



The IMAGINE Series focuses on the hope of a different world as followers of Jesus make disciples who make disciples.



I. Introduction

Even as the disciples ask, “Whose sin caused this? (John 9:2)” Jesus imparts to this same man His love and life!

Imagine this scene from John chapter nine: It is a warm Sabbath morning in Jerusalem, and we are strolling with Jesus and His disciples. Having visited the temple, we follow the Master through the narrow, bustling streets. Jesus stops suddenly. The disciples whisper questions among themselves.

“What’s going on?”

“Why are we stopping?”

“What’s the Master doing?”

We approach Jesus in order to inquire about what has attracted His curiosity. We are quickly silenced by the intensity in His eyes. Following His gaze into a shadowy corner, we discover the object of His rapt attention—a blind beggar huddled alone beside the teeming river of humanity.

The people who jostle past the beggar are as blind to his presence as he is to them. But Jesus notices him. The Savior’s brow furrows with concern, but his face radiates compassion. We are gripped by the love pouring from His eyes.

Yet before the Master moves to touch the needy, blind beggar, one of the disciples shatters the tender moment. “Master, whose sin caused this man’s blindness? Did he do something wrong, or were his parents at fault?”

We are struck by the contrast. The Master is thinking, “How will I minister to this precious child of God? How can I alleviate the loneliness He must feel?” But the disciples’ only focus seems to be finding fault and assessing sin.

Within this biblical story lies a significant insight into Christ-like living, as well as a partial explanation for the irrelevance of the twenty-first century church. God’s heart is captivated by human need, while God’s people are too often preoccupied with human sin.

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- If we are to live a testimony of Christ's life and love with those around us, we must begin to see people as both fallen and alone.
- God is burdened by our sin because He is a holy God. Yet, what we often miss is that God's heart is also burdened by our sin because sin is what keeps His children alone, separated from Him and from one another.
- As we come to truly understand His complete provision for sin at Calvary, we are challenged to consider this question: Upon which of these two issues (sin or aloneness) can we actually make an impact?
- When Christ cried out, "It is finished!" He was declaring that He and He alone had made provision for our sin.
- We have the privilege of joining Him in removing a measure of the aloneness in people around us and introducing them to Jesus, who can remove their spiritual aloneness.

Recall that when the blind man came to Jesus for healing, the disciples wanted to know whose sin had caused the blindness. Jesus was moved with compassion and miraculously healed the blind man. Jesus never specifically called attention to the man's sins, but Christ's concern for the man's aloneness clearly made a spiritual impact because the man boldly declared his faith in the One who had healed him (John 9:38).

When God appears and declares something to be "not good," we must sit up and take notice because we have a serious problem.

The book of Genesis recounts the day that humankind lost fellowship with the Creator. Genesis 3:1–24 details how Adam and Eve fell from their position of perfect communion and harmony with God to one of animosity and strife. As a result of these events, humankind is now fallen, sinful, and in desperate need of a Savior. We must, however, look back to the second chapter of Genesis. Before Adam's fallenness, God declared his state of aloneness, and described it as "not good." Our Creator is acutely aware of man's condition. We are both fallen and alone. If we as the leaders of Christ's church hope to reach the world for Him, our ministries must reflect this same relational foundation. We must see people as Christ sees them—both fallen and alone.

II. Seeing People as God Sees Them: Created to Relate—Displeasure in Paradise

In Genesis 2:18, God uttered for the very first time this sobering phrase: "It is not good." He declared that something was missing in the garden. Up to this point, everything in creation had been pronounced "good." Eden was a perfect paradise.

A. Declaring Something "Not Good"

Now if you or I were to declare that something was "not good," it might not make much of an impact. When God declares something to be "not good," we must sit up and take notice because we have a serious problem. So what could have been "not good" about the garden of Eden?

- **Adam lived in a perfect world.** There was no crime, no traffic, no pollution, no disease, and no war. It was a totally problem-free environment. Most notably, the fall of humanity had not yet occurred, so Adam was sinless, innocent in heart and mind. There was only good within the garden.

A sovereign God, free to create Adam any way He desired, chose to fashion him in such a way that Adam needed to relate intimately not only with his Creator, but also with others.

