

Valuing People

Helpful Resources

Map of Palestine in the Time of Christ

Making Sense of It All

- The Big Picture

As Jesus began His ministry, He chose twelve men to be His disciples. A disciple is a student or a follower of a teacher (or Rabbi). These twelve men would spend the next three years following Jesus, watching, learning, and doing the work of ministry. Of course, they had run-ins with the religious leaders of the day (Pharisees, Sadducees, and scribes), those who upheld Jewish traditions and confronted any perceived threats to the Mosaic Law. We also read the opening words of Jesus' greatest message, that of the Sermon on the Mount. One of the truths that quickly surface when observing Jesus' ministry is that He valued people. In this review, let's consider the ways He valued people and how that should impact our lives.

- Jesus Valued People

1. **Jesus Valued People Over Perception** (*Mk. 2:13-17*): Jesus called Levi (or Matthew) to be one of His disciples, despite his occupation as a tax-collector. Jews viewed those who collected taxes for Rome as the scum of the earth, but Jesus befriended them.
2. **Jesus Valued People Over Profession** (*Mk. 3:13-19*): The twelve disciples were an interesting mix of men, from all walks of life. Several of them were simple fishermen. While it is easy to look down on people because of their occupations, Jesus valued them.
3. **Jesus Valued People Over Politics** (*Mk. 3:13-19*): As a tax-collector, Levi worked for the Romans, for which the Jews despised him, colluding with the enemy. On the other end of the spectrum was Simon the zealot, a radical Jew who wanted to revolt against Roman occupation. Jesus included both men among His disciples. He valued people over politics.
4. **Jesus Valued People Over Policies** (*Jn. 5:1-15; Matt. 12:9-14*): Jesus healed two men (one lying lame by the Pool of Siloam and the other with a withered hand) on the Sabbath. But it was unlawful to work on the Sabbath, so religious leaders pointed out this offense. However, Jesus didn't break any laws. The Pharisees had added their own customs or traditions to the law, distorting it to mean something God did not intend. To Jesus, healing people was more important than adhering to man-made policies.
5. **Jesus Valued People Over Persecution** (*Mk. 3:1-6; Jn. 5:16; Lk. 6:22*): Despite knowing that the religious leaders would argue with Jesus and even conspire to kill Him, Jesus ministered to people anyway. He also challenged His followers to do the same.
6. **Jesus Valued People Over Projects** (*Mk. 3:7-12*): Jesus put His life as a carpenter on hold to minister to people. Though He had other things to do, people were His priority. Rather than make a living, He was more interested in making a difference. Rather than viewing crowds as interruptions, Jesus viewed them as opportunities to change lives.

- Personal Application

1. **Determining Value:** Who determines our value? There are three options. First, we can allow others to determine value. The problem is that "man looks at the outward appearance..." (*1 Sam. 16:7*). For example, the Pharisees viewed tax-collectors as scum. Second, we often determine the value of people. The problem is that "our hearts are deceitful and desperately sick" (*Jer. 17:9*). Again, the Pharisees, viewed themselves as righteous, ranking themselves high above others. Third, we can let God determine our value. He says that all people are made in His image. Therefore, all people are valuable and worthy of respect. When we see people as God sees them, we will value them too.
2. **People Must Be Our Priority:** If God values people most, then we should value people too. In fact, they should be our priority. Just as Jesus put everything on hold to minister to people, we too must set everything aside for people work. The only thing on earth that will exist in eternity is people. What we do in the lives of people will remain forever.
3. **Ways to Value People** (*Eph. 4:1-3; Col. 3:12-14; Phil. 2:3, 4*): Of course, there are countless ways that we can demonstrate that we value people. We can spend time with them, listen to them, serve them, give them gifts, encourage them with our words, and more. But what about difficult people? We exhibit value by demonstrating tolerance, patience, and forbearance. To be tolerant is to endure something unpleasant or inconvenient, to let it go. To be patient is to endure someone or something without letting it show (not easily provoked); and to forbear is to restrain words or actions, perhaps when you lose your patience.

- Prophetic Passages

1. **Two Resurrections** (*Jn. 5:28, 29*): Jesus foretold of a judgment day in which all people will be resurrected, believers and unbelievers, for their eternal destiny.
2. **Jesus in the Old Testament** (*Jn. 5:39*): During His lifetime, Jesus fulfilled over 200 Old Testament prophecies. Nearly everywhere we turn in the Old Testament, there is a passage foreshadowing the arrival of the Promised One. Jesus said, "You search the Scriptures to find eternal life, but the Scriptures point to Me."
3. **God's Servant** (*Matt. 12:15-21; Isa. 42:1-4*): The prophet Isaiah spoke of a special, humble, Spirit-led Servant who would come one day and suffer at the hands of men. Of course, that prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus, "the hope of the world" (*Matt. 12:21*).

The Bottom Line

Because Jesus valued people, ministering to them was His priority.

Questions to Consider

1. Would you say that you value people? In what ways do you demonstrate it?
2. How do you determine the value of people? How do you determine your own value?
3. Making people a priority is easier said than done. Why?
4. Task-oriented people often view others as interruptions rather than opportunities. Have you ever struggled in this area? What steps have you taken to overcome this tendency?
5. Relationship-oriented people have their struggles too. What are they? Have you ever struggled in this area? What steps have you taken to overcome this tendency?