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**“Hands and Feet”**

I admit it…I’m guilty! I have fallen down the rabbit hole. I have fallen under the influence of my partner, Chris. The shows’ premise seems simple enough. Ten people are allowed to take only ten items with them. They are dropped deep into the wilderness and the last one standing wins the show. Each participant is in their own location. Each is left alone with only nature around them and some cameras to document it all. They must forage for their own food and water. They must be able to start and maintain their fires. They must procure materials to build a shelter from the environment. Whether it be snow, ice and cold or intense heat, humidity and torrential rain. Not to mention; mosquito's, red ants and a wide variety of creepy, crawling bugs. A daunting enough task for almost any one, especially a lounge chair quarterback like myself. I always end up amazed at the ingenuity of the contestants who manage to create a safe place in the wild, intense but beautiful environment around them. Out of six seasons so far, only one person had made it past the requisite 100 days. Can you imagine? 100 days with no one around but you? To some, this may sound like paradise. A place far away from the noise of society. A place where the “simplicity” of nature is all you have to deal with. But this competition is not just about the physical challenges or the chase for food, water and essentials. This show reveals it’s contestants as they face themselves truly cut off from the outside world with no one but themselves to lean on. Isolation is not normal for human beings. We are social creatures, even when we say we don’t want to be. The reality of our inherent need for each other becomes inescapable as the time to leave the show rapidly approaches for each contestant. Some contestants opt to bow out for this reason only. For myself personally- being the social butterfly that I am-I would say the chances of me completing this challenge would be little to none. A week? Maybe. A hundred days? Not even close. A good friend of mine had been in voluntary isolation for over a decade. She moved from a suburban world to the country because she found living amongst humans was too difficult for her. Though living alone with just nature around her gives her peace, she proclaims her loneliness. She is unable to find a place where she fits in. Too many people disappoint her, Too many people let her down. The peace she’s tried so hard to find, has lead her to an isolated life filled with “flawed” human beings like herself. This isolation has become not a place of peace, but a prison. A place where the wounds within her fester and remain. I think of her a lot when I watch this “survival of the fittest” competition…Wishing there was some way to help her find her place in the world once again and realize she’s not as alone as she thinks. A place where her wounds could finally heal. A thought came to me while watching another of Chris’ shows. This show highlighted people with dermatological conditions and possible treatments

that could be used to cure or alleviate symptoms. It was so easy to see the patient’s pain, how they had changed, not only in physical appearance but spiritually as well. Relief was palpable once a solution was found and implemented. They were heard. Seen. And their burden lifted. One could make the argument that not everybody who has a physical wound get relief. And not everyone is treated with compassion because of our own inability to respond. The sufferer or the observer or both? Good question. But what if we bore a sign of our inner distress? As children, it’s relatively simple. I we cried; there would be relief in a bottle, food, a change of diaper or even just to be held. As as an adult, it’s not that easy. We have learned to internalize what we feel. Asking for help isn’t “proper”. Too often we push aside what we are felling. Too often, we’re tired and internally broken, and it seems so much easier to just stay in our shell. The shell seems so warm, safe and comfortable and nothing can scare us anymore. Thus, we make our lives even more isolated. Make ourselves more lonely. We hide our scars, our hurts so that nobody can hurt us anymore. Us humans, we don’t like change. Putting ourselves “out there” into the rapidly changing world scares the crap out of us. But stagnation isn’t growth. And it isn’t living. We get angry too easily. We’re scared too often. Too often we’re manipulated into believing our pain and fear is somebody else’s fault. It’s that African American. That South American. Chinese. Japanese. Jew. Gays. Trans. The camps that we implemented in California during WW11 for those of Japanese descent should be proof enough of this. Even if the reason for this was “for their protection”. Elections have been won by playing our fears and frustrations against somebody else. Wars have been waged because of this. There is plenty of debate gong on right now that this is true...I’ll leave that debate for the political pundits and talking heads. This doesn’t help the widow who is lonely and lost without her partner. Or the husband and wife who have grown so far apart over the years, they no longer know how to talk to each other. Single parents who don’t know how they are going to get though the next day. The child who can’t discover who they are for fear of rejection. Banishment.Or the teenager who hides in social media because it’s “safer” that being out among other teens who can be bullies and mean if you’re different. Ask the child who is never picked to be on the sport team, or the one who is flat out ignored in the classrooms. Some where, some time, every single one of us know what it feels like to be alone and isolated. Lonely. I have often wondered how many times Jesus felt like that. Who did He have to go to on this earth to “hear” him. Even the most faithful of his disciples were barely hanging on most of the time. How alone he must have felt. Could he have gone to his mother, Mary? She never shunned or deserted him. I would have run, sprinted for my mother. You’re welcome, mom. What we can’t see is that we are all the same. We all eat, drink, and need shelter and safety for ourselves and our loved ones. We all put our pants on the same way. How did we become a people who can’t acknowledge this??? Or worse, accepts this as the status quo? In today’s scripture reading-Genesis 1:27- we learn how we are all a part of each other. Made in God’s image and made to be a part of each other in this puzzle of life. What if we approached everyone who crosses our path in life as though we were seeing God in their faces?...a creation of God before us. Can we see with Jesus’s eyes? A tall task? You bet. How do we tackle this abounding task? One person, one moment at a time. We listen when we ask,”how are you?” We begin to recognize the face of God residing in everyone we meet, and show them the way home. A place where it is truly safe. One person. One moment at a time. We step outside of our own hurt to reach out to someone who is also hurting…No matter your own beliefs, or what their religious or political beliefs may be. We acknowledge the person in front of us without expectations. Without judgment. No matter the color of their skin, or yours. What gender. Where you call home or who you love. We seek not to change them. We have no agenda. We do this because we wish someone would do this for us. We do this because Jesus did this for us. I have worked in a retail, social setting for over 20 years. In Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, South Carolina and Georgia.

I have been blessed to works with all kinds of people from all areas of life. The well off, the poor. The healthy and the differently abled. Many, many people. One of the best compliments I ever received in my optical career was from an elderly African American lady. While helping her with her glasses, she told me she went to two different places for help, but I was the only person who took the time to truly listen to her and her problem. She told me that I was the only who who finally “saw” her. This is what I try to do for everyone who comes across my path. I charge you to do the same. The truth is, we all feel alone and lonely. We all feel unseen, unheard at some point in our lives. Some of us bear physical hurts and scars. Most of us carry our scars on the inside. We all struggle through life trying to keep ourselves and our families safe from our changing environments. But nonetheless, our environments are always changing. If we are to be Jesus’ eyes, hands and feet; we are charged with reaching out to all of humanity. Not just to the people that we like. Or who look like us.This is a bold, courageous step to make. But we don’t make this step alone. We walk with Jesus.If I can reuse a piece of scripture from last week, “From now on, you will be fishing for people.” Bruised and battered but all part of the whole. We all need to be seen, saved. All it could take is one hand. One heart. And this could be you. So let your light shine this day, week, month. A weary world needs you.