



Preaching the 9 Arts of
**Spiritual
Conversations**

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Contents

Getting Started with the 9 Arts Sermon Resource.....	5
PART 1: SERMON OUTLINES AND IDEAS.....	9
PART 2: SERMON SERIES SAMPLES	31



Getting Started

WITH THE 9 ARTS SERMON RESOURCE

Jesus' final instructions to his disciples were to "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). In John 20:21, Jesus said this to his disciples: "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." In Acts 1, Luke records Jesus' message this way: "You will be my witnesses." Not you *might* be or you *could* be, but you *will* be. Jesus is basically saying, "So when people want to know what I am like and what I am up to, they will look to you as witnesses. They will expect to find the truth about me from you." In the next chapter of Acts, from this small group of disciples, the Church is born.

As we continue to read the New Testament, God's mission keeps showing up. In 2 Corinthians 5, we are called Christ's "ambassadors" to whom he has given "the ministry of reconciliation" (verses 18-20). He has committed to us, Jesus' followers, the message of reconciliation. Paul says that God is making his appeal to the world through us.

It is clear from these verses and others that author J. Andrew Kirk is right: "It is not so much the case that God has a mission for the church in the world but that God has a church for his mission in the world. Mission is not made for the church; the church is made for the mission—God's Mission"¹

Any way you look at it, we are called to *Go*. To be a follower of Jesus is to join Jesus on his mission. All of his followers are called to participate. But how many of our people know they are sent? How many have heard this call? How will you help them hear the call and equip them for the Mission?

Nine relational practices are evident in Jesus' ministry that show us the way to engage with people around us and make new disciples. At Q Place we call them the 9 Arts of Spiritual Conversations. When you—as a pastor—have tried out these practices and become confident in the result, you can begin to help your people not only hear the call to the Mission, but also understand how to go about it. This sermon resource is designed to help you build sermons to cast vision and help your own church get on the journey of following Jesus' all-important purpose for us.

1 J. Andrew Kirk, *What Is Mission? Theological Explanations* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 23-37.

HOW TO USE THIS SERMON RESOURCE

Preaching the 9 Arts of Spiritual Conversations is designed to help you cast vision to your people for personally engaging in the Great Commission.

Part 1: Outlines & Ideas

You can use these outlines and ideas as a starting point for building your sermon series. There are nine sermons (one on each art) and a introductory sermon to launch the series.

Part 2: Sermon Series Samples

Three pastors have offered their 9 Arts sermon series and supplementary resources as samples for you to refer to and incorporate into your own structure and plans.

Sample 1: On a Rescue Mission with God is a topical sermon series that was informed by the basic outlines provided in this resource. Pastor Michael Dean preached

this series at East Bend Mennonite Church in Fisher, IL.

Sample 2: The 9 Arts of Spiritual Conversations is a topical sermon series that is also based on the outlines in this resource. Pastor David Riemenschneider preached this series at Bloomingdale Church, a Christian & Missionary Alliance Church in Bloomingdale, IL.

Sample 3: Walk This Way is an expository sermon series from the Gospel of Luke. This series is especially appropriate for a church with a large percentage of seekers in the audience. Pastor Eric Rust launched this series on Easter Sunday at Cedar Hills Church, an Assemblies of God church in Sandpoint, ID.

9 Arts Sermon Outlines & Ideas

Intro Sermon: Why Cultivate These Practices?	11
1. The Art of Noticing: Why Notice?	13
2. The Art of Praying: Why Pray?	15
3. The Art of Listening: Why Listen?	17
4. The Art of Asking Questions: Why Ask Questions?	19
5. The Art of Loving: Why Love?	21
6. The Art of Welcoming: Why Welcome?	23
7. The Art of Facilitating: Why Facilitate?	25
8. The Art of Serving Together: Why Serve Together?	27
9. The Art of Sharing: Why Share?	29



WHY CULTIVATE THESE PRACTICES?

the **big** idea

With a fresh perspective and simple, everyday practices, any Christian can engage in the Great Commission.

related **Scripture**

This is a large work I've called you into, but don't be overwhelmed by it. It's best to start small. Give a cool cup of water to someone who is thirsty, for instance. The smallest act of giving or receiving makes you a true apprentice. You won't lose out on a thing. Matthew 10:42 (MSG)

focus question

What kind of feeling does the term *evangelism* stir up inside you? How would you define *evangelism*?

challenging **wisdom**

Perhaps the most obvious observation is that most unchurched people are not being pursued by anyone.

