

AFTER YOU

WEEK 1

WHAT?

WE'RE STARTING A NEW SERIES

VIDEO: The Awareness Test ▲

We're starting a brand new series this week. But before we get into it, I thought we could play a little game.

INSTRUCTIONS: *Play a short "awareness test" video, like this one. If you're feeling ambitious, you can also make your own. This should be a video that encourages your students to focus on one aspect of the video so much that they fail to notice something very obvious happening in the background. To increase your crowd interaction, you may want to pause the video and ask students to answer a misleading trivia question or two before the twist is revealed.*

QUESTION: Have you ever failed to notice something obvious? ▲

- Isn't that crazy? Sometimes we can be so focused on one thing that we completely miss something really obvious that's happening right in front of us.
- We've all been there. Maybe you were so focused on texting your friend about that embarrassing (and totally hilarious) thing you just saw someone do that—BOOM! You walked straight into a wall. Or maybe you were so focused on that book you were reading, or that video game you were playing, that you didn't even notice your mom had been calling your name . . . for like five whole minutes. Or maybe you lost your phone, or your

glasses, or your house keys, and spent forever trying to find that thing you lost, when you suddenly realized, "Oh, wait—it's in my hand."

- Has that ever happened to you? Have you ever failed to notice something obvious?
- *Look for a show of hands or a verbal response from your students. If you'd like, ask a student or two to share a story of their own.*

WE'RE TALKING ABOUT WHAT WE NOTICE ▲

- As we kick off a new series today, I want to talk about some things we notice—or fail to notice.
- Sometimes, our lack of attention to important things (like where we're walking or where we put our glasses) might leave us with a bruise or a few wasted minutes. But other times, our lack of attention to important things can have much bigger consequences.

SO WHAT?

WE STRUGGLE TO NOTICE OTHERS' NEEDS

STORY: Talk about a time you failed to notice someone else's needs ▲

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story (or have another adult or student tell a story) about a time when you failed to notice someone else's needs because you were too focused on yourself. If possible, tell a story from when you were in middle school or high school to make it as relatable as possible. Share the consequences you or they experienced as a result of you failing to notice their needs.*
- Can you relate? Have you ever been so focused on yourself, your image, your life, or your needs that you completely missed what was happening in someone else's life?

IMAGE ▲



AFTER YOU

IMAGE



AFTER YOU

IMAGE





AFTER YOU

- As we begin this new series today, I want us to spend the next few weeks thinking and talking about what it looks like to take our eyes off ourselves long enough to see the needs of someone else. Because the reality is, there are people all around you who are going unseen.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Show the three images, one at a time, from this week's downloads as you teach.*
- Maybe there's the guy from one of your classes who looks like he has it all together on the outside but, the truth is, his parents are getting a divorce and he's a mess inside.
- Or maybe there's the girl you see at lunch who you assume is just quiet and likes to keep to herself but, in reality, she's consumed with loneliness.
- Or maybe you know someone (maybe they're even your close friend) who is outwardly so positive, friendly, and outgoing but inwardly they're actually terrified someone will find out just how anxious, depressed, or afraid they truly are.
- Sure, I'm imagining these scenarios. I don't actually know who's walking through your school hallways or sitting at your lunch table. But I don't think these scenarios are very far-fetched. We are surrounded by people who are hurting and in need. But too often, we fail to notice them.
- But today, I want to share a story that is quite the opposite of most of our stories. The story I'm going to share isn't the story of a missed opportunity. It's the story of someone whose entire life was laser-focused on noticing the needs of others.