- **Adam also possessed everything** he could possibly need or want. The garden of Eden and everything in it (with the exception of one unique tree) was his to use and enjoy. Adam had it all. He never suffered from a low bank balance, an empty pantry, or an investment loss. Adam was living a dream existence. He was in a perfect world, and almost everything in it was available for his use, enjoyment, and stewardship. What could have possibly been “not good”?
- **Adam had an exalted position.** He had an excellent job with no competition for advancement. He was CEO over the “fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground” (Genesis 1:26). He had no problems with job security, jealousy from co-workers, or pressure to perform. Career-wise, he was at the top of the ladder. At this point, he was the only person on the ladder, but at least he was at the top! So where was the crisis? What could have been missing?
- **Adam even enjoyed an intimate relationship with God.** Above all the earthly benefits and blessings in the garden, Adam walked and talked in perfect, uninterrupted fellowship with his Creator because sin had not yet come between them. Can you imagine the thrill of communing with God face-to-face? You and I might talk about our daily “quiet time” with God, but Adam was blessed to be with God every day. Yet something was still “not good.” What could have possibly been wrong in such an ideal setting?

There was just one thing missing, but apparently this one thing troubled God’s heart. In Genesis 2:18, God declared what was not good—Adam was alone. Adam needed a human relationship. A sovereign God, free to create Adam any way He desired, chose to fashion him in such a way that Adam needed to relate intimately not only with his Creator, but also with others.

B. Created to Relate but Alone and Fallen (Sinful)

God’s Original Design: Lost but Restored

Both Old and New Testament scriptures reveal that God’s original intent was that, **in humble dependence and expectant faith, humankind would dwell in grateful communion with God and one another.** Let’s go back to the garden of Eden, before man’s sin, in order to get a glimpse of this intimacy that God originally intended.

God’s Original Design: Humble Dependence

In the garden, Adam was totally dependent upon his Creator. Never once did Adam experience a need for something and find no supply. As Jehovah Jireh, the God who provides, our Creator provided abundantly for Adam.

God’s unchanging nature is to reveal man’s needs and then abundantly meet those needs. God now confirms this original facet of His intimate relationship with man through the revelation of His Word. The New Testament reveals that God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6). This humility of heart in response to God’s gracious provision was one crucial part of the Creator’s original intent for His relationship with man.

God's Original Design: Expectant Faith

Next, imagine talking with Adam immediately after God declared his aloneness. The conversation might have gone something like this:

"Adam, how are you doing?"

"Not good."

"What's wrong?"

"I'm alone."

"But Adam, what does that mean?"

"I don't really know, but it's not good."

"How do you know it's not good?"

"Because God said so."

Adam's heart was originally inclined to trust God and exercise expectant faith because of his confidence in God's word. When God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food" (Genesis 1:29), Adam promptly received God's provision. When God declared Adam's dominion over the birds of the air and the beasts of the field, it was so (1:26, 28; 2:19, 20). When God showed Adam all the animals and there was not a suitable helper among them, Adam, by faith, received God's provision. If we are to be a part of God's original design for His relationship with man, we must exercise faith that comes from hearing God's Word (Romans 10:17) and boldly trust in His provision. In so doing, we can be confident of an intimate relationship with our Creator. Thus, another element of God's original design was for us to please Him with the demonstration of our faith, for "without faith, it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6).

God's Original Design: Abundant Gratitude

Finally, after God set Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, He personally blessed them (Genesis 1:28), gave them authority and dominion over all that they could see (vv. 28, 29), and pronounced the whole scene "very good" (v. 31). Their hearts must have been filled with gladness before the Tempter introduced insecurity and doubt. The Creator's plan was to abundantly supply every need of His people, and as they offered thanksgiving for their provision, the path would be paved for an intimate relationship with Him. This gratitude in response to God's lavish gifts and undeserved grace was the third element of God's original design for His relationship with His creation, and this grateful love can come to constrain our lives and ministries as it did the apostle Paul's (2 Corinthians 5:14 KJV).

C. Man's Fall from Grace and Jesus' Lessons from the Desert

God planned to provide abundantly for Adam's needs and entrust him with the care of His work. In turn, Adam was to relate to God with humility, faith, and gratitude. We know this plan was altered after the sin of Genesis 3, but what specific changes occurred? We know that God stayed the same, so what changed within the heart of man?