– George Barna

call to **action**

This week, intentionally do three simple things:

1. **Notice, pray for, and listen to people.**
2. **Invite God to show you the people he wants you to notice, and be attentive to his promptings.**
3. **Keep a list of people God prompts you to notice.**

SERMON OUTLINE

1. Today's challenge

- We all know Matthew 28:18-20 (the Great Commission), where Jesus commands us all to “go and make disciples of all nations,” but evangelism has become the activity of a small minority of Christians.
- Many Christians believe evangelism is the role of the paid professionals, but the Great Commission was given to all disciples of Jesus.
- The overarching narrative of all of Scripture is that God is in pursuit of lost men and women.
- What grade would you give yourself for making disciples (evangelism): A, B, C, D, or F?
- What grade would you give our church?

2. How can all Christians share the good news?

- If evangelism really is “good news,” there must be a way for all of us to be involved, not just a select few.
- Matthew 22:36-39: Loving God and loving others is the foundation of the Great Commission.
- Focus on the little stuff, simple practices, small behaviors, because little things seemed to matter to Jesus (Matt. 10:42).

3. Cups of cold water: simple conversation practices

- We are not that good at casual conversations, let alone spiritual conversations.
- To live a Great Commission lifestyle, we all need to improve in our conversational ability.
- For this to be sustainable, we need simple, memorable activities that can be done by anyone as part of a normal routine that provides a pathway to spiritual conversations.
- Getting good at spiritual conversations with those who believe differently from you is an art that takes practice.
- Nine simple practices for a lifestyle on mission with God are called the 9 Arts of Spiritual Conversations (Noticing, Praying, Listening, Asking Questions, Loving, Welcoming, Facilitating, Serving Together, and Sharing).

SERMON IDEAS**A Case for Practicing These Arts**

In Luke 6:43-44, Jesus says that a tree is recognized by its fruit. No tree can produce fruit that is outside of its DNA. An orange tree produces oranges, etc. The statement that Jesus makes could be applied to both individuals and churches.

Do we like the fruit that we are producing? What does it tell us about the kind of church we are? About the kind of people we are?

Though Jesus commissioned all of his followers to bear fruit, to “go and make disciples” (Matt. 28:19), he clearly revealed in John 15 that we are powerless to bear any kind of fruit without abiding in him. Part of abiding in Jesus is to live in the way that he lived, to follow his example. The Arts of Spiritual Conversations are practices that you can identify in the way that Jesus interacted with people. What if we lived out these same simple practices? Do you suppose that we would begin to see more fruit?

Expository Sermon Passage: 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

In verse 16, Paul states that we no longer look at people from the worldly point of view. In other words, we see people with the eyes of Jesus. The first three Arts help us to see people with Jesus’ eyes by paying attention to them in a new way. Noticing, praying, and listening all help us to stop regarding people from a worldly point of view. In verse 18, Paul says that Christ has given us the ministry of reconciliation. Ministry implies active and tangible ways for people to experience this reconciliation. Asking questions, loving, and welcoming are very real ways for us to enter into this ministry. Finally, in verse 20, Paul calls us Christ’s ambassadors, entrusted with the message of reconciliation. The message needs to be proclaimed, and that happens as we facilitate ongoing spiritual conversations, serve together with people, and share our faith.

An Illustration

Use a tool box as a prop to talk about the tools that are needed to get a job done right. Explain how you use the different tools and then apply it to the way of life that Jesus calls us to. So often, we have told people to go out and make disciples, but we haven’t equipped them to do it. In other words, we haven’t provided them with the tools. These Arts of Spiritual Conversations are the tools needed to live a Great Commission lifestyle.

If sports, painting, or another activity resonates more with you, you could bring up the tools necessary for that activity (e.g., a golf bag full of different clubs for different shots).

SUMMARY

There are specific practices, or arts, that lead to authentic spiritual conversations. With practice and intentionality, Christians can improve in these nine simple areas and experience an increase in meaningful spiritual conversations as a natural part of their lives. Using these practices, anyone can engage in evangelism, sharing the good news about Jesus.

