Stephen Covey – Coming Near Understanding.

Stephen was travelling on a train one Sunday morning in New York. People were sitting quietly, some reading their papers, some lost in thought, some resting with their eyes closed.

It was calm and peaceful when suddenly a man and his children got on board. The children were loud. They were feral and they instantly shattered the peace.

The man sat down next to Covey and closed his eyes, apparently oblivious to the situation. His children were yelling backwards and forwards, throwing things, even grabbing people's papers. It was very disturbing. And yet the man did nothing!

Stephen felt irritated. He couldn't believe the man could be so insensitive as to let his children run wild and do nothing about it.

So finally, noticing how angry others were Stephen lent across to the man and said:

"Sir, your children are really disturbing a lot of people. I wonder if you couldn't control them a little more?"

The man lifted his gaze and came to and said:

"Oh you're right. I guess I should do something about it. We just came from the hospital where their mother died about an hour ago. I don't know what to think and I guess they don't know how to handle it either."

Can you imagine how Covey felt at that moment? He suddenly saw things differently. He thought differently. He felt differently and he behaved differently.

His irritation vanished and his heart was filled with the man's pain. Feelings of sympathy and compassion flowed.

"Your wife's just died?" he said, "Oh I'm sorry. Can you tell me about it? What can I do to help?"

Drawing near to the man and understanding his state threw a totally different light on the situation.