John 4:3–34. How did Jesus approach the Samaritan woman? What was the woman’s response to Christ’s conversation with her? What was the disciples’ response to this experience, and how did Jesus broaden their vision?

The eternal lesson that Jesus longed to teach His disciples and each one of us is simply this: “Those who have the Spirit of Christ will see all men through the eyes of divine compassion.”—Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, June 20, 1892.

Who are the people whom, due to the influence of your own culture and society, you tend to view disdainfully or with a lack of respect? Why *must* you change your attitude, and how can that change come?

Begin Where You Are

Someone has rightly said, “In life the only place to start from is where you are, for there is no other place to begin.” Jesus emphasized this principle in Acts 1:8, in which He declared, “ ‘But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth’ ” (*NKJV*).

Jesus’ message to His disciples was too plain to be misunderstood: begin where you are. Witness where God has planted you. Rather than dreaming of better opportunities, start with those around you. See with divine eyes the possibilities closest to you!

You don’t need to be the most educated person in the world, the most eloquent, the most gifted. However helpful some of those gifts could be if rightly used, in the end all you need is your own love of God and your love for souls. If you are willing to witness, God will open the way for you to do so.

Read John 1:40, 41; John 6:5–11; and John 12:20–26. What do these passages tell you about both Andrew’s spiritual eyesight and his approach to witnessing?

Andrew’s experience speaks volumes to us. He began in his own family. He first shared Christ with his brother Peter. He developed a cordial relationship with a little boy who then provided Jesus with the material for a miracle, and Andrew also knew just what to do with the Greeks. Rather than debate theology, he sensed their need and introduced them to Jesus.

The art of effective soul winning is the art of building positive, caring relationships. Think about the people closest to you who may not know Jesus. Do they sense in your life someone who is compassionate and caring? Do they see in you a peace and purpose that they long for? Is your life an advertisement for the gospel? We make friends for God by sharing Jesus. They become Christian friends, and eventually, as we share God’s end-time message of biblical truth, they may become Seventh-day Adventist Christians, as well.

Why can it be so difficult at times to lead our family members and relatives to Christ? Have you been successful in sharing Jesus with any of your family members or close friends? Share any principles that the class might find helpful.

Dealing With Difficult People

Jesus was a master at dealing with difficult people. By both His words and actions, He demonstrated acceptance. He listened sensitively to their concerns, raised questions, and gradually revealed divine truths. He recognized the inner longing in the most hardened hearts and saw potential in the vilest sinners. For Jesus, no one was beyond the reach of the gospel. Jesus certainly believed that “none have fallen so low, none are so vile, but that they can find deliverance in Christ.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 258. Jesus looked at people through a different set of lenses than the rest of us do. He saw in each human being a reflection of the glory of the original Creation. He raised their thinking to grasp the possibility of what they might become, and many rose to meet His expectations for their lives.

Read Matthew 4:18, 19; Mark 12:28–34; and Luke 23:39–43. What do you find similar in Christ’s appeals to Peter and John, an unnamed questioning scribe, and the thief on the cross? Study Christ’s approach to each of these carefully. What stands out to you?

Everywhere Jesus went He saw spiritual possibilities; He saw potential candidates for the kingdom of God in the most unlikely circumstances. We call this ability “church growth eyes.” Church growth eyes are a cultivated sensitivity to see people as Jesus saw them, as winnable for the kingdom of God. This also involves “church growth ears,” which has to do with listening to the unspoken needs of those around us. It has to do with listening to their hearts’ longing for something they do not have, even if they have not openly expressed it.

Ask the Lord to make you sensitive to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the lives of others. Pray that God will give you the second touch and open your eyes to the spiritual opportunities He brings before you each day to share your faith with others. Seek God for a seeing eye, a listening, sensitive heart, and a willingness to share the Christ you know and love with others, and you will be on your way to an exciting journey of a lifetime. Life will take on a whole new meaning. You will have a sense of satisfaction and joy that you have never experienced before. Only those who work for souls can know the satisfaction it can bring.

Sensing Providential Opportunities

The book of Acts is filled with stories of how the disciples took advantage of providential opportunities for the advancement of God's kingdom. From one end of the book to the other, we read fascinating accounts of the early church and how it grew, even despite the challenges it faced both internally and externally.

In 2 Corinthians 2:12, 13, for example, the apostle Paul tells his experience at Troas: “Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia” (*NKJV*). God miraculously opened a door for Paul to preach the gospel on the European continent, and he knew that the doors God opens today might be shut tomorrow. Seizing the opportunity and seeing the possibilities, he immediately sailed for Macedonia.

The God of the New Testament is the God of the open door—the God who provides providential opportunities for us to share our faith. Throughout the book of Acts, God is at work. There are open doors in cities, in provinces, in countries, and most of all, in individual hearts.

Read Acts 8:26–38. What do these verses teach about Philip's openness to God's leading and his responsiveness to divine opportunities?

“An angel guided Philip to the one who was seeking for light and who was ready to receive the gospel, and today angels will guide the footsteps of those workers who will allow the Holy Spirit to sanctify their tongues and refine and ennoble their hearts. The angel sent to Philip could himself have done the work for the Ethiopian, but this is not God's way of working. It is His plan that men are to work for their fellow men.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 109.

If we have ears to hear and eyes to see, we, too, will be guided by unseen angels to reach truth seekers with the truths of the kingdom.

Notice how central the Scriptures were in this story. Also, notice how at this point it was so important for someone who knew the Scriptures to expound on them. What lessons are here for us?

Further Thought: Read Ellen G. White, “The Gospel in Samaria,” pp. 103–111, in *The Acts of the Apostles*.

All around us people are seeking for the things of eternity. As Jesus so aptly put it, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few” (*Matt. 9:37, NKJV*). The problem, therefore, was not with the harvest. With eyes divinely anointed, Jesus saw a plentiful harvest where the disciples saw only opposition. What was Christ’s solution to the problem? “Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest” (*Matt. 9:38, NKJV*). The solution is to pray that God will send you out into His harvest.

Why not pray this prayer? “Lord, I am willing to be used for the advancement of Your kingdom. Open my eyes so that I can see the providential opportunities You are opening before me each day. Teach me to be sensitive to the people around me. Help me to speak words of hope and encouragement and share Your love and truth with those I come in contact with each day.” If you will pray this prayer, God will do some extraordinary things with your life.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 If you have worked to bring souls to Jesus, there is one thing you know: it is not always easy, is it? Yes, of course, only God can convert hearts, but in His wisdom He has chosen to use us to be part of that process. To work for even one soul takes time, effort, patience, and a love born from above. What choices can you make that will help you have the death to self that you need in order to be an effective witness for Christ?
- 2 Who are some of the people you come in contact with who don’t know the Lord? What have you done, or are doing, or should do, to witness to them?
- 3 Think about Saul of Tarsus. Here is someone who appeared to be about as unlikely a convert as one could imagine! And yet, we know what happened to him. What should this tell us about the danger of too quickly judging others by outward appearances?
- 4 Keeping in mind the story of Saul, how should we interpret a text like Matthew 7:6: “Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces” (*NKJV*)?