WHY NOTICE?

the **big** idea

The first step in developing a relationship with anyone starts with noticing them.

related **Scripture**

And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward. Matthew 10:42 (NIV)

focus question

Remember a time when someone noticed something positive about you and then told you about it. How did it feel to be noticed?

challenging **wisdom**

My new perspective of understanding and loving God like never before gave me a new set of eyes through which to view people. With these new God goggles, I didn't just see people. I saw lost people. People with a name. People with a story. Good people. Good parents. Good neighbors. Yet they are lost people, and I barely even knew their names.

– Melody Allred

call to **action**

Try paying attention to three different people this week. Spend a few moments wondering about them. Ask three questions to yourself about each person. Pray secretly for each one. Write down your observations and any secret prayers. Share your experiences with someone else.

SERMON OUTLINE

1. Noticing is a gateway to relationships

- Matthew 9:36-38: Jesus noticed the crowds first, and then was moved with compassion for them. How about us? Do we see the helpless and hopeless condition of people we come in contact with every day?
- A precursor of knowing someone is noticing them.
- Noticing is the first step to bring someone the good news about Jesus. It opens our eyes to God's work and grace.

2. Jesus is our model of noticing

- Jesus was masterful at noticing people. In Luke 19, he noticed Zacchaeus first, and then took the step to personally initiate contact with him. See also Luke 7:11-13.
- Noticing people can move us to compassion and action as people become real to us, in need of a real Savior. See Luke 19:41.
- Noticing is a relational act of kindness that ordinary people can do. You probably already do it, but now you can practice it more intentionally.

3. Noticing counts in evangelism

- Evangelism means "good news." When Jesus noticed people, it was good news.
- People long for attention like "a cup of cold water" (Matt. 10:42). Do we really think noticing counts? Should it?
- Noticing doesn't require any courage, it just requires you to do it. It changes your view of God, others, and you. It is a starting point for building more genuine, caring friendships with people who are separated from God.

4. Three simple ways to practice noticing in normal life routines

1. Paying attention. It's a simple, nonspeaking practice of intentionally focusing on people you ordinarily come into contact with each day and opening your heart to where God may be at work.
2. Secret prayer. As you pay attention to someone, you can discreetly send up a silent prayer (Matt. 6:3-4).
3. Genuine listening. If you are prompted to start a dialogue, evangelize with your ears.

SERMON IDEAS

More Accounts of Jesus Noticing

- **John 9:1** – The phrase that jumps out here is *As he went along* . . . Jesus paid attention to the people he intersected with along the way. He was attuned to the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs around him. Are we?
- **Matthew 9:36-37** – Jesus noticed people in a way that moved his heart. The word for “compassion” here means that Jesus’ insides literally ached for these people. Do you notice in a way that moves your heart?
- **John 4:1-9** – Jesus noticed people everyone else had written off. The Samaritan woman was surprised that Jesus noticed her at the well. She comments on the fact that she is a Samaritan and he is a Jew, not to mention her immoral lifestyle that likely caused her to be there in the middle of the day by herself.

One Church’s Idea

One Sunday, a church planted people throughout the church and in the parking lot for people to “notice” on their way in. They had one man lying under a car out in the parking lot trying to fix his car; they had a couple of women in the corner, one crying; they had another man having a very angry conversation on his cell phone in the church lobby; a boy with a black eye; etc. When the sermon began, the pastor asked the people what they had noticed as they came to church that morning.

A Story about Noticing that Led to Ministry

Here’s a story from Pastor Jeff Klein:

When my son Joseph was 8 years old, he came home from school one day and told me that there was a boy in his class who needed our help. When I asked why, Joseph told me what he noticed: “Well, when we went out for recess today, the new boy in my class, Eric, went out in shorts and flip flops. He must have been cold in the snow.” (It was February in Chicago.) Because of Joseph’s keen eye and because his heart was moved, our church was able to get in touch with Eric’s family. Then we discovered that they had recently come from a refugee camp in the Congo in Africa. We were able to provide them with snow pants, boots, winter coats, and mittens. All this began because an 8-year-old boy was paying attention.

Give an Assignment

Go sit in a shopping mall or on a street with lots of people and practice noticing.

SUMMARY

Through simple, ordinary practices like paying attention to people around us, God begins to change our hearts and we begin to wonder about people and care for them.