- As a result of the fall, all descendants of Adam now enter the world with a corrupt nature. Inclinations and passions which were once directed toward God are now directed away from and even against Him.

- Thoughts which were once pure and God-focused are now wicked and unsettled.
- Hearts which were once filled with gratitude and contentment are now touched by guilt, fear, and shame.
- Willful obedience has given way to blatant rebellion and all human-kind is now by nature dead in transgressions and sins, and our only hope lies within the redemption that is offered through the last Adam, who will become our “life-giving spirit” (1 Corinthians 15:45).

As we study the fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3, we gain insight into the strategies of Satan and the tendencies of our own corrupt nature. Sinful behavior can be traced back to its roots in three expressions of the fall: self-reliance, selfishness, and self-condemnation.

The Pain of Self-Reliance: Humility Replaced with Self-Reliance

After the fall, rather than exhibit a humble dependence upon God and His provision, man became prone to prideful self-reliance. Instead of approaching God with humility, many of us now may deny our needs or even claim to be able to meet all our needs on our own. **Just as Christ was tempted to meet His own needs in the desert (Matthew 4:1–4)**, many of us are tempted to rely upon our own strength, abilities, or determination as we try to meet the God-designed needs of the human body, soul, and spirit.

The Pain of Selfishness: Faith Replaced with Selfishness

Secondly, the fall resulted in man’s tendency toward selfishness and “fearful taking.” Rather than exercising faith in God to meet our needs, man is now tempted to selfishly take from others. Instead of trusting God to abundantly provide, many of us now demand, manipulate, or self-gratify because of a fear that our needs will go unmet, rather than receiving God’s grace by faith. We may even seek to take from God, demanding His blessings based on our own “good works.” **Just as Christ was tempted to take from God and demand His protection in the desert (vv. 5–7)**, many of us are tempted to selfishly take from God and other people. For some of us, our fallenness is most often expressed in behaviors that gratify ourselves.

The Pain of Self-Condensation: Gratitude Replaced with Self-Condensation

Finally, the fall rendered man vulnerable to self-condemnation. Instead of expressing thanksgiving and gratitude for the gracious provision of God and acknowledging God’s inherent declaration of our worth (worth the gift of His Son), man is now prone to question his worth and live in doubt about the validity of his needs. This tendency may leave us vulnerable to feelings of discontentment, a sense of unworthiness, or the loss of our joy and hope. **Just as Christ was tempted to surrender His true identity in the desert (vv. 8–10)**, many of us are tempted to question our own identity as the beloved of God. Rather than expressing thankfulness for God’s provision, we are often tempted to question our worth and deny our inherent value as declared by God.

Colossians 3:16 Moment:

“Let the Word of Christ dwell deeply in you . . .” (Col. 3:16).

Pastor/Teacher: Share your response and then lead others in vulnerability and prayer for transformation.

“I have a tendency to be _____ (selfish, self-reliant, or self-condemning).

This tendency may result in _____



W-3 Yielding to the Scripture's protective cautions and transforming power to bring life change in me

Walking in the Light of God's Word (John 12:35, Psalm 119:105) Through Frequent Experiences of Scripture

As you reflect on each of these results of the fall of man, ask yourself the following question:

To which of these three tendencies am I most prone? Selfishness? Self-reliance? Self-condemnation?

I have a tendency to be _____ (selfish, self-reliant, or self-condemning).

This tendency may result in _____

Pause now to pray, claiming the power of His Word to remove this tendency from you. Ask for His sanctifying work regarding this area of fallenness. Ask that the Spirit might bring forth humility, causing self-reliance to give way to total dependence. Ask that the Spirit might bring forth faith, causing selfishness to give way to confident trust. Ask that the Spirit might bring forth praise-filled gratitude, causing self-condemnation to give way to the wonder of God's love. "Sanctify them in truth; your word is truth" (John 17:17).

It is true that a relationship with God is to be primary in each of our lives. We are to trust Christ as Savior, yield to His Spirit, and obey His words. But we must also recognize that, in Jesus' eyes, our relationships with our neighbors (literally our "near ones") are just as significant as our relationship with God.

