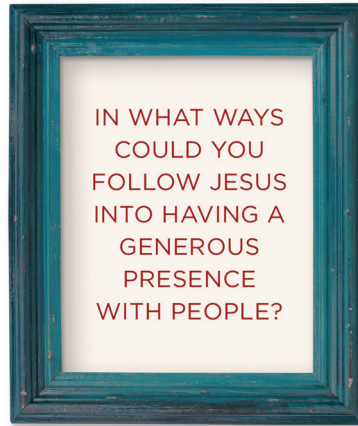


A big part of discipleship is allowing the Holy Spirit to develop us into being people with a **generous presence with others** where we display **gracefulness** and **gratitude** in our relationships.

Think About It: How can you have more empathy today in your marriage? In what ways could you follow Jesus into having a generous presence in your family this week? How might you display gracefulness and gratitude among your neighbors, co-workers, and friends? What small but concrete action of compassion could you take within the next few hours or before tomorrow in your relationships?



DAY 4: THE EMPATHY & COMPASSION OF JESUS: PART I

Yesterday, we reflected on following Jesus' example of empathy, compassion, generous presence, gracefulness, and gratitude. For today and the next two days, let's dive into a wonderful narrative from the New Testament that beautifully shows Jesus interacting with people. We're going to read the Gospel of Luke (chapter seven) to see all the ways Jesus expressed empathy, compassion, and love for the people around him. This will be an exercise of *lectio divina*, or sacred reading.

Lectio divina is a way of reading scripture where you place yourself in the story and allow the Lord to speak to you as you imaginatively and prayerfully engage with the text. As you read, you will want to move through a basic reading, then meditate on or ponder what you've read. Next, you will pray about what the Lord is saying to you through his word. And finally, you will contemplate what the Lord would like you to do in light of what you read.

Read Luke 7:11-17 – Jesus Raises a Widow's Son. Underline the places where Jesus shows empathy, compassion, etc. with people. Prayerfully read these passages and ask the Lord to show you how to follow Jesus' example.

DAY 5: THE EMPATHY & COMPASSION OF JESUS: PART 2

Read Luke 7:18-35 – Jesus and John the Baptist. Use the lectio divina method of reading described on Day Four. Underline the places where Jesus shows empathy, compassion, etc. with people.

DAY 6: THE EMPATHY & COMPASSION OF JESUS: PART 3

Read Luke 7:36-50 – Jesus Anointed by a Sinful Woman. Use the lectio divina method of reading described on Day Four. Underline the places where Jesus shows empathy, compassion, etc. with people.

DAY 7: RECAP & REFLECT

On this final day of this growing deeper exercise reflect on what the Lord has taught you over this past week. Record this in a journal or share with a friend.

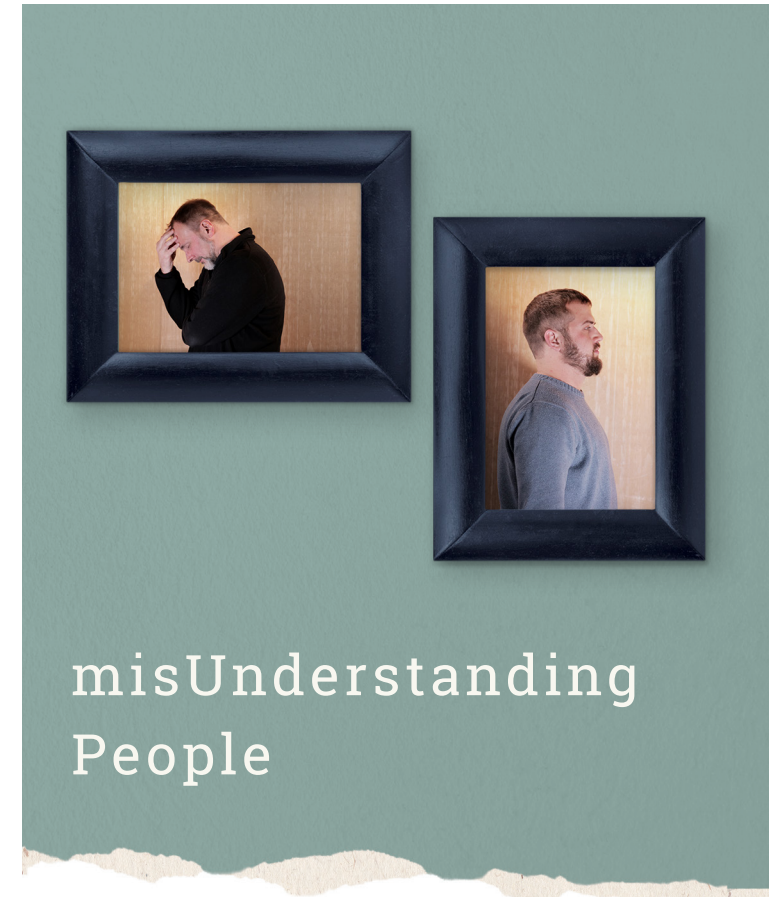
An *Examen* is an exercise that will help you as you reflect through prayer. There are five simple steps:

1. Acknowledge that you are in the **presence** of God.
2. Express **gratitude** to the Lord for everything that comes to mind.
3. **Rummage** through this past week by reflecting on how you have followed Jesus.
4. Express **sorrow** over sins and ways you've not followed Jesus.
5. Receive the **grace** of God for a new day and a fresh start in your life and relationships.