Part 2:

**9 Arts
Sermon Series
Samples**

- 1. On a Rescue Mission with God 33
Michael Dean, East Bend Church, Fisher, IL
- 2. The 9 Arts of Spiritual Conversations 89
David Riemenschneider, Bloomingdale Church, Bloomingdale, IL
- 3. Walk This Way 133
Eric Rust, Cedar Hills Church, Sandpoint, ID



THE ART OF NOTICING

INTRODUCTION

A pastor friend of mine had a horrifying experience just a few weeks ago. Driving to the church office, he stopped at a 4-way stop and the car in front of him began to move through the intersection. All of the sudden it stopped in the middle of the intersection and the driver door opened. A young woman got out and was visibly upset. A few moments later he heard several gun shots and the woman fell. Then the passenger door opened and a man got out and turned the gun toward my friend who witnessed all of this and fired it directly at him. The man then ran off into a warehouse that was adjacent to the stop.

The bullet that was fired at my friend hit his windshield, right in line with his chest. But by the grace of God it ricocheted off the windshield and he was uninjured. The woman, however, had crumpled to the ground.

My pastor friend rushed to her side, hoping to save her, but she died in his arms. The most disturbing thing in this whole story for my friend came with the realization that this couple had lived just two houses down from the church building, and no one at church knew them. They didn't know their names, their past, their struggles. No one! They had gone unnoticed. The shooter who had run away was found shortly after all this by police. He had taken his own life.

How many people around us go unnoticed? Neighbors, coworkers, fellow students at school? How many people do we walk by on a regular basis that we just don't take time to notice?

CONTENT

1. Noticing is a gateway to relationships.

Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."

Matthew 9:36-38

- Like we talked about last week, Jesus saw the crowds and had compassion on them. This is noticing!
- Do we notice, as Christ did, the hopeless position of so many around us? Do we allow that to move us to compassion—to action?
- If we desire to learn to know others, we must first notice them.
- Notice when they are struggling to get through the day. Notice when things seem to be going great. Notice their name badge.
- Noticing others is the first step in bringing them the good news about Jesus. It opens our eyes to God's work and grace in them. Remember, God is pursuing everyone—and we are his ambassadors—on a rescue mission with him!

2. Noticing moves us to compassion, which should move us to action.

There are so many around us who are carrying such a large burden—often with little to no help at all. They are alone and lost and hurting. It doesn't take a person with a degree to see hurt and sadness in the faces of people around us—or to see how some try to hide their pain in destructive ways. In Luke 7, as Jesus is arriving at a new town, there is a funeral procession that is exiting . . .

Now as He approached the gate of the city, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a sizeable crowd from the city was with her. When the Lord saw her, He felt compassion for her, and said to her, "Do not weep." And He came up and touched the coffin; and the bearers came to a halt. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise!" The dead man sat up and began to speak. And Jesus gave him back to his mother. Luke 7:12-15

- Jesus noticed this woman (verses 13-14) and had compassion on her. It moved him to action. He raised her son to life! Friends, Jesus invites us to do the same thing today! That is the business we are in—we are on a Rescue Mission with God. But we need to notice first! We need to notice the widow, we need to notice the single mother, we need to notice the lonely widower, we need to notice the shy teen, we need to notice the overstressed mom, we need to notice! Jesus did, and he compels us to notice too.
- In Luke 19, we see Jesus, as he was on his way to another place, notice little Zacchaeus up in the tree. He sees Zacchaeus first and then engages with him. He calls him down and begins to interact with him. He doesn't just see a tax collector or sinner like the Pharisees do—he sees someone he loves and will die for!

When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house." Luke 19:5

- So many in the world today carry within them an awareness of their sin and brokenness. Though we may not see it, they think it's all we see! The first line of defense that Satan uses is to remind us of our unworthiness. Can we look at others with compassion and with interest in who God might want them to become? We know that we are not defined by our past, but by our future. Can we look at others with that same perspective—in such a way that we help them begin to see themselves in that way?
- Noticing people can move us to compassion and action as people become real to us, in need of a Savior! We see beyond their "sinfulness" and/or their tax collector status to who God created them to be.
- Noticing is a relational act of kindness that ordinary people can do. It's something that you already do—but today, I want to invite you to do it intentionally!

