

Easy to Overlook?

Max De Pree, a businessman and a famous guru on corporate leadership, tells a riveting story about how we should look at people, especially those who may find themselves in unfortunate circumstances.

He was in a hotel in Phoenix when his left knee gave out and he was unable to walk. Consequently, he was forced for a while to use a wheelchair.

The next morning, he and his wife, Esther, went to breakfast with her pushing him in the wheelchair.

They had eaten several meals there before, and each time, the hostess looked at De Pree and asked politely the same question, “How many?”

But not this morning. The hostess looked past him to Esther and said politely, “How many?”

Then she led them to the dining room, and she turned again to Esther and asked, “Would he like to sit at the window?”

Suddenly, De Pree realized that it was as if he, Max De Pree, had disappeared. In a twinkling of an eye, this polite, well-meaning young woman had stripped him of his identity and position.



De Pree said it made him conclude that to be oppressed is wrong, but to be overlooked may be even worse.

The story leads me to pray, “O God, let me always see people for whom they are – a child of God, made in your image, men and women of significance, loved by you, and who need my attention, be it in one of our nursing centers or anywhere I encounter them.”

– Beecher Hunter