It is clear throughout Scripture that God, for reasons known only to Him, has opted to fill our longings for oneness through love relationships with both Him and other human beings.

III. Seeing People as God Sees Them—"Needy" by design

A. The Great Commandment Reinforces Our Need for Others

Come with me now to another scene in the life of Jesus—the day when Jesus gave the Great Commandment. The Pharisees and Sadducees are gathered around Jesus and His disciples. A lawyer has just posed the question, "Which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses" (Matthew 22:36 NLT)?

How to Live Out the Great Commandment

Great Commandment love is relevant in human lives because it seeks to meet both spiritual needs and relational needs, thus removing the aloneness that God calls "not good." But what do we need in our relationships with one another? How do we identify valid relational needs? In short, we do these by identifying passages of Scripture that tell us how God has demonstrated His love toward us and how we are to love others in return. Throughout His Word, we find God demonstrating His love for human creation, and as we look deeper, we will also recognize relational needs that He desires to meet, at least in part, through us.

Identifying Biblical Relational Needs: "Freely you have received, therefore freely give" (Matthew 10:8).

Removing the aloneness that God calls “not good” requires meeting valid relational needs from the resources God freely supplies.

- In 2 Corinthians 1:3, 4, God is described as “the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles.” This passage establishes that human beings have a need for comfort in times of trouble because God would not comfort us unless we needed it. But He does not stop there. We are to “**comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God**” (v. 4). Notice the pattern. The passage establishes our need for comfort in troubled times, declares that God is the ultimate source of the comfort we need, and calls us to lovingly share his comfort with those who need it.
- Another example is found in Romans 15:7: “**Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you.**” This passage establishes our need for acceptance, declares that God is the ultimate source of the acceptance we need, and He calls us to meet the need for acceptance in others.
- In Romans 15:5, Paul describes “the God who gives . . . encouragement,” and in 1 Thessalonians 5:11 adds, “**Therefore encourage one another.**” These verses establish our need for encouragement, reveal God as the source of encouragement, and command us to lovingly share encouragement with others.

A Valid Relational Need

These passages show us that a biblical relational need is one that God has met in our lives and admonishes us to meet in the lives of others through the expression of Great Commandment love. Scripture urges believers to be “**good stewards of the manifold grace of God**” (1 Peter 4:10 NASB). One aspect of His multi-faceted grace is His comfort, another is His acceptance, and another is His encouragement. He has “graced” us by meeting these needs and calls us to express His grace to others. As we live in loving

Need	Definition	Jesus	“One another”	Principle
ACCEPTANCE	Receiving another person unconditionally when the other’s behavior has been imperfect; continuing to love another in spite of differences or failures	<i>“I do not condemn you either.”</i>	Romans 15:7 Ephesians 4:32	Matthew 10:8
COMFORT	Responding to a hurting person with words, feelings, and touch; to hurt with and for another’s grief or pain	<i>They said to Him, ‘Lord, come and see.’ Jesus wept” (John 11:35).</i>	1 Thessalonians 2:8 2 Corinthians 2:7	Romans 12:15b Matthew 5:4 2 Corinthians 1:3, 4 Acts 9:31
ENCOURAGEMENT	Urging another to persist and persevere toward a goal; stimulating toward love and good deeds, particularly when someone is weary	<i>“Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”</i>	1 Thessalonians 5:11 Hebrews 3:13 Hebrews 10:25	Romans 1:12

Colossians 3:16 Moment:

“Let the Word of Christ dwell deeply in you . . .” (Col. 3:16).

Pastor/Teacher: Share your response to:

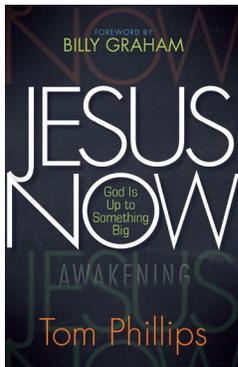
I could better express God’s acceptance to . . .

I could better express God’s encouragement to . . .

I could better express God’s support to . . .



L-5 Living with a passionate longing for purity and to please Him in all things



“Is America in the early stages of a spiritual revival, which will overshadow anything we have ever seen before in our nation’s history?”