3. Noticing others and acting on it is evangelism.

But Peter said, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!" And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened. Acts 3:6-7

- Evangelism means “Good News”! When Jesus noticed people, it was good news! When you notice others and give them your attention, you begin the process of evangelism—opening the door for the Good News to be shared!
- Peter and John noticed the lame beggar. And they gave him what they had. That is all God asks of you. Can you give what you have? The Good News that is within you? Can you give your time, and your attention, and your ears, and your heart?
- Noticing doesn’t require any special courage, it just requires you to do it.
- It changes your view of God, others, and you!
- It is a starting point for building more genuine, caring friendships with people who are separated from God.

Ron Hutchcraft, on his radio program, shared the following story, asking if you have any “Room in Your Lifeboat.”

When I’m in a new city, I don’t usually make visiting a local cemetery one of my sightseeing priorities. But I did in a ministry trip to Halifax, Nova Scotia. I visited the cemetery where 121 passengers of the doomed *Titanic* are buried; many with their names still unknown.

Not long after the midnight radio transmission “Have struck iceberg,” three telegraph cable repair ships were dispatched from Halifax to make the 500-mile trip to the collision site to pick up the bodies of the victims. In a way, the aftermath of the sinking of the *Titanic* is a tale of two ships. One was the *Carpathia*, the ship that rescued hundreds who had made it into lifeboats, and then took them into New York Harbor. The *Carpathia* carried a ship full of rescued people, but not the *Mackay Bennett*. No, that was the first funeral ship to arrive at the scene of the sinking. All they found was 328 people, floating in their lifejackets, frozen to death. The first one they found was a little two-year-old boy, floating face up. They were devastated.

By the time they sailed into Halifax Harbor with every church bell in town tolling, there were three long rows of bodies on their deck—every one a person who did not have to die. See, those lifeboats had been half empty. But as the people in the water cried out for help, the people in the lifeboats just kept rowing away. So one ship carried those who had been rescued, and the other ship carried those no one cared enough to rescue.

Those people in the water died not because the *Titanic* sank; they survived that. But because the people who were already saved did nothing for those who were dying. Dear God, is that us—the already saved, secure in our half-empty lifeboat, doing nothing about the spiritually dying people all around us? We’re enjoying the fellowship of the folks already in the lifeboat, singing our lifeboat songs, maybe even making the lifeboat bigger or more comfortable for us. But

our coworkers, our fellow students, our neighbors who don't have a relationship with Jesus, the only one who could forgive their sin, they just go on living and dying without him.

Our word for today from the Word of God paints a portrait of stark contrast as it describes the destinations of those who were rescued and those who never were. It's in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10:

... When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power. (1984 NIV)

Think about it! Those are real people, condemned to pay for the sins Jesus already paid for on the cross—some because they didn't take what Jesus died to give them and others because no one ever told them how.

The Bible goes on to describe this as the day when *he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed*. Look, don't you want the people you know, the people who you love to be there? Then whatever has kept you from telling them about Jesus—your fears, your inadequacy, your hang-ups—can they possibly be as important as rescuing someone who's dying?

In a sense, eternity will be a place where the ones someone rescued will sail to one port where there will be celebration and reunion, while those no one rescued will go to another port where there is only death and sorrow.

You've got room in your lifeboat and there's still time. Why don't you spend the rest of your life pulling as many dying people into your lifeboat as you can?

THIS WEEK'S RESCUE MISSION PROTOCOL

1. Notice. Pay attention. Intentionally focus on people you ordinarily come into contact with and then open your heart to where God may be at work in them.
2. Pray secretly. As you pay attention to someone, discreetly pray for them. (See Matthew 6:5-6.)
3. Listen genuinely. Listen to them well and listen often!

NOTICING

INTRODUCTION

[Put on glasses with small funnels pointing out over the lenses.]

I have a problem. I have funnel vision.

We all tend to put on filtering lenses of what we see as important, what we want to focus on. I can be an expert in this. Perhaps you more Type-A people are more susceptible to it. You and I tend to be the people who don't see outside our funnel lenses. We don't notice; we don't see lost people needing the gospel. Often we see just people, maybe even annoying people. We tend to squeeze them out of our field of vision.

Yet they are people, to whom you could offer a helpful gesture or an encouraging word, or people who really may need your help.

For example, my wife was in a grocery store with an older woman who was confused at the checkout line. Marina took the time to engage and noticed immediately a need for help.

