

## Seeing Humanity in All

Jesus said:

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,  
and with all your soul, and with all your mind.  
This is the greatest and first commandment.

And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” (Matthew 22:37-40)

### Supplies Needed

- Flip chart and markers
- Device to play video
- Pins or tape
- Each teen needs their own device connected to the internet



### Game: West Wind Blows

There are several different names for this game – so you may call it something different!



- Have everyone sit in a circle except for one player who stands in the centre. The person in the centre gets to call out something like...
  - “The west wind blows to anyone who...  
... likes pineapple on their pizza!”  
... loves to run!”  
... plays a musical instrument!”The statement must apply to the person in the centre.
- Everyone else in the circle who the statement applies to must get up out of their seat and find another. BUT they can't sit in an open seat on either side of them or go back to their most immediate seat. The person left without a seat each round stands in the middle and gets a turn to call out a new statement.





### Intro: Different or the Same?

As an intro to this topic have the teens think about these questions:

#### Discussion Questions

-  How do we define humanity?
-  Do we all want to be different? The same?

-  What are Biblical or modern examples of stories that highlight our shared or unique humanity?
-  What are ways (historical and present-day) where society does not treat everyone with shared humanity?



### Activities




#### Activity 1: Humans of New York

##### Directions

If you are unfamiliar with the photo blogger, Brandon Stanton, you can watch this [2.5-minute video](#). He moved to New York and set a goal of taking pictures of 10,000 people. He began to share their stories on Facebook, and after a decade, it has grown into a global movement.

- For this activity, either have several of his books on hand, or have each teen come with a device that can connect to the internet.
- Ask each teen to work individually and either go to the Humans of New York Facebook or Instagram profiles, read through the website, or his books and choose one or two profiles to focus on. Read the whole profile.

##### Discussion Questions

-  What is unique or special about this person's story?
-  What is one part of their story that you relate to?
-  Where do you see this person's humanity even if their story is very different from your own?
- Have everyone gather back and share their profiles and thoughts with each other.

## Activity 2: Empathy vs. Sympathy

### Directions

Have two flip chart pieces of paper in the front of the group and brainstorm together what we think empathy and sympathy are (one on each page).

- Watch [this video by Brené Brown](#).
- After watching the video, play a game we're calling... "is this empathy or sympathy?!" Read aloud the following statements and get the group to vote which type of response they think it is.

### Statements:

- At least... you had a boyfriend.
- Someone at my mother's gym was diagnosed with that! I can get you her doctor's name.
- I'm really glad you told me.
- I don't know what to say.
- At least... you have two parents.
- Can I bring you anything?
- I'm really sorry.

### Reflection and Discussion

- 🗨️ What do you think would change in our society if we acted more out of empathy, rather than sympathy?



## Closing: Building Empathy

One of the proven ways to build more empathy in your life is to listen to others, without the need to respond.

- Pair up the teens and invite them to take turns speaking while the other listens. The person listening will not respond to what is said, they will just listen. The person speaking can choose to share whatever they wish (if it is appropriate!).
  - It could be as simple as "my favourite colour is blue!" and the person listening will not respond with their opinion, but just take in that information.
- When the allotted time is over, ask the pair to read the text from Matthew at the beginning of this section and then pray together. It may be uncomfortable for some, but encourage them to try!



**More Precious** is the National Youth Project of the Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

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