

**“The Invisible Woman”**  
**Or**  
**“What Jesus Sees”**

All I Ever Really Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten - by Robert Fulgham:

Most of what I really need to know about how to live, and what to do, and how to be, I learned in Kindergarten. Wisdom was not at the top of the graduate school mountain, but there in the sandbox at nursery school.

These are the things I learned: Share everything. Play fair. Don't hit people. Put things back where you found them. Clean up your own mess. Don't take things that aren't yours. Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody. Wash your hands before you eat. Flush. Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you. Live a balanced life.

Learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work some every day.

Take a nap every afternoon. When you go out into the world, watch for traffic, hold hands, and stick together. Be aware of wonder. Remember the little seed in the plastic cup. The roots go down and the plant goes up and nobody really knows how or why, but we are all like that.

Goldfish and hamsters and white mice and even the little seed in the plastic cup ~ they all die. So do we.

And then remember the book about Dick and Jane and the first word you learned, the biggest word of all: LOOK. Everything you need to know is in there somewhere. The Golden Rule and love and basic sanitation, ecology and politics and sane living.

Think of what a better world it would be if the whole world had cookies and milk about 3 o'clock every afternoon and then lay down with our blankets for a nap. Or if we had a basic policy in our nation and other nations to always put things back where we found them and clean up our own messes. And it is still true, no matter how old you are, when you go out into the world, it is best to hold hands and stick together.

(Excerpt - *All I Ever Really Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten* - by Robert Fulgham)

I'm not sure what that has to do with the story of the bent over woman, but I had to share it on Back to School Sunday. And it got me to thinking...

These days of youth and school – elementary, middle, high school -- these days are important. Too often we adults look at the kids and think, "It's just 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, just wait 'til he or she gets older." No! Do not wait! The things children experience are important. These are the days we learn all about how to 'play well with others.' What could be more important than to play well with others? --play well with others...

Isn't that what Jesus kept trying to teach the people of his day and his disciples? The story of this poor even teaches us that we don't have to do it at any specific time either. It's always the right time to treat somebody right.

Now everyone stand up for a minute.\* I want to do a demonstration....go ahead – stand and greet your neighbor, have a little chat about the week or something...

(\*someone comes upside aisle all bent over)

I have you all standing to simulate the synagogue. No pews you know. Ok, You can sit down.

Now could anybody clearly see \_\_\_\_\_ coming up the aisle? Unless you were on that aisle you couldn't see very well could you? And what if you'd been aware of this woman for 18 years and lived in a patriarchal society where even the healthiest of women weren't considered much more than property? Would you pay any attention to her?

So Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, and it was probably crowded, and this woman appeared...

Imagine what the world looked like to her: unable to stand upright for 18 years. She wouldn't have been able to easily gaze into the eyes of another person – not her husband, if she had one; not her children, if she had any; her parents, her neighbor, her friends, if she had any. I keep saying that – 'if she had any' – people who had a deformity or an infirmity in those days were considered unclean and were shunned, outcast, marginalized. No one would probably have spoken to her and most would have looked away. Maybe even to the point of crossing the street.

Imagine the loneliness: being cut off from everyone in town....Truth be told she was probably not even welcome in the synagogue. She was cut off from even the promise of

being loved by God. She was isolated, separated, disconnected -- she was invisible. Can you imagine?

But Jesus saw her. Jesus always saw the invisible people. And not only did he invite her over...

Remember that eating all alone at lunch feeling we talked about last Sunday? Well, it's like Jesus just invited this lonely, ignored, woman over to his table in the cafeteria!

Not only did he call her over – and I just love this – picture if you will; Jesus, before he heals her, bent down to look into her eyes. Maybe he smiled – I like to think so....but Jesus, the Son of the Lord God Almighty, stooped down – maybe he got on his knees -- to look into the bent over woman's eyes. You know – I'll bet nobody had looked into that woman's eyes in years....

Pastors make lots of hospital visitations. No big deal. But when we make them it's not unusual to be on a tight schedule, squeezing in visits between a dozen other pressing obligations, or the family is there and doesn't understand this whole 'pastor in the hospital room' thing, or the doctors are coming in and it's time for 'vitals.' Anyway, it frequently seems like the poor patient is getting the short end of the deal. The pastor is rushed and stands there visiting the patient, itching to get a move on, prays and splits. On to the next lucky patient. I'm new at this so I hope I can remember what I just said!

One day I was talking to one of my seminary friends who spent some time interning as a hospital chaplain and she told me a story about a woman whose daughter had died from a fast moving cancer, and of course spent more than her fair share of time in hospital beds. During that time she was visited by any number of doctors but the one she loved – her words not mine – the one she loved was the one who got down on his knees so he could look her in the eyes when they talked.

How often do we really see the invisible people around us? I don't mean we have to get on our knees when we talk to people – not literally, anyway – but how easy is it for us to just get on with our busy day – our important jobs, our lessons, our projects, our errands.....

Are we ignoring the invisible people- -the homeless come to mind first – those folks with the signs at the intersection of 133 & 82 ...

Of course that's obvious.

What about that lawn worker you see across the street at your neighbor's house once a week? Or yours? ... What about the nannies, the ditch diggers, and the housekeepers? Or the clerk at McDonalds trying to make it on 7.25 an hour.

Kids – what about that weird kid nobody talks too? Or that creepy quiet kid? Or the new kid? They're invisible!

I stole this from facebook and made a couple of little revisions... you may have seen it...

*The Girl you call fat? She has been starving herself & has lost over 30lbs. The Boy you called stupid, he has a learning disability & studies over 4hrs a night just to pass with a 'C'. The Girl everyone calls ugly? She spends hours putting make-up on hoping people will like her. The Boy you called faggot and tripped in the hallway? He gets abused enough at home.*

*Oh! and Adults – that girl in the beat up old car you just cussed out -- under your breath of course, there's kids in the car! -- she just cut you off coming out of City market? -- single mom working two jobs just to put food on the table, trying not to be late again so she doesn't get fired. That grumpy cashier who can't even give change right? Just got the news that there is nothing more they can do for his mom's cancer.*

You get the idea... this goes for you grown-ups too. Everybody has a back story, something going on in their lives that they desperately try not to take to work with them....

When we go back to school or work tomorrow, Look... Remember? The biggest word of all? Really look... and see, if you can, what Jesus sees. Invite someone over to your table. Get on your knees to talk to them if you have to. Go ahead, look at someone and smile.

\* Sing "People Need the Lord"