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a 'sinner.'" But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

Luke 19:1-10

CONTENT

Geography

Jericho was the winter capital of the Jewish state for King Herod under Roman occupation. It was a thriving trade town known for rich balsam groves nearby that created a lot of business and tax revenue. So in this busy city, Jesus notices Zach the tax collector. He was a man of means who purchased a franchise from Rome and was given full authority to collect all of the taxes to be routed to Rome, with the rights to keep anything above the Roman quotas. It was a system plagued with abuse and often carried out legalized extortion.

Remember

- It was a busy city with lots of taxes to collect.
- Zach, as chief, was responsible for all the taxes of Jericho. Possibly, this meant Zach was the district commissioner of the system, involved in training others to cheat the people.
- Now little Zach may get our sympathy when his story is told as the children's story, but he was not a particularly likeable guy. He was a short little bully with authority.
- Yet Jesus noticed Zach.

When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today."

Jesus sees someone others don't want to see (a tax collector).

A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy.

Jesus notices someone who is open to change.

He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

- Jesus saw Zach as a confused, lost guy, curious for a better life.
- Zach may have been a boss but he was a bruised up, seeking guy. As a Jew, he had gone through the catechism of Judaism. He had gone to the synagogue school as a kid. He had become affluent, but now he was alienated from the people. He was not welcome at their neighborhood block parties or local holiday festivals.
- But he still pondered what his life legacy would be. He was asking questions about life's significance and even climbed a tree like a little kid to catch a look at Jesus.
- People often come to responsive points, when they are taking a philosophy or psychology class in high school or college, or getting married, or having a baby, or unfortunately getting divorced. Maybe they are having trouble answering children's questions, or facing health issues, or a really hard time at work, or financial troubles. Sometimes it's even when everything is going great, as it was for Zach, and people begin asking themselves, "Is life more than gathering stuff or playing with expensive toys?" Some people become very successful and then they begin to ask some hard questions about their lives.
- There was another side of Zach that the others, even the religious people (perhaps the religious people most of all), had forgotten.
- They want their life to have significance as they think about their legacy.
- Now Jesus didn't blast Zach about his sin. Zach probably already felt guilty about it. Rather, Jesus noticed a seeking man. He offered Zach his time, his friendship, and the possibility of a clean slate of forgiveness when he was a chief sinner.
- Jesus noticed Zach as a man who was ready to change, and it would be a costly change.

Jesus initiates the conversation.

When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately.”

- There are people in your life like that. They may even have the veneer of a Zach.
- To anyone standing in the crowd that day, it was a surprise that Jesus noticed him. From their point of view it was shocking that Jesus even cared to interact with him, picking him out, calling him by his name. Jesus noticed a man who was responsive to the truth. Jesus put his arm around his shoulder (down here). “Zach, I’m so glad to see you. Could we have lunch together today, if you’re available?”

Jesus goes and hangs out with a sinner: “I must stay at your house today.”

So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a ‘sinner.’”

- Maybe he approached him as a long-lost friend. Jaws dropped. “Jesus knows him? Jesus wants to eat lunch with him?”
- Zach was also surprised, but he was glad to reply with an enthusiastic yes.
- People were grumbling, “He’s eating with a loser, a traitor, a sinner.”

Jesus helps a man find a home.

But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”

- Zach volunteered half of what he owned for the poor and repayed fourfold all he had wronged.
- Four times? Under the Mosaic law if a thief voluntarily confessed his crime, he had to restore what he took, plus a fifth, and make an offering to God (Lev. 6:1-7). If caught with goods, one was to repay double (Ex. 22:4).
- Zach did not quibble over the terms of the law. He offered to pay the highest price because his heart had been changed.

Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”

- At the end of the day, his encounter with Jesus had changed his life. (Opposite of the rich ruler in Luke 18:22.)
- Jesus calls Zach that day a son of Abraham—a royal lineage.

There are Zachs all around us.

- They may be making some bad choices, cheating people, offending, but they also think about their life legacy, don’t want to waste their life, and are willing to check out what Jesus says—find out who Jesus is.
- They may be curious enough to show some interest when you notice them and take the initiative to start a conversation, offer a kind deed, genuinely care about

people like Jesus did. Your role some days is to help them be on the right road at the right time when Jesus is going by.

- There are people like that within a few feet of this church, and they need to be noticed. There are not a few people like Zach in our city. [Note your city’s population.] Many don’t know God. [Note the number of churches in your city and more specifically, those that focus on the Word of God as their source of faith.] But even with all these churches in the mix, that means that we each have a responsibility for a large number of people. [Divide the number of total churches by your city’s population to come up with a specific number.]

