










Make a difference in your community

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 <p>intro</p>	<p>As we look at Jesus' life, we see Jesus reaching out to all kinds of people and building relationships. These relationships were defined by dignity, care, and value. Many Christians view relationships with others—especially with non-Christians—as a project or a means to an end. Jesus shows us, though, that shouldn't be the case.</p> <p>WATCH 'HOW TO ABANDON HOMELESS PEOPLE' NOW. Click on the link in your email to watch the video online. (length - 5:29)</p> <p>C. J. Speelman's story of doing bike repairs in Portland shows us a beautiful example of someone reaching out to befriend and value the people around him.</p>
 <p>read</p>	<p>Sometimes when we see the hurts and struggles around us, we don't know what we can do. We feel small and unable to enact real change. But even small acts of kindness can make a huge impact. And it starts by really seeing the people around us, viewing them as loved and valued and important . . . and then treating them as such.</p>
 <p>talk</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When has someone made you feel loved and valued by doing something small? 2. How can we help people in ways that help them retain their dignity?
 <p>read</p>	<p>C. J. Speelman meets a very real need in Portland: the need for free bike repairs. In the midst of this service, he has the opportunity to build relationships with his friends that live outside, creating a safe place for people to be themselves. In this way, Speelman is able to be a tangible expression of Jesus to his community.</p> <p>Jesus was constantly reaching out to people and building relationships.</p> <p>Throughout the Gospels, we see Jesus seeking out the sick, the hurting, and the sinful. He calls each of us to himself. He cares for each of us deeply, even comparing himself to a shepherd who deeply cares for his sheep (Jn. 10:11). And just as a shepherd will leave his flock to seek out a lone lost sheep, Jesus desires that we will all come to him (Mt. 18:12- 14).</p> <p>Read John 4:1-30.</p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What can we assume about the Samaritan woman because she is out getting water at noon? 2. Why was it scandalous for Jesus to be speaking to the woman? 3. While Jesus does bring up the woman's sin during their conversation, he starts the conversation on a very different subject. What does he start talking with her about and why?
	<p>Speelman says that it's not about the service he's providing; it's about connecting with others. This seems true of Jesus in this story as well. It didn't matter so much where they were or specifically how he started the conversation. It mattered more that he met the woman where she was and started building a relationship with her.</p>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. If Jesus were telling this story today, who might take the place of the Samaritan woman? Who in your culture and community is ostracized and looked down upon?
	<p>Jesus calls us to reach out and build relationships. Read Matthew 22:34-40 and Matthew 7:12.</p>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. With all the laws and regulations the Jewish priests set forth, Jesus summed up the law very succinctly. How would you sum up how we're supposed to live as Christ-followers? 6. What does it look like to reach out to others, loving them as we love ourselves, treating them the way we want to be treated? 7. Sometimes Christians approach the command to love others simply as a strategy to get people to come to Christ. What does it look like to love non-believers and not treat them as projects? 8. Speelman explains that the homeless people in Portland depend on their bikes, and that's why he chose to fix bikes. Speelman says that homeless people without their bikes are like cowboys without their horses—they're nobody. By fixing their bikes, they are somebody. It brings value to them. 9. What opportunities are there in your community to help people who feel like nobody instead feel like somebody?

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Spend time getting to know your community and the needs around you. As a whole group, or in small groups of three or four, spend time simply observing in assorted locations in your community. Consider popular restaurants, community centre's, neighbourhood parks, homeless shelters, food pantries, or other natural gathering places. Simply observe the people and the location. Then begin to get to know the people. Start up a conversation. Go into this without an agenda other than getting to know them.

Then have your group reconvene. Debrief your experience with these questions:

- 1. What was it like observing? What feelings did you have? Why?*
- 2. What did you observe about the people and culture?*
- 3. Did anything surprise you? Why or why not?*
- 4. What was more difficult: simply observing or starting up conversations?*
- 5. Based on your observations, what needs do you see in our community? How might we meet those needs as a group?*

OR

Spend time interacting with people who are outside your comfort zone. Consider serving at a food pantry, cooking a meal for a homeless shelter, or serving at an under-resourced school. Intentionally interact with people whom Jesus would interact with and pray that he will give you the eyes to see these people as he sees them.



It's not about the thing we're doing; it's about how we're connecting with others. C. J. Speelman saw a real need in his community, a group of people who felt like nobodies, and found a way to interact with them and bring value to their lives. Speelman found a way to say, "You matter to me and to God."

Let this story inspire you to help people in your own community understand that they matter. Consider who in your neighborhood needs biblical community. Who needs someone to restore their value? What needs are there around you? What are the causes of the social ills in your area? Then choose a way to act.



Ask God to help you see others the way he sees them.

Ask God to help you see opportunities around you where you can make a difference in someone's life.

Ask God to help you live out the principles spoken about tonight.