

# They Aren't Interested

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When considering someone or a family to invite to worship or engage in a discussion about religion, have you ever thought “they aren't interested in religion”? “Just look at his or her lifestyle, friends, and the way he or she conduct themselves.” Sometimes we make judgments about one's interest in spiritual matters based on outward appearance or superficial characteristics. A few examples from the Bible illustrate just how outward appearances and superficial observations can be wrong.

Two groups of people in first-century Israel who would surely be on the so-called “not interested” list are the tax collectors for the Roman government and Roman soldiers occupying the country. Tax collectors were generally despised and were grouped with harlots (Matt. 21:31-32). But Jesus singled out a chief tax collector living in Jericho named Zacchaeus and asked to stay in his house (Lk. 19:1-10). It was not surprising the people murmured because Jesus stayed with a sinner. Would not a priest have been a more promising candidate to host the Son of God? Yet, Zacchaeus was receptive to Jesus' invitation. As we discover from Zacchaeus' conversation with Jesus, it was his practice to give half of his income to the poor and would repay anyone fourfold if he were to overcharge a person. Furthermore, he readily became a follower of Jesus.

Cornelius, the Roman centurion of Acts 10, could have been on someone's “not interested” list. Granted, considering the situation existing in that place and time, Cornelius was a person who, based on outward appearance, would likely cause someone to pause before approaching him to discuss religion. But this man was genuinely interested in spiritual things. And apparently, so was the centurion overseeing the crucifixion of Jesus (Lk. 23:47).

The parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector in Luke 18:9-14 further illustrates the folly of trying to judge the hearts of people. The person who outwardly appeared "religious" was not the one Jesus said was justified. Again, it was an unlikely tax collector.

The fact we cannot judge peoples' hearts means that we simply must act on our love for the Lord and seize each opportunity we have to share our faith.

For the elders,  
Don Denton