A strategy that has brought some results.

- Help seeking, responsive people get on a good path through Awana clubs, a teen coffeehouse, Alpha, or weekend worship.
- In 2013, Barna Group surveyed unchurched adults. Stats on church growth in relation to bringing others and inviting others: 4% were invited to attend and came, 23% were invited but declined, 73% were never invited.
- Can we take off our funnel vision glasses and notice people who are seeking and responsive to change in their lives?

Question

- How many of you can name an individual, possibly more than one, who explained and lived the gospel and were key players in your becoming a Christ-follower?
- Were they standout communicators or people with notable social or financial power?
- Maybe, but likely they were just ordinary people like you and me.
- Someone noticed us and helped us find the way, now it is our turn.
- There may be some Zachs here today. You have chased your path and are alienated from his grace. He is extending forgiveness and hope to you today, a clean slate, but you need to ask. . . .

Prayer

Lord, it sure is a good thing you came to seek and save the lost like us. You’ve called us to yourself and we are motivated to spill over with your love.

FIELD EXPERIENCE: WHAT CAN WE DO THIS WEEK?

1. Note one person you pass each day and make an attempt to talk to them, smile at them, offer a kind word.
2. Hand out a Notice Card as a reminder to follow through on the challenge.

BENEDICTION

Jesus told us in that day his main mission and now ours: *“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost”* (Luke 19:10). He invites us to participate. Our focus today was on taking off our funnel vision.

WALK THIS WAY: Notice

INTRODUCTION

It's good to be with you, Cedar Hills. I'm Eric, and I serve as a pastor here. Today is week 2 in a new series we are calling "Walk This Way." For nine weeks, we are following the way of Jesus as told in the New Testament book of Luke.

One of the discoveries you'll make pretty quickly when you read the story of Jesus is how dramatically he impacted the people he came in contact with. Every one of Jesus' interactions with people teaches us something about the way Jesus feels about us, AND how Jesus wants us to treat others.

the **big** idea

Jesus doesn't call me to condemn me; he calls me to change me.

CONTENT

I am married to a woman who often changes her hairstyle. I live in constant fear I am not going to notice. A while back, we were hanging with friends, and one of them says, "What do you think of Nicole's hair?" Apparently, she had changed it dramatically three days earlier, and I didn't even notice!

Noticing matters, doesn't it? When we notice, part of what we are saying is that we care. Now, I had looked at my wife many times in those three days. I had talked with her face-to-face. I had kissed her. But all I saw is what I had trained myself to see, and I didn't even notice the change.

Today, let's look at an encounter Jesus had with an outcast, someone who just blended in to the crowd and nobody seemed to notice. We will see today how simply noticing someone can change their life.

Luke 19:1

An important detail here that we have to keep in mind as we read this story is that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. Jesus had somewhere to go! He was literally passing through Jericho, headed toward Jerusalem.

I don't know about you, but the last thing I like to have happen when I've got to get somewhere is to be interrupted. Ever race into the grocery store really quick to grab one item and you run into someone who has nowhere to go and wants to talk? It's hard. It's hard to set aside our plans, our agenda, and make space for the unexpected.

Luke 19:2-4

So we meet a man here named Zacchaeus, and we learn three things about this guy:

- He's a tax collector. He is a Jew who is working for the Roman government, making his living collecting taxes from his own people. That made him an outcast

and a traitor with his fellow Jews. Tax collectors were despised, dishonest, thieving, back-stabbing sinners.

- He's rich. The Bible says *very* rich. The commissions he made collecting taxes were pretty lucrative, and he built his wealth taking from others and padding his own pockets with the surplus.
- He's short. I grew up in the church and remember singing a song about Zacchaeus ("Zacchaeus was a wee little man and a wee little man was he"). Apparently Zacchaeus was Scottish! I'm not sure he was a hobbit, but he was short enough to not see over the crowd, so he finds a nearby tree and uses his tree-climbing skills to get a bird's-eye view of what's about to go down.

Luke 19:5

This is such a profound verse, because in a sea of people who overlooked Zacchaeus, who didn't acknowledge him, who didn't want to have anything to do with him, Jesus noticed him—"looked up" on purpose, made eye contact, and called him by name! "Zacchaeus, get down here!"

