

# The Least of These

*Kemi Searcy*

When Ife was thirteen, she looked like a sloppily-dressed, frumpy grandma. She often wore a scarf on her head. Most of the other adolescents at church avoided Ife as she tried to engage everyone, “Hi Tim!” or “Hi Bella!” Ife had been born with a mental injury to her brain. She drooled, walked slumped to one side, and laughed a bit too loud. She wanted...and...needed extra love. Cathy, a bright and popular teen, always gave Ife some attention every time she saw Ife. Ife responded by hanging onto Cathy’s arm. The funny thing was that Cathy acted as if Ife’s looks and behavior never bothered Cathy at all.

There are “odd” people living all around us. These are people who challenge our sense of “normal” and whether we can “endure” socializing with them. You can find them in your neighborhood, office, or at church. Sometimes the issue as to why they are “odd” is not as demonstrative as Ife’s was. Yet, they still make us uncomfortable, often to our own embarrassment.

Jesus looked for people who others did not befriend. He had dinner with tax collectors, considered the social worst of the worst. He rubbed elbows with whores, cheats, and contagious lepers. We used to call these kinds of people “E.G.R.” or Extra Grace Required” persons. But Jesus loved them, spent time with them, and yes, died for them. He said, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the **least of these** brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25:40).

It can cost you something to be seen with an EGR. My friend Megan felt God wanted her to reach out to Penny, who was on several neural medications to help alleviate her schizophrenia. Penny was a volunteer in the church ministry Megan led. Megan decided to meet up with Penny once a week and walk around the local lake. Megan got some exercise and Penny had some undivided attention. Several leaders at the church told Megan not to “waste her valuable time” with Penny. They said that there were potential leaders who could use Megan’s time instead. But Penny persisted.

Today, Penny has her mental issues under control and is the missions leader at her church. She has a responsible job in a leading national company. Penny proves there is potential in everyone to be used for God’s glory. Some people may be more successful than others in the eyes of society, but who can say what God sees?

Who do you have around you that is an EGR? Some may just behave or speak in a way that is not acceptable in the culture around them, while others may be challenged mentally or physically. Ask the Lord to shine His light on any person that needs extra grace and love from you.

Here are some points to remember as you minister:

1. Your agenda is not to change the person you are assigned to---just to love them the way they are and accept them. Let God do the changes. Your goal is not to create, manipulate or even see the final goal. Yours is but to obey God's call
2. Jesus befriended the rejects and was criticized for it. Not everyone will accept why you are helping your person.
3. Let the Lord show you how He sees the person that needs your love. Seeing through His eyes gives a different perspective than what the world has to offer. Pity is not a worthy motivation.
4. Let the Holy Spirit lead you in what you are and what you are not to do for your person. Having them for dinner every night is going to impose on your family. Finding a time to meet when your family is busy elsewhere can be a better choice.
5. Trust God for when things need to change or cease in your attention toward your person. This person is His child and He will provide the next steps.
6. Work for God's glory and not your own. Luke 6: 32-34 (Message Bible) says, "If you only love the lovable, do you expect a pat on the back? Run-of-the-mill sinners do that. If you only help those who help you, do you expect a medal? Garden-variety sinners do that. If you only give for what you hope to get out of it, do you think that's charity? The stingiest of pawnbrokers does that."

Women have a caring instinct that is naturally built into them. God gives us families to nurture and ways to care in every place our feet tread. I suggest you pull the power of your caring instinct forward and make a difference in another's life.

Extra Grace Required? Woman of God, become Extra Grace Given!