JESUS NOTICED OTHERS' NEEDS

SCRIPTURE: Mark 6v30-37a

- When Jesus began his ministry here on earth, it's not like there weren't other religious teachers around. There were plenty. But Jesus stood out. Jesus gained a following like no one else. There were tons of reasons for that (including the fact that he was God), but here's one of those reasons: when Jesus showed up, he didn't just teach. He healed.
- From the very beginning of Jesus' ministry, he made it a priority to not just meet spiritual needs, but physical needs as well. He healed the sick, raised the dead, cast out demons, fed the hungry, befriended the lonely, cared for those in need, and taught his disciples to do the same.
- In Mark 6, Jesus sent his disciples out for a short-term mission. They were to go out, on foot, and go wherever they were needed and accepted. He instructed them to preach, to heal the sick, and to cast out demons wherever they found them. Watch what happens when the disciples return.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Mark 6v30-32.*
- The disciples told Jesus everything that had happened and all that they had done. It has been a busy and exhausting trip for all of them. Now look what Jesus does: he *notices* that his disciples haven't eaten, that they're exhausted, and that they'd been so busy. Then he meets their needs.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Mark 6v33-34.*
- On their way to get some rest, Jesus and the disciples are met by a crowd. Again, do you see what Jesus does? He notices the needs of the crowd and then he meets them.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Mark 6v35-37a.*
- I don't know what the disciples' attitudes were like in this passage. Maybe they were exhausted and just trying to get these crowds of people to go away, but maybe not. Maybe they were doing exactly what Jesus taught them to do: notice needs. And they did! They noticed the crowds were hungry.
- That's a good start, but it seems like the disciples had missed something important. Jesus calls us to notice the needs of others, yes—but then he calls us to do something about it. His disciples needed the reminder that day. Today, so do we.

- It's so easy for us to live a "me first" kind of life, isn't it? A life where we get so focused on ourselves and our own needs that we fail to notice the needs of the people in front of us.
- But Jesus never once lived a "me first" kind of life. Jesus lived an "after you" kind of life.

PAUL REMINDS US TO NOTICE OTHERS' NEEDS

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 2v3-4 ▲

- Several years after Jesus died and rose from the dead, the apostle Paul came on the scene. After he met Jesus, he devoted his entire life to spreading Jesus' message—including Jesus' call to live an "after you" kind of life.
- Here's one example of a letter Paul wrote to some new Christians in the ancient town of Philippi.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Philippians 2v3-4.*
- Do you see how many times Paul says "don't" in this passage? I don't know about you, but I know I need the occasional stern reminder like this one to stop being so "me first." But I love that Paul doesn't stop there. He also gives us quite a few "do"s. Don't just think about yourself. Do take an interest in others. Don't be obsessed with your own needs. But do notice the needs of others.
- The life of Jesus, and the instructions of Paul, are more than just "don't be selfish." They're bigger than that. If you're trying to do life like Jesus did, it's not enough to simply *not* be selfish. The way of Jesus is to go a step further—to be selfless. And that starts by noticing the needs of others.

NOW WHAT?

YOU'RE CALLED TO LIVE SELFLESSLY

ACTIVITY: Group Selfie



- Can we be honest though? Serving others and living selflessly isn't always that appealing. It certainly doesn't come naturally for most of us—including me.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Take out your phone. Point to the camera as you teach. Then take a group selfie and post it later on your ministry's Instagram account.*
- We live in a world where it's normal to be consumed with ourselves. You know the front-facing camera? It was originally designed for FaceTime—a piece of technology that was designed to help two people connect. Instead, it's mostly used for selfies.
- I'm not saying selfies are bad, of course. But I think it's just another example of how easy it is to become so focused on ourselves that we forget to even notice others.

THIS WEEK, NOTICE OTHERS' NEEDS



- So what do we do? How do we be less selfish and be more selfless? Like we've seen today, **living selflessly starts with noticing others' needs**. Here are three tips for doing that well this week:
- **LOOK.** Literally. Look up from your phone or whatever distracts you from noticing the needs of others. When you're in a position to be physically or digitally around other people (in the hallways, at lunch, or scrolling Instagram), be intentional about noticing and really seeing them. There are so many people in your life who are longing to be truly seen.
- **DISCOVER.** Once you've noticed someone, get curious about them. Ask how they're doing and really listen. Then imagine what it might be like to be them. Wonder about what needs they might have that they haven't communicated. That's how you discover others' needs.
- **DO.** Once you've truly seen someone and discovered their needs, do something about them. Just like Jesus commanded his disciples to do, go! Help. Act. Serve.
- My hope for you during this series is that you start to look and live a little bit more like Jesus. All throughout the Gospels (the four biblical accounts of Jesus' life), we see Jesus showing people, over and over again, what it looks like to live a generous, compassionate, selfless, "after you" kind of life. Because if you're willing to live an "after you" kind of life, not only will

the life of someone around you be changed, but you will be changed as well.

- This week, what do you think could happen if you made it a point to notice as many needs around you as possible? How many do you think you could notice? 5? 10? 50? This week, I want to challenge you to notice. To look, discover, and then do something to live like Jesus and meet those needs. Because **living selflessly starts with noticing others' needs.**