Notice what Jesus says. He DOESN'T say, "Zacchaeus, get down here, you thief! You're in big trouble, pal!" No! Jesus doesn't condemn him. He has something far greater planned than condemnation. He was planning transformation. "I must come to your house today!"

And Zacchaeus is stoked! He can't believe it. "Me, hosting Jesus?!"

Luke 19:6-7

Who are they displeased with? Exactly: Jesus! "Who does he think he is, hanging out with a sinner like Zacchaeus?"

I woke up with this thought last week: The two times in the New Testament when Jesus' character was most viciously attacked are (1) When he claimed to be the Son of God, and (2) when he shared a meal with tax collectors!

- Keep in mind that culturally, this is more than just lunch. Sharing a meal with someone in that culture implied mutual acceptance. I accept you, you accept me. But religious people believed they were to separate themselves from "sinners." They stuck to their own kind, their own moral circle, the people most like them. And Jesus, by his actions, is announcing, "I accept Zacchaeus, this notorious sinner, this dishonest tax collector, as is!"

Jesus' love for outsiders caused him to notice those others overlooked. He rearranged his plans, his schedule, and his life to make space for Zacchaeus. And look what happened as a result:

Luke 19:8-9

Jesus hadn't gone to Zacchaeus' house that day to condemn him. He went there to change him, and that's exactly what happened. Zacchaeus did not experience salvation because he did a good thing by making up for cheating and giving half of his possessions to the poor. He experienced salvation because he trusted in Jesus as the Messiah. That is what it means to be a son or daughter of Abraham: To accept Jesus as the Son of God, as Lord and Savior.

Zacchaeus was forever changed because Jesus looked up, noticed, and was willing to make space in his life for someone others overlooked.

I want to invite my friend John Nishimoto up here. John is one of our elders and has served as a Cedar Hills life group leader for over 10 years. Last year, John had a profound experience related to this that I've asked him to share. . . .

Story: Example of Noticing.

[Note: Have a member of the congregation give a testimony on noticing. Following are the points John, mentioned above, made as he shared his story.]

- 2003 God brought us to Sandpoint for a reason.
- 4+ years ago Becky and I led two Starting Point Life Groups. Everything was simplified.
 - Love God.
 - Love my neighbors.
- I was born again and days later was brought into a church.
- I learned all the right answers in Sunday School. I attended a Christian college. I was a professional Christian. My moral circle was just the right size, or so I thought.
 - My brother is gay.
 - My niece got a tattoo.
- These are examples of how I, in my moral righteousness, chased people that I cared about away from me, my family, and God.
- Then I took a trip to Atlanta for Life Group leaders.
- God's purpose for why my family was here started to crystallize.
 - Love God. Love his people. Expand my moral circle.
 - God has led me here to CH, perhaps to help others expand their moral circle.
- CH is a church that already has a wide moral circle, and I feel God may be calling me to help widen it even more.
- Jesus noticed and reached out to tax collectors, prostitutes, the handicapped, and the lost.
- I know now that I am here to learn to notice others—those who may believe differently than me, people who were not normally inside of my moral circle.
- Won't you join me?

Jesus ends his conversation with Zacchaeus by announcing why he, the Son of Man, came to earth in the first place. . . .

Luke 19:10

Yes, Jesus came to save. He is all about saving. That's a huge part of it. Yet he also came to seek, to look for, to find, to notice. That's where it starts: noticing. He looked up and noticed a man society chose to overlook!

Imagine what would happen if we began to notice, to pay attention to the things, the words, and the people we have trained ourselves not to see. What if we expanded our

moral circle enough to make room for people who aren't like us—who don't believe as we believe?

If we want to walk in the way of Jesus, we must get comfortable noticing and making space in our lives for people who live or believe differently than we do.

NEXT STEPS

- I am placing my trust in Jesus Christ.
- I will expand my moral circle and practice the Art of Noticing.
- I'm committing to read one chapter a day from the Gospel of Luke in the Bible.
- I'm going to participate in a 9 Arts of Spiritual Conversations group.

Pray

1. Challenge to Notice.
2. I want you to know today, you are not beyond Jesus' love. He's seeking after you. He notices you. You may feel like an outcast on the sidelines of society, but Jesus notices you and wants to be a part of your life. He doesn't want to condemn you today; he wants to change you! (Salvation!)