

Grace really is amazing!

(7) Looking through grace filled eyes

Scriptures: Matthew 9:35-38; Eph. 2:8-9; Gal. 3:28; 6:14; John 4:9, 27; 8:1-11; Luke 8.

1. Read Matthew 9:35-38. As Jesus looked at the crowds he had compassion on them. What was his response? For whom do you feel most compassion? What is your response?
2. If we are going to look at others with compassion and through grace-filled eyes why is it so important to firstly remind ourselves that we are what we are because of God's grace?
3. Do you think that the phrase "love the sinner, hate the sin" is helpful to see others as Jesus saw them? Give examples of how Jesus differentiated between sinner and sin.
4. German theologian, Helmut Theilicke, wrote: *"Jesus gained the power to love harlots, bullies and ruffians... he was able to do this because he saw through the filth ... because his eye caught the divine original which is hidden... in every man. When Jesus loved a guilt-laden person and helped him, he saw in him an erring child of God. He saw in him a human being whom his Father loved and grieved over because he was going wrong. He saw him as God originally designed and meant him to be, and therefore he saw through the surface layer of grime and dirt to the real man underneath. Jesus did not identify the person with his sin, but rather saw in this sin something alien, something that really did not belong to him, something that merely chained and mastered him and from which he would free him and bring him back to his real self. Jesus was able to love men because he loved them right through the layer of mud."* How does this quote help us in practical, down-to-earth, ways to look at others through grace-filled eyes?
5. In the context of his conversation with a Romanian lady selling the Big Issue in Tamworth, Steve suggested that due to our hurriedness we can sometimes miss the opportunity to see people through the eyes Jesus. Is this your experience?
6. Steve reminded us that if we are to look through the eyes of grace we need to distinguish between what a person is (presently) and what they could become (future). What examples can you think of in the New Testament of Jesus transforming lives? In which way did Jesus reach out to those who were outcasts or untouchables (...or ceremonially unclean in terms of the Jewish law) in Luke 8?
7. "God loves others as much as he loves you!" Why will this realisation bring a change in the way that you see others? Are we quick to judge a person like Roger? Who are the social outcasts today? Why has the church so little success in reaching gay people?
8. How did Tony Campolo respond to the tramp in Chestnut Street, Philadelphia? What lesson did he himself learn from this encounter? How would you have responded to that tramp?