“Tom Phillips makes a convincing case that this could be true as he examines some of the significant new ways God is at work touching lives today.” —Billy Graham

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intimacy with the One True God, freely receiving His abundant, manifold grace, we are to freely give to others (Matthew 10:8). This is what it takes to remove the aloneness that God calls “not good.” It requires meeting valid relational needs from the resources God freely supplies.

This view of needs is affirmed by the words of the apostle Paul, who assured the Philippian church of God’s provision—“God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19). He gave testimony of the ways in which God had used them to supply his needs—“It was good of you to share in my troubles . . . you sent me aid again and again when I was in need” (vv. 14, 16). God is Jehovah Jireh, our Provider. He has promised to meet all our needs, and He has chosen at times to do so directly with Him, and at other times to do so through our families, friends, and church community.

Amazingly, Ephesians 1:18 reveals that the Holy Spirit brings with Him these glorious riches, **“...which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight...” (Ephesians 1:8).**

Walking in the Light of God’s Son through Frequent Encounters with Jesus (John 12:35, John 8:12)

“As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Peter 4:10).

Pause and consider this “manifold” or “multi-faceted” grace of God. God’s grace—His unmerited favor has been expressed to you in these different ways or facets.

- You have received God’s grace as **He’s shown you acceptance** during those times when you’ve failed (Romans 15:7).
- You have received God’s grace when **He’s encouraged you** when you were sad or disappointed (1 Thessalonians 5:11).
- You have received God’s grace when **He has supported you** during times of struggle (Galatians 6:2).

Now pause and ask God: “How could I better express the glory of Your grace to others? Ask Him specifically about how to show more of His acceptance, encouragement, and support to others. Listen and be still. Allow God’s Spirit to reveal the people in your life who need to receive more of His glorious grace expressed through you.

After you’ve heard from the Lord, complete the following sentences.

- *“I could better express God’s acceptance to . . .”*
- *“I could better express God’s encouragement to . . .”*
- *“I could better express God’s support to . . .”*

“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works” (Hebrews 10:24).

With vulnerability and sincerity, share what God has revealed to you with a partner or small group. Pray together. Ask that God’s Spirit would express His grace through you, so that others would be able to see Him in you.

Offer a simple prayer, such as the following:

Lord Jesus,

Thank you for the fresh encounter with You. Thank You for speaking to me.

Please help me to be more accepting of _____

Please show me how to do this in practical ways. Empower me by Your Spirit.

B. God's Design—Opening Our Eyes and Heart to Address Two Crippling Lies

Two very significant implications for life and ministry derive from the truth that God created us to need both Him and each other.

■ **First, none of us can rightfully say, “All I need is God.”** To do so is to reject other people as a channel of God’s loving provision. When we speak of our needed redemption, “Christ is all I need.” Yet for life abundant as He intends, we need both Him and one another. Adam lived in a perfect, sin-free world and had a deeply personal knowledge of God. If anyone had grounds to think that an intimate relationship with the Creator was all he needed, Adam sure did.

■ The second implication is closely related to the first. Just as we cannot claim, “All I need is God,” **we must not convey the message; “You only need God.”**

To do so is to communicate a message of condemnation. “You should be able to take care of yourself without needing other people. If you still have needs, you do not have enough of Christ. If you were more consistent in your quiet time, if you had more faith, if you loved God with more of your heart, soul, and mind, you would not be needy.” As important and necessary as faith and quiet times and loving God are, God has chosen to involve people in meeting the needs of other people.

■ The “you only need God” message is crippling Jesus-followers everywhere today. This message is irrelevant to the real needs of people because it represents only half of the Great Commandment. We may have the “love God” part right, but love for God is incomplete without love for our neighbors. Dismissing our need for one another is the equivalent of saying to a starving beggar, “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed” (James 2:16). To the single adult, it may sound like this: “You should not be lonely because Jesus is a friend that sticks closer than a brother.” We might communicate to a faithful ministry worker, “Your need to be appreciated is nothing more than pride. God sees your labors, and His reward should be enough.” Or we might say to people who have been abused or abandoned, “You just need to forgive and forget and move on with your life.”

