

Where you stand determines what you see and how you respond.

I was fascinated by that quote recently. And it is so true of our life. Where you stand determines what you see and how you respond.

I asked folks on Facebook this past Monday to comment on what they were seeing and how they were responding. The variety of answers said a lot about what people were doing. I had several responses that arrived from the field- literally because they were out hunting!

Several people responded about the beautiful weather that we experienced on Monday with temperatures in the upper 60's. Two people commented on the brokenness of the world. Two referenced children. One person told a story about a little silver Christmas tree that she had rescued from the trash and now sat in her office with the whirling color wheel making the tree shimmer. That tree serves as her reminder of Christmas pasts.

But I think my favorite response came from a woman who was a member of the first church I served in Sullivan County. She wrote this about what she was seeing: My only sibling, my sister Eileen. She is visiting while her husband is at deer camp. We have had a wonderful four day visit and still have until the weekend to enjoy a much lengthier visit than we usually enjoy. She has taught me how to knit on double pointed needles; we've copied and shared our parents' recipes. We've shared Thanksgiving and plan to shop, see a movie and eat out. My reaction is to appreciate each moment....and I've just told her how happy I am to have her here. Thanks, George. Your question spurred my thoughts and my expression of my thoughts to her!

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Last week we talked about God entering into our world and being present with us in a way that God could identify with us. Jesus, through his birth and life, demonstrated how important being present is to identifying with the people that he came to redeem, restore and heal.

We also said last week that this miracle/mystery called the incarnation is the example and the catalyst for moving us to be present with people around us and identifying with them by knowing their heart, their struggles and hearing their questions about life. How is that challenge going I gave you last week?

God couldn't stand far off from his creation. That's what moved God to enter the world and be present with humanity. But as Jesus life demonstrates presence is not enough. Proximity is essential to transferring the gospel from one life to another.

Look at it this way. Jesus mixed with people from every level of society. He ate with Pharisees as well as tax collectors and prostitutes. And if we are to follow in Jesus

footsteps, his people will need to be directly and actively involved in the lives of the people we are seeking to reach. And that requires more than just presence; it requires genuine availability that comes from being close enough to rub shoulders.

And here is an important point; you can be present with someone and be in close proximity to that person and still miss out if you are not genuinely available. Genuine availability means that if you don't have more than a few minutes; then you are not genuinely available. Proximity is more than just an issue of space; proximity is freeing yourself to give the best of yourself and your time not just what is left over.

The only way to be genuinely available to another person is to close the distance between us and them. And closing the distance is what Jesus did best. His proximity to the people that he came to minister to is what changed their lives. And our willingness to draw close to those we are called to minister to will be necessary if we are going to change lives.

And it all begins by answering the question; "Where are you standing?"

Where you stand makes all the difference in the world. Your perspective changes dramatically depending on where you are standing. From atop a mountain you can see many things; but it's not until you come down from that mountain that you gain a whole new perspective to life up close in the valley.

Let me illustrate it this way. A long time ago someone taught me that when you talk to a child you need to get down on their level. If they have to strain their neck to look at you the message you are communicating is far different than if you look them straight in the eye.

And if you take the time to get down and look that child in the eye it also says that you are genuinely available to them.

Jesus never stood at a distance from people. Even in his birth Jesus was close to people. Had Jesus been born in a palace he would not have been able to be seen by the common people like the shepherds. And that common bond with people continued in his ministry; Jesus got close enough that his life changed the lives of those whom he was with.

So I want to challenge you to think about where you are standing. Here is a simple thing you can do this week. Stop every once in a while and notice where you are standing. Where are you? Why are you here? What have I never seen here before?

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Where you stand, your proximity to others, will also determine what you see. At a distance from people it is easy to overlook a single individual and even easier to overlook the pain their eyes.

What you see is determined by how you focus your eyes. I want to challenge you to get close enough to others that you can see who they are and what the needs of their life really are.

I thought about this all week in relation to my visit to Sierra Leone. I had seen pics, read stories; but until I stood there looking at people with real names and real needs I had not really seen the need.

As you are standing and looking at your surroundings this week I want to challenge you to see the people, see the needs, etc. that God has placed around you.

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Where you stand and what you see are extremely important but if it doesn't move us to action then we've merely taken up space and chosen to ignore the opportunity that is right in front of our eyes.

Video <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JYATwAZzWEE&NR=1>

Choosing to do the right thing was dependent upon where people were standing and what they saw. But where they stood and what they saw caused them to choose to do the right thing. It all begins with where you stand and what you choose to see- but in the end it comes down to how you respond.

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Are you willing to enter into the presence and proximity of others the way Jesus did for you?