God bless you! See you at Living Word for the final two weeks of our *Life Together* series. • Pastor Aaron



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Week 4 • February 26 • Pastor Aaron Kunce

LIFE TOGETHER

DEVOTIONAL

View the February 26 message online at
LWCCyork.com/messages

A GROWING DEEPER PRACTICE

People are awesome. Don't you agree? If you've never seen one of the "People Are Awesome" videos on YouTube, take a few moments to check one out!

It's amazing how the Lord has created you and me in his image and likeness. It is also amazing how God has packed every single human being with astonishing gifts, talents, and beauty. It's part of our humanity. But sometimes we miss the beauty and good things in the people around us.

Read the long but incredible quote from Thomas Merton that is printed below. He sounds somewhat mystical and poetic because he was somewhat of a mystic and poet. But he sees the people around him for the awesome creations of God that they are. As you read Merton's words, think about the people around you: your family, neighbors, co-workers, etc.

In Louisville, at the corner of Fourth and Walnut, in the center of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all these people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers. It was like waking from a dream of separateness, of spurious self-isolation in a special world ...

This sense of liberation from an illusory difference was such a relief and such a joy to me that I almost laughed out loud. ... I have the immense joy of being man, a member of a race in which God Himself became incarnate. As if the sorrows and stupidities of the human condition could overwhelm me, now that I realize what we all are. And if only everybody could realize this! But it cannot be explained. There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun.

Then it was as if I suddenly saw the secret beauty of their hearts, the depths of their hearts where neither sin nor desire nor self-knowledge can reach, the core of their reality, the person that each one is in God's eyes. If only they could all see themselves as they really are. If only we could see each other that way all the time. There would be no more war, no more hatred, no more cruelty, no more greed. ... But this cannot be seen, only believed and "understood" by a peculiar gift.

DAY 1: LOVING BENEATH THE SURFACE

In the book *Why Am I Afraid to Tell You Who I Am?* author John Powell describes a journey we all need to travel in order to get to a place called love in our relationships. The journey starts with the **clichés** we believe about each other. This is the simplest surface level of relationships. The next level deeper is **facts**—what is basically true about another person. Then there is the level of our **opinions**, which involves our beliefs, views, values, political persuasions, etc. Below our opinions is the realm of **emotions**, what we feel and why we feel. And below that is the place of transparency. This place of **transparency** is where we are comfortable being vulnerable and are able to safely express our truest selves without fear of rejection or condemnation. Unless we can push through the emotions to transparency, we will retreat back to shallower relationships of basic facts and clichés. God desires more for us and calls us all to love each other *beyond the points of discomfort we encounter when we have differing opinions*, to the relational richness and depth of transparency. This place of transparency is where relationships truly flourish.

Think About It: What are the clichés people may believe about you? What are the basic facts about you that are more accurate than the clichés? What are the opinions you hold dear? What are the emotions that undergird your opinions, values, and beliefs? And finally, what are your deepest longings and desires? What is the core identity and DNA that makes you—you? Do you have any relationships where you are able to express your truest self with transparency? Are you helping the people around you move down through the journey of these levels to love? How could you move deeper and toward love with someone close to you today?

How has Jesus loved you all the way down to the place of complete transparency?

Read and pray through the following verses today:

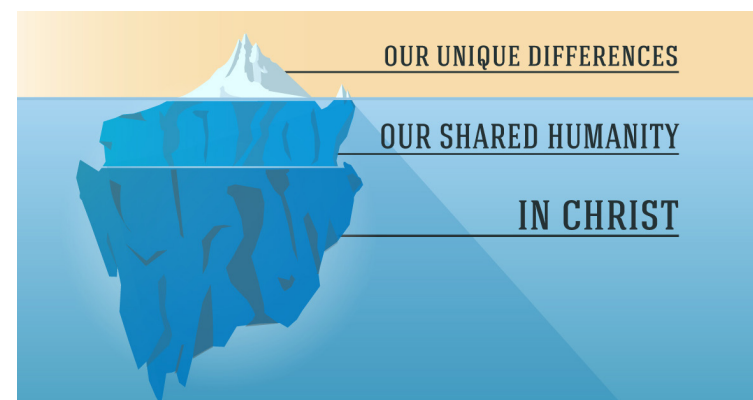
1 Peter 4:8
John 13:34
Ephesians 4:2

DAY 2: WHAT UNITES US

Read Galatians 3:26-28 and Ephesians 2:11-22. Underline words and phrases that stand out to you as you read.

What unites us in our shared humanity is far greater than our differences that can sometimes divide us. This is especially true of Christians, because in Christ we have a oneness that transcends all of our differences. In Christ, we have the same Father and we all have access to him by faith. In Christ, all the barriers and dividing walls between us have been obliterated. In God's eyes, these barriers have all come down ... all destroyed by the cross.

Think About It: As you read through the scripture passages in Galatians and Ephesians, what truths stood out to you? How do you sense the Holy Spirit speaking to you in these passages? As we continue to ponder being change agents in our relationships, how has what you've read here reinvigorated you for being the change in your relationships today?



DAY 3: BECOMING A PERSON OF EMPATHY

We all have differences, but deeper understanding of our shared humanity leads to deeper **empathy** with other people. God wants to move us into a posture of empathy for the people around us. Jesus had astonishing empathy for the people all around him. He has that same empathy for you and me. And as his followers, we are to suffer with those who suffer, weep with those who weep, and rejoice with those who rejoice. And to go even further, as Christ followers we need to let ourselves be moved to concrete acts of **compassion** for others.