By God’s design, we need Him and other people. Therefore, our complete message to a hurting world must be: “I need you, and it is all right for you to need me. We both need an intimate, loving relationship with our Lord.”

C. The Savior's Need

For us to “see people the way God sees them” challenges us also to consider the humanity of the God-man Jesus.

Consider these passages of Scripture:

■ In Luke 2:52, Jesus grew in favor with _____

None of us can rightfully say, “All I need is God.”

Just as we cannot claim, “All I need is God,” we must not convey the message; “You only need God.”

“I need you, and it is all right for you to need me. We both need an intimate, loving relationship with our Lord.”

- In Philippians 4:19, the apostle Paul says that “God will supply all your needs;” and in verse 18, he acknowledges that God met some of his needs through _____
- In 2 Corinthians 1:3, Paul exalts the God of all comfort, but in verse 4 he reminds us that we are often comforted so that we can _____
- In 1 Corinthians 12:21, Paul says that every believer is a member of Christ’s body and that we need each other. It would be absurd to say, “I do not _____.”
- In Revelation 3:16, the apostle John rebukes the church of Laodicea because they have become “lukewarm” (irrelevant), and in verse 17, he specifically confronts the exalted self-reliance of those who declare, “I am rich; I have acquired wealth and _____.”



L-10 Practicing the presence of the Lord, yielding to the Spirit’s work of Christ-likeness

Walking in the Light of God’s People Through Faithful Engagement in Fellowship (John 12:35, Matthew 5:14).

“I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” (Philippians 3:8 NASB).

The Son of God faces the darkest hour in the history of creation (Matthew 26:37, 38). The One who knew no sin will soon become sin for His disciples—for you and me. He has vulnerably sought the prayerful support of Peter, James, and John. Now they seem oblivious to the Master’s need.

“Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?” (Matthew 26:40). See the disappointment in His eyes as He returns to His place of agonizing prayer.

Amazingly, the scene plays out again and again. Three times the Master shares His pain and need with His closest friends, and three times they let Him down.

Meditate on Christ’s words, “Could you not pray with me for just one hour?”

What does it do to your heart to meditate on the saddened Savior? How does it make you feel to hear the words, “Could you not pray with me?”

Pause to pray for one another: *Lord Jesus, my heart is touched with _____ as Your Spirit leads me to encounter You in Your Word.*

For each of us to see people with the compassionate heart of Jesus, we start with the Spirit’s deepening work of compassion for Jesus. Share your responses with your partner or small group as you engage the faith and prayers of others. Allow the Holy Spirit to sensitize your heart to the needs of the Savior and the needs of others around you. Close in prayer for one another.

D. Why Did God Create Us With Needs?

The Father could have created us so that we did not need food to eat, air to breathe, or comfort when we are hurt. Yet He chose to do otherwise. Let us consider the manifold wisdom of God making us as He did.

- **Needs remind us of our dependency and call us to humility.** Jesus revealed His total dependence on the Father when He said, “The Son

can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing" (John 5:19). Jesus also taught us how dependent we are on Him when He said, "Apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

Since God created us to be needy, humility is prompted within us. In this state of humility, we may receive His abundant grace (James 4:6). Furthermore, our journey toward being conformed to His image must include the pursuit of humility, because Jesus Himself was humble (Matthew 11:29).

- **Needs remind us of the Father's loving care and call us to exercise faith.** Our needs also stimulate our faith. If we did not have needs, there would be no opportunity for us to exercise faith. Scripture tells us that we were created for God's pleasure (Revelation 4:11), but without faith, God cannot be pleased (Hebrews 11:6). It thus becomes clear that the interaction between our neediness and our faith is an essential component in fulfilling the purpose for which we were created.

If and when we admit that we have needs, we will be faced with a critical decision. Will we selfishly "take" in order to have our needs met, or will we exercise faith that we will receive from the giver of all good gifts (James 1:17)? If we are fearful of not receiving, we will be tempted to selfishly take from God and others. In attempting to take eternal life and a relationship with God, man exalts religious ritual and good works, thus missing the simplicity of receiving these gifts through childlike faith (Titus 3:5).

