

Seeing with Spiritual Eyes

Have you ever completely misjudged someone based on their appearance or behavior, only to discover later that you had it all wrong? We live in a world where snap judgments and surface-level assessments dominate our interactions, but as believers, we're called to something deeper.

The Danger of Judging According to the Flesh

When we judge people solely by what we see on the outside, we often miss what's really happening in their hearts. Consider this powerful example: As I ministered at a church in Oklahoma, I noticed a man in the congregation with what appeared to be an angry, hostile expression throughout the entire service. I was expecting this man to storm out at any moment.

But when the altar call was given, that same man came running forward, weeping and giving his life to the Lord. What looked like anger was actually deep conviction from the Holy Spirit working in his heart.

Why We Misread People

Our minds can overthink and misinterpret what we observe. Someone might avoid eye contact not because they dislike you, but because they're intimidated or dealing with insecurity. A person might seem distant not because they're rejecting you, but because they're processing something internally.

This tendency to judge according to outward appearances causes countless problems in relationships, especially in marriages. How many arguments start with "Why did you look at me that way?" or "You're not even listening to me!" when the reality might be completely different from our perception?

The Heart Connection Jesus Demonstrated

In Mark 4:33, we read that Jesus "spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it." How did Jesus know when people were truly able to receive His message? Through spiritual discernment - a heart-to-heart connection that goes beyond surface appearances.

Learning from David's Wisdom

King David understood this principle when potential allies came to join his army while he was fleeing from Saul. In 1 Chronicles 12:17, David said, "If you have come peaceably to me to help me, my heart will be united with you."

David knew this was a life-or-death situation. He couldn't afford to judge these men merely by their words or appearance. He needed a spiritual connection, a heart-to-heart recognition of their true intentions.

The Difference Between Soul Love and Spirit Love

Many relationships are built primarily on emotional attraction, physical chemistry, or shared interests. While these elements aren't wrong, they shouldn't be the foundation of lasting relationships.

What Is Spirit Love?

The love of God that has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5) is different from emotional or physical attraction. This divine love is:

- Committed regardless of feelings
- Based on laying down your life for others
- Not dependent on how someone makes you feel
- Anchored in spiritual connection rather than circumstances

When you connect with someone through this God-kind of love, you also care about what they care about and love those they love. It's a family connection that transcends personality differences or emotional ups and downs.

When Your Spirit and Soul Don't Align

Sometimes you might believe something in your spirit while feeling something completely different in your emotions or thoughts. This isn't necessarily a sign of spiritual weakness - it's part of the human experience.

The Father's Honest Prayer

When a desperate father brought his demon-possessed son to Jesus, he made a profound statement: "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24). He was acknowledging that his heart believed while his mind was screaming doubt.

Jesus honored that heart-faith and delivered the boy. This shows us that we can operate in faith even when our emotions or thoughts aren't cooperating.

Practical Steps for Alignment

When your soul (mind, will, emotions) isn't aligned with your spirit, you can:

- Pray for help: "Lord, make me bold with strength in my soul" (Psalm 138:3)
- Speak to your soul: "Bless the Lord, O my soul" (Psalm 103:1)
- Create the right atmosphere: Use worship music, Scripture reading, or fellowship to help your emotions catch up with your faith
- Ask the Holy Spirit for assistance: He understands and will help bring alignment

Moving Beyond Surface-Level Christianity

Many people attend church or engage in religious activities out of obligation rather than spiritual hunger. They're present physically but absent spiritually - like a motel with the light on but nobody home.

The Importance of Heart Connection

True spiritual growth happens when we move beyond:

- Religious obligation
- Emotional experiences alone
- Physical attraction or social compatibility
- Judging by appearances

Instead, we cultivate:

- Genuine spiritual hunger
- Heart-to-heart connections with God and others
- Faith that operates regardless of feelings
- Discernment that sees beyond the surface

Life Application

This week, challenge yourself to look beyond surface appearances in your relationships. Before reacting to someone's behavior or words, pause and ask yourself: "What might really be going on in their heart?"

Practice connecting with people spiritually rather than just emotionally or socially. In your marriage, friendships, and family relationships, focus on the heart connection - the commitment to love and serve regardless of how you feel in the moment.

Questions for Reflection:

- Am I judging people based on appearances rather than seeking to understand their hearts?
- In my closest relationships, am I building on emotional attraction or spiritual connection?
- When my feelings don't align with my faith, do I let emotions dictate my actions, or do I operate from my spirit?
- How can I cultivate deeper spiritual discernment in my daily interactions?

Remember, when you operate in the love of God that's been poured into your heart, you become much harder to deceive, manipulate, or offend. You're anchored in something deeper than circumstances, emotions, or other people's opinions. This is the foundation for truly meaningful relationships and effective Christian living.

Quotes

1. "You can get it very, very wrong when you judge someone according to outward things."
2. "We should no longer know anyone according to the flesh only."

3. “So many problems in relationships come down to misunderstanding—misreading and misinterpreting one another.”
4. “You simply cannot judge things according to the flesh.”
5. “You would never know the pain people are carrying just by looking at them.”
6. “People become jealous and want what someone else has, while the person who has it doesn’t even want their own life.”
7. “We assume too much about people—based on what they have, where they live, and how things look on the outside. That is judging according to the flesh.”
8. “You are a spirit. You have a soul. And you live in a body.”
9. “When the Bible says, ‘Trust in the Lord with all your heart,’ it’s talking about your spirit—your inner man. That’s where trust must begin. That’s number one.”
10. “There is the love of God that is in our hearts, and then there’s emotional love—love based on feelings and on how someone makes us feel.”
11. “But what we want to build on is the love of God that has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. That kind of love says, ‘I love you from my heart. It’s a deep conviction. Regardless of how I feel in the moment, I am committed to you.’”
12. “You may be moody on the outside, but you can be rooted on the inside—stable, grounded, and unshaken.”

Verses

1. