

“Does God Need Glasses?”

Have you ever been at a social gathering, perhaps a tea, a reception, or a party of some kind, and had the experience of feeling “out of focus”?

I’m sure you have--- I think we have all had this happen to us:

Picture yourself at an afternoon reception. You mill around, balancing your cup and saucer with a couple cookies on a napkin. You see someone standing over to your left, quietly sipping her coffee. You drift her direction and initiate some friendly small talk. She responds to you politely, but she doesn’t seem to be able to focus her eyes quite right. When she looks at you her eyes look blurry, unfocused, slippery. They flicker over you and around the room. As your conversation progresses, her eyes act like captive butterflies, unwillingly held in your vicinity, darting here and there, seeking escape. Suddenly her eyes light up, focus sharply on a person across the room. She murmurs a hurried good-bye and makes a bee-line across the room to speak to the Vice-President of the Women’s Association, or the Mayor, or the Presiding elder of the church. Well, anyway, someone she decided was worthy of her time, attention and presence.

Sound familiar? It’s not a good feeling is it? However, we probably have all played BOTH parts in this little scene. We are trained in life to SEE who is REALLY important, significant, worthy of our esteem. The world teaches us CLUES for making this assessment.

What are these clues? You know a lot of these—maybe unconsciously, but you know them:

CLOTHING- good quality, rich fabrics, leather, furs, prestigious brand names printed on purses, shirts, shoes.

APPEARANCE- In our fitness-conscious age, those who frequent health clubs may be more focused on LOOKING GOOD, than on FEELING good and getting healthy. For women- slimness to model-thin proportions; for men- trimness with appropriately muscled accents—

What about AGE? Although things may be changing some, our culture is still highly youth-oriented. Eyes snap toward the young, the energetic, the ones who walk with a firm step and vibrant attitude.

How about POSITION? Job titles, social status, certain roles in society command our attention, our direct gaze:

DIRECTOR

CHAIR OF THE BOARD

DOCTOR

PRESIDENT

Do you call your doctor by his or her first name? Does he or she use yours?

PUBLIC FIGURES receive overwhelming scrutiny- television, radio, movies, magazines, newspapers, books. We imitate hairstyles, clothing, posture, carriage, voice quality, gestures, speaking styles of those who are SO IMPORTANT they receive the concentrated gaze of a whole culture.

So, with all these clues, we conclude we have pretty sharp eyesight. Doesn't take US long to figure out who's REALLY IMPORTANT, right?

The problem with this is that most of us conclude WE AREN'T. Experiences like those at the imaginary reception we visited above reinforce our conclusion.

Then we can move into all kinds of problems. We may feel compelled to manipulate the clues we've considered to convince others we ARE important. We spend more than we need on expensive clothes or cars. We drive ourselves to attain a certain position at work. We become obsessed with our bodies, seeking an unattainable standard of physical beauty or strength. We pick people to get close to, based on their ability to bring us prestige by association.

Or we may just get really sad, discouraged, depressed, convinced we aren't worth much at all. We're just blurry, out-of-focus people, bordering on invisible.

What a mess. Can we get out of it somehow? Imperfect, frail and sinful as we are, I don't expect we can leave these destructive patterns behind once and for all in the next ten minutes. But I think we can make a START right

now. As Christians who give Scripture a special place in the life of faith, we need to evaluate our eyesight in light of Scripture. What does the Bible tell us about this problem of eyesight?

First off, it seems that God's eyesight isn't as good as our own. I mean, look at the record. When God picked Abraham and Sarah to be the father and mother of the whole Judeo-Christian tradition, he picked a man over 75 years old to travel through miles and miles of terrain over years and years. He picked a barren post-menopausal woman to bear the child who would be the ancestor of a family more numerous than the stars! What's with that? Could God be a little like Mr. McGoo of the cartoons—meaning well, but in need of a good pair of glasses?

The Bible is full of instances like this. When God pointed to Moses, the prophets, the disciples, Mary of Nazareth, and said, "YOU!"—most of them initially responded with a startled, "ME???"- perhaps repressing the urge to whip out a good pair of glasses, plunk them on God's nose and say, "NOW, take another look."

Our text for today provides another Biblical example of God's unique eyesight.

God sent Samuel to anoint the KING of Israel. Samuel understood the king would be one of Jesse's sons. Now, to get the full impact of this story, be aware that Jesse's was a family of the smallest clan of the smallest tribe of all Israel. And which of Jesse's sons was chosen by God to be king? None other than the smallest son. Clearly, God does not see as we see.

Samuel watched all those tall young men pass in front of him, thinking that surely one of them would be God's chosen. But no-----

It's David in whom God has seen the qualities needed for the king.

David- the youngest
-just a boy
-unimportant to his father and brothers
-he didn't need to be visible
-in fact, he wasn't even THERE!
-his father had sent him to watch the sheep

David- not important in his family's eyes- not important in the world's eyes- not initially important in the prophet SAMUEL's eyes---- was SEEN and KNOWN as a king, through the eyes of God.

It's plain that God doesn't see as we do. But the question that comes next is this:

Who is it who really needs the glasses?
Maybe it's us.
But how can we find the glasses we need?
How can we move toward seeing as God's sees?

“For the Lord sees not as we see, we look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”

When I hear this verse, a memory stirs within me. I think I may know what it is to look with my eyes, yet see with my heart. I bet you know what that's like, too.

Travel with me- back through years of memory- to when you were a very small child--- let's say about four or five.

You are four years old- ok? Now,
Think of your mother. Or a special teacher. Or a favorite aunt.
Was she pretty? Did she seem to be the most beautiful woman who ever lived?

How about your father? Your older cousin who showed you he thought you were great?
Was there ever a man more handsome, more noble, more wise?

Think of any person who loved you deeply. Weren't they the best, most beautiful people you knew?

See what I mean? I think we DO know how to see as God sees.
We may have lost that ability- or only have it in rare moments-

But God is with us, guiding us to look with our eyes and see with our hearts.
We can become INTENTIONAL, asking God to teach us to see with HIS eyes.

Friends, to take a step along this road, we need to examine ourselves fearlessly—because we are NOT looking at MOST people the way God does. We allow ourselves to be BLIND to the importance and beauty of countless of God’s precious children. We look past people in our daily lives—sometimes our own parents, children or spouses! We close our eyes to people in need in our communities—we turn off the television to avoid seeing upsetting images of hurting people across the globe. And if you look at our charge card statements and our bank records, you might find an ungodly percentage of our resources dedicated to a scant few people--- the only ones we SEE with our **money**. Some of our resources may be dedicated to trying to LOOK BETTER OURSELVES according to the WORLD’S vision.

We need to take this to heart, friends. There are hurting and invisible people that matter to God that we don’t see, don’t care about, don’t reach out to. There are people God wants to raise up as leaders, who we brush away with dismissive gestures. Today is a great day to ask God to show us some truths about ourselves we need to change. The old question still is a good one: “If you were arrested and tried for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?” There is no one here who doesn’t have a LOT of room to grow—and that includes ME!

But don’t forget God sees the beauty and goodness in us, in spite of our failings. His Holy Spirit can help us to change and knows just how to shape us. He loves us as we are, and sees us as we will be, with his transforming power.

Each day we try to follow God’s leading, each moment we remember to look for Jesus in order to love and serve him, God is watching US. And BEAMING. BEAMING with JOY. He sees US with HIS heart and says, “You are precious in my sight.” May we become his faithful people, starting right now. May we learn to look with our eyes yet see with our hearts. Amen. Amen.