When man was created, everything he needed to survive—air, food, water—already existed. Before man needed redemption, the Savior was available in the Creator's eternal plan. Jehovah Jireh, God the Provider, can be trusted with our needs. He alone is worthy of our faith.

- **Needs remind us of our worth to the Father and call us to gratitude.** As we exercise faith at the point of our need, we experience the caring involvement of the One who knows everything about us yet still loves us. It was God who declared us worthy of the gift of His Son, even while we were still sinners (Romans 5:8), but even in the face of God's overwhelming unmerited favor, some of us are self-condemning, rejecting the available righteousness of Christ. We would do well to remember that because of His lavish grace, "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).

Jesus reassures us of our worth in His discourse on the birds of the air and the lilies of the field (Matthew 6:25–34). Just as God feeds the birds and clothes the flowers, He is ever attentive to our needs. Reflecting upon the certainty of God's provision moves us to respond with sacrifices of praise to Him (Hebrews 13:15).

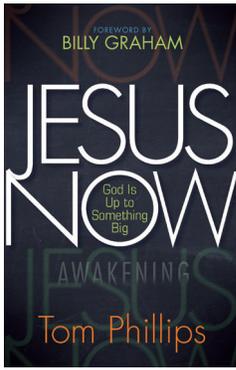


L-4 Rejoicing regularly in my identity as "His Beloved"

Walking in the Light of God's Son through Frequent Encounters with Jesus (John 12:35, John 8:12).

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

God declared our infinite, unconditional worth at Calvary. Pause to allow His Spirit to overwhelm you with the wonder of His love—unmerited, unstoppable, and unlimited. Give Him thanks. His Spirit



God desires to draw all people to himself. He is awakening the world through the reconciling love of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. What if God was already awakening you, your family, your church, your city? Are you willing to let His Spirit, without warning, sweep through your own life?

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desires to empower your expression of this same love to one another. The testimony of the gospel is that your true identity is not determined by what you do. You and I could do nothing to merit being made part of His family. Pause to give our Savior praise and worship.

Lord Jesus, as I reflect on your unmerited, undeserved love toward me, my heart is moved with _____

IV. Seeing People as God Sees Them—Priceless and Worthy of our Serving Them!

■ Life is priceless! To honor life is to be honored by God.

"The LORD your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy" (Zephaniah 3:17).

- We find clear instruction for our life from God's obvious protection through pregnancy care centers, doctors, nurses, adoption workers, foster families, and a vast array of others who care for children as gifts from the Lord (Psalms 127:3).
- Beginning with our own children, grandchildren, and families—"He who provides not for his own family is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8).

As we extend our charity and mentoring, our orphan care and protection of the unborn, might others say of us as it was the midwives of Moses, "So God was good to them" (Exodus 1:20).

■ Serving is Christ-like! We are never more like Jesus than when we are serving.

"I am among you as one who serves" (Luke 22:27).

"The greatest among you is one who serves" (Luke 22:26).

The burden and calling of Jesus in John 9 was to serve the man born blind.

The burden and calling of each Jesus follower is to serve people in the work God puts before us.

It's this wonder and mystery of serving that we see in the incarnation—that the Word would dwell among us and serve us all the way to the cross.

■ Serving others through the work He has put before you.

Even as we have reflected together on this man born blind, we might easily minimize the kingdom impact of our work, and yet viewed through the framework of a Christ-like servant's heart, you are extending His life and love right in the work where He has "planted" you.

You might not encounter many born blind, but God sees every need and knows every story of those in the "traffic patterns" of our daily work. God hears each of their heart cries even as they intersect with us in our work. He sees and hears but do we? In closing, let's focus on hearing what He hears and seeing what He sees.



M-1 Imparting the gospel and one's very life in daily activities and relationships, vocation and community

Walking in the Light of God's Son Through Frequent Encounters With Jesus (John 12:35, John 8:12).

"The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name" (John 10:3).

Pause for the next few moments and ask God's Spirit to bring insight and direction concerning God's divine calling for your life. Claim this promise: "Call to me and I will answer you . . ." (Jeremiah 33:3).

Quietly ask the Lord, *Why am I here? What special purpose do you have for me? What specific calling do you have for my life?*

Now listen to the Lord. Celebrate that He longs to involve you and share these things with you, so that others might come to follow Him.