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## Act 35: I Spy

by Abby King

By now you've probably caught on – a startling amount of living generously is simply noticing people. We often only realise people are lonely when they actually tell us. But there are plenty of lonely people who never say a word. Today, put those people-watching skills to good use.

"When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, 'Woman, you are set free from your infirmity.'"

**(Luke 13:12 NIV)**

Loneliness can feel like a dirty secret sometimes, like acknowledging that you're somehow deficient and defective. It's as though you didn't get invited to the party or picked for the team, like everyone is playing the game while you watch from the side lines. It feels shameful to say the words out loud – I'm lonely – so we mostly don't. It hurts to admit that you feel unwanted and invisible.

These are the nagging questions underlying the pain and the shame: Do I matter? Does anyone see me?

In the Gospel stories, we find Jesus over and over again speaking into these deep longings, showing people on the margins that they are worthy of his time and attention, that they matter to him, that he really sees them. The woman caught in adultery, the woman at the well, Mary Magdalene, the blind man, the leper, the crippled woman: Jesus offers his presence to each of them, seeing who they are and meeting their needs.

One of the most generous gifts we can give people is ourselves: our time, our attention, our willingness to care about them. When we show up for people in this way, we become the hands and feet of Jesus. We answer people's deepest questions: you matter, I see you.

It doesn't take very long to look around and realise that all sorts of people are lonely. People with chronic illnesses, or carers. Parents of children with special needs, or singles. Widows, people with disabilities, people who live alone. People whose partner works long hours. People who are grieving all kinds of losses. People with depression.

Recently, I watched my friend instruct her teenage children: 'Look out for the people sitting on their own and go and sit with them.' Who might you look out for and sit with today?

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Abby King is a teacher and writer living in Birmingham. She writes to find light in the dark, beauty in the chaos and peace in the storm. She teaches to change the world, one little life at a time. Her work is regularly published in Teach Primary Magazine.

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## Choose how to complete this act...



### **GREEN OPTION:**

Watch for lonely people this week. At church, look for those at the sidelines. At work, look for those who eat lunch alone.



### **YELLOW OPTION:**

Make a point of connecting with someone you know, but have avoided spending time with because they're a bit socially awkward.



**RED  
OPTION:**

Strike up a chat with someone you don't know – at the bus stop or café maybe - who looks a little sad.

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