

## **Puzzle - Connecting with the world**

In the greater Roanoke area there are over 300,000 people. Of that number nearly 100,000 of them do not attend church and another 100,000 do not attend regularly. If that overwhelms you then let's just look at the 24018 zip code. There are nearly 37,000 people and of that number there are nearly 12,000 people who do not attend church and another 10,000 people who only attend occasionally. That means we have a huge mission field around us. Sadly, according to Dr. Thom Rainer: "Only 2 percent of church members invite an unchurched person to church. **98% of church-goers never extend an invitation in a given year.**" - *Dr Thom Rainer, The Unchurched Next Door*. As Christians we are to follow Jesus example!

### **Mark 2:13-17 (NLT)**

<sup>13</sup> Then Jesus went out to the lakeshore again and taught the crowds that were coming to him. <sup>14</sup> As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at his tax collector's booth. "Follow me and be my disciple," Jesus said to him. So Levi got up and followed him.

<sup>15</sup> Later, Levi invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. (There were many people of this kind among Jesus' followers.) <sup>16</sup> But when the teachers of religious law who were Pharisees saw him eating with tax collectors and other sinners, they asked his disciples, "Why does he eat with such scum?"

<sup>17</sup> When Jesus heard this, he told them, "Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do. I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners."

### **How do we connect with the world?**

#### **I. Develop a heart of compassion**

Having compassion for others isn't something that comes naturally to most of us. When God lives within your heart, you'll begin to see others in the way God sees them. That's one of the goals of being a follower of Jesus—to be more like him.

In order to develop a heart of compassion you need to:

A. **Intentionally choose to grow in your faith.** – I’ve preached about the importance of not being stagnant in your faith. We can’t just accept Christ, avoid sin, and sit still. Do you know what happens to water when it just sits? It soon starts to stink and stagnating saints soon stink too! That’s why we must be intentional about growing.

B. **Intentionally pray that God will open your eyes** –

1. Prophet praying that eyes would be open – Army surrounding Dothan to get Elisha. **II Kings 6:15** **When the servant of the man of God got up early the next morning and went outside, there were troops, horses, and chariots everywhere. “Oh, sir, what will we do now?” the young man cried to Elisha.**

**16 “Don’t be afraid!” Elisha told him. “For there are more on our side than on theirs!” 17 Then Elisha prayed, “O Lord, open his eyes and let him see!” The Lord opened the young man’s eyes, and when he looked up, he saw that the hillside around Elisha was filled with horses and chariots of fire.**

2. Jesus looking over Jerusalem and crying – **Matthew 23:37** **“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones God’s messengers! How often I have wanted to gather your children together as a hen protects her chicks beneath her wings, but you wouldn’t let me.”**

We need to pray that God will open our eyes to the needs of those around the world. So often we are self-focused. Actually that’s our biggest battle-- self.

*Lord, open my eyes to the needs of others. I want to have a heart of compassion like you. I want the situations and suffering of others to break my heart and cause me to act. Lord would you please break my heart for the people and situations that break your heart so that they can know the love of Jesus by my actions? Amen.*

C. **Intentionally think of others first.** – Because we are such self-centered individuals we will have to intentionally choose to put others first.

These three steps will help you begin to develop a heart of compassion. A second step in connecting with our world is:

## II. Doing small things to show the love of God

A. **Think outside of the box** – A company was looking to fill a position and had 200 people apply for the position. During the screening process the H.R. person sent an email out to them with a “What would you do challenge?”

“You are driving along in your car on a wild, stormy night. You pass by a bus stop, and you see three people waiting for the bus:

1. An older woman who looks as if she is about to die.
2. An old friend who once saved your life.
3. The perfect man (or) woman you have been dreaming about.

Which one would you choose to offer a ride to, knowing that there could only be one passenger in your car. This is one of those moral/ethical dilemmas once used as part of a job application.

You could pick up the older woman, because she is going to die, and thus you should save her first; or you could take the old friend because he once saved your life, and this would be the perfect chance to pay him back. However, you may never be able to find your perfect dream lover again.

One candidate who was hired had no trouble coming up with his answer. He simply answered: “I would give the car keys to my old friend, and let him take the lady to the hospital. I would stay behind and wait for the bus with the woman of my dreams.”

The moral of this story is to think outside the box. Jesus challenged his disciples to do just that. Jesus said in Matthew 10:42 “**And if you give even a cup of cold water to one of the least of my followers, you will surely be rewarded.**” In John 13, the night before he dies, he washes his disciple’s feet and then challenges them to love others. - In essence, think outside of the box to do the small things to show God’s love.

