


A cluster of autumn leaves in shades of orange, red, and yellow in the top-left corner.

International Day of Older People 2023 Bible Study

I See You!

Activity and Icebreaker

'Do you see what's missing?' (Memory game)

- Place ten items on a tray, then cover them with a cloth.
 - Without anyone seeing, remove an item and then uncover the tray for people to guess which item is missing.
 - When people have had a guess, then replace the item and remove a different item and ask again which item is missing.
 - Repeat this activity a few times to get everyone involved and talking.
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- A single yellow autumn leaf on the right side of the page.

Selected Bible Verses for Study

- Luke 19:1-10 – The story of Jesus meeting Zacchaeus
- John 4:1-26 – The story of Jesus meeting the Samaritan woman at the well

Questions for Study and Reflection

1. What are the similarities in these two accounts of Jesus meeting Zacchaeus and the Samaritan woman?

(Potential answers: Both seen as outcasts – Zacchaeus due to his employment and the woman due to her personal life. Jesus takes the time to talk to them. Jesus sees them. Jesus brings salvation to both individuals.)

2. What surprises you about these two accounts?

(Potential answers: The outpouring of love from Jesus despite how others judged Zacchaeus and the woman. Jesus was often found with those who were disrespected and ignored by others in society.)

3. Do you feel there are people still in our society today who are overlooked or judged because of their employment, economic status, or personal life stories? If so, why?

(Potential answers: Some jobs are seen as more 'credible' than others. Some people may judge those who are in 'non-skilled' employment or unemployed as 'less educated'. Perhaps those who have been married more than once are looked upon differently, or those who choose to raise children outside of marriage, or those with different lifestyles that some people may struggle to accept.)

**4. Does the Church see older people as a gift, or just as a 'sea of older faces'?
Does the Church consider how older people with talents and wisdom may feel invisible?**

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Bible Study



Older
People's
Ministries


(To aid discussion, this quote could be used as a reminder that there are older people in care who also feel unseen.)

'Recently, I had the privilege of holding another friend's hand while she briefly felt sorry for herself. She had had another bad fall, was bruised and sore, and worst of all, no one in her care home had seemed to notice her that morning. 'It was as if I was invisible.'

(Source: <https://www.biblicalcounselling.org.uk/death/walking-with-older-saints/>)

Personal Reflection Time

Spend some time reflecting on the following questions using your own views and perceptions. Answers can be discussed or thought about personally:

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1. How easy is it to see beyond our own personal lives without judgement or discrimination?
 2. When you see refugees seeking safety, travelling on boats from other countries, do we see sons, daughters, mothers and fathers like us, or do we view these people differently?
 3. Do we view others' lives through the lens of our own personal life circumstances? How, if so?
 4. Are there people within our own churches who are forgotten and unseen? Can we name them?

Jesus truly saw Zacchaeus, he truly saw the woman at the well, and Jesus truly 'sees' you. Jesus sees the refugee seeking safety, he sees the young pregnant girl, he sees the frightened child on a boat fighting to stay alive, he sees the man who can no longer provide for his family due to unemployment, he sees the teenager fighting body dysmorphia, he sees the older person who feels forgotten and isolated, he sees the addict who fights to face another day. Jesus sees and Jesus loves everyone.

What about us? Do we need to broaden our view to become more like Jesus? Do we need to see the person, not the situation – a real-life person with needs, with hopes and dreams? Perhaps it's time for us to open our eyes and see what's truly real and then be prepared to do something about it.

Closing Group Activity

Read the reported words of General William Booth below and then ask the group to write a personalised 'I'll fight' poem. This could be typed up and given to each member of the group.

'While women weep, as they do now, I'll fight; while children go hungry, as they do now, I'll fight; while men go to prison, in and out, in and out, as they do now, I'll fight; while there is a poor lost girl upon the streets, while there remains one dark soul without the light of God, I'll fight, I'll fight to the very end!'

Prayer

Lord, give us eyes to see others as you do. Give us ears to hear people's stories, and give us open hearts to accept everyone and love unconditionally as you love us. Forgive our narrow judgements of others, and open the eyes of our hearts to see deeper than our human minds allow. Amen.

