



Key Scriptures: James 1:27, Matthew 25:40

Main Point: You can't help what you don't see.

Materials Needed: 4-8 sticky notes and a pen for each student

Introduction

Good morning everyone. Take a deep breath. Now, let me ask you a question: when was the last time you walked through the hallway at school, or the grocery store, or even just the church foyer, without *any* immediate agenda, *any* screen, and *any* headphones?

For most of us, that's a ridiculous scenario. Our default setting is RUSH, RUSH, RUSH.

We move through life like we're on a mission, which is good, except our mission is usually to get to our locker, beat the traffic, or finally charge our phone. We're focused on the task, or the device, or the conversation with the person standing immediately next to us. And because we are so narrowly focused, we become experts in a very specific, unintended art form: the art of missing everything.

You know exactly what I mean. We walk past the single piece of paper lying on the stairs, thinking someone else will get that. We walk past the new kid eating lunch alone, headphones blasting, and we think, They probably want to be left alone. We walk past your parent who just got home from a tough shift, and you don't stop to ask, "How was your day?"

We didn't *not care*. We just *did not see*.

This morning, we are kicking off a four-week series called S.E.R.V.E.: A Lens not an Event. We're going to challenge this idea that service is just a random event you attend, like a youth group service project or a mission trip once a year. We are going to explore the radical idea that ***service isn't an event you attend. It's a lens through which you view the world.***

The way we make our impact endure is not by doing huge, dramatic things, but by changing how we see the small things.

And that brings us to the first and most critical letter in the S.E.R.V.E. acronym:

S is for SEE.

If service is a lens, then ‘See’ is the first step in putting that lens on. We’re going to learn that the biggest barrier to service isn’t a lack of ability or a lack of motivation; it is simply a lack of awareness. We cannot help what we do not truly see.

Lesson

So, what keeps us from seeing? We live in what I call the personal bubble. This bubble is a thick, invisible shield that surrounds you, and it’s created by three powerful forces in our lives: technology, schedule, and self-focus. Let’s take a quick look at each of these.

1. The Technology Barrier

Let’s be honest. Technology is incredible, but it is the number one physical barrier to awareness. How many times have you been scrolling through Instagram or watching a YouTube video, only for someone to walk up and say, “I’ve been trying to talk to you for five minutes!”

When you wear headphones, you’re not just blocking out sound; you’re posting a giant, invisible sign that says: *DO NOT DISTURB*.

You are focused on the digital world instead of the physical world. You are present online, but absent in reality. You might be watching a video about poverty in a faraway country, while ignoring the person in your own family who needs five minutes of your time. This is the ultimate irony of modern awareness.

2. The Schedule Barrier

The second layer of the bubble is our frantic pace; our schedule. We are the most over-scheduled generation in history. School, practice, rehearsal, youth group, homework, part-time job, dinner, sleep (if we’re lucky). We’re focused on efficiency, not people.

When you're rushing to your next commitment, your brain isn't processing the world around you; it's processing a checklist: *Did I grab my book? Is my fly zipped? Am I going to be late?*

When people are just obstacles in the way of your next item on the to-do list, you simply can't afford to see them as human beings with needs. Your schedule forces you to treat everyone like a moving piece of furniture.

3. The Self-Focus Barrier

The deepest, thickest layer of the bubble is self-focus. This is where worry lives. We worry about clothes, about grades, about our friend group, about what we look like on social media. We are constantly running an internal mental audit of our own lives.

And when you are primarily focused on your own problems—when the center of your universe is you—everyone else is just background noise.

The result of these three barriers are that we are looking all the time, but we rarely truly see. There is a huge difference between the two.

- *Looking* is passive. It's what your eyes do. You see a light fixture, a wall, a sign.
- *Seeing* is active. It is what your mind and heart do. It means noticing the person who is struggling to carry those boxes, or the teacher who hasn't smiled all day, or the tension in the room that no one is talking about.

Tonight, we start the hard work of popping the personal bubble and putting on the service lens.

Scripture

The reason we have to train ourselves to see is simple: God's view of service requires observation. The Bible makes it clear that we cannot fulfill the command to serve if we remain blind to the suffering and needs around us.

Let's look at two critical passages that teach us what happens when we truly put on the service lens. Turn with me to the book of James, chapter 1,

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