1. Getting someone a cup of coffee in the office
2. If driving down a toll road, pay for the person behind you.
3. On a hot day get some cold water and take it to people working outside, or on a cold day get something hot to share.
4. Allow someone in the turn lane to go before you do

5. Allow someone to go in front of you at the checkout
6. Say “THANK YOU” to others, (custodians at work, garbage collectors, receptionist, etc.)
7. Mow your neighbor’s yard, bake them some cookies, or wash their car.
8. Hold the door for someone.
9. Use the person’s name rather than just talking to them.
10. Strike up a conversation with an elderly person or someone that just looks like they need a word of encouragement.
11. Smile
12. Return someone’s grocery cart
13. Leave a big tip for your server with a note of encouragement
14. Give someone else the close parking spot
15. Make cookies and leave some for your mail carrier, or drop them off at the Fire Department. Or you could pick up some donuts for the police and drop them off (that way they don’t have to go there to get them. ☺)

You never fully know how a life will be touched by a small act of kindness, but God does. Jesus gives us a hint of the impact of doing the small things.

**Matthew 25:34-40 (NLT) “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. <sup>35</sup> For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. <sup>36</sup> I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.’**

**<sup>37</sup> “Then these righteous ones will reply, ‘Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? <sup>38</sup> Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? <sup>39</sup> When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?’**

**<sup>40</sup> “And the King will say, ‘I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!’**

### **III. Build Relationships**

- A. Make time for people!** – Don't just say hi and shut the door. When we watched making room for neighbors in our C.G. class **it recommended putting two lawn chairs out front.**
- B. Look people in the eye** – It lets them know that you are listening and that they are important.
- C. Get to know them** –
- 1. Talk about their interests/hobbies/current events** – it's common wisdom that people love to talk about their hot buttons. Find something, an idea or a philosophy or a hobby that others are passionate about and just ask a question. With the power of social media today it is not hard to find hot buttons to focus on.
  - 2. Ask about their families/pets/significant others** - In your conversations, ask about the people that are close to them. Even a simple "How are your parents/girl/boyfriend?" bring out a human element that creates an opportunity for bonding.
- D. Treat others as equals** – Don't belittle people, treat others the way you want to be treated. As you get to know them and you find out the person is a lawyer don't start telling lawyer jokes like:
- 1. How does an attorney sleep?** A: First he lies on one side, then he lies on the other or:
  - 2. Q: What do dinosaurs and decent lawyers have in common?**  
A: They're both extinct.
- Treat them with respect. It's amazing how much showing respect makes a difference.
- E. Invite them into your world** – Have them over for dinner or out for dinner, out to a game, etc. Christmas is coming and it's a perfect time to intentionally reach out to your friends, relatives, associates, and neighbors.

Even though this world is not our home, God has called us to **connect** with our World and make a difference. Check out this video entitled, that's why I pray:

**Big and Rich – That's why I pray**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QjJyZfDCa88>

Conclusion:

We can make a difference developing a heart of compassion, being intentional in doing small things, and intentional in building relationships. You may be here this morning and say I've tried, people aren't interested. If that's you, or sort of you then check out these statistics:

- 82% of the unchurched are at least somewhat likely to attend church if invited – *Dr. Thom Rainer, The Unchurched Next Door*
- “62% percent of formerly churching adults are not actively looking for a church, but are open to the idea of attending church regularly again.” – *Scott McConnell, Lifeway Research*
- Most people come to church because of a personal invitation.
- 7 out of 10 unchurched people have never been invited to church in their whole lives
- The study revealed that 63 percent of Americans are willing to receive information about a local church from a family member, and 56 percent are willing to receive it from friend or neighbor.” – *Philip Nation, LifeWay Research and National Spokesperson for Back to Church Sunday*
- A majority (66 percent) of Americans are unwilling to receive information through an e-mail message, and 70 percent say e-mail would be ineffective in getting them to visit.

There was a little Christian church in Germany, during WWII. They were barely 50 yards from the train tracks, and each Sunday morning, they could hear the trains rolling by, taking the Jews to their death in the furnaces.

They could also hear the screams for help. But what did they do? They sang their hymns unto the Lord louder so they couldn't hear them screaming for help.

We can comment about how could they do that, but aren't we doing the same thing when we allow ourselves to be so busy that we ignore those around us? The harvest is truly plentiful and we are the harvesters! **What will you do?**

Church... the world is hurting, the world is in need, and Christ has sent us to the world to be the light, to rescue them. The question this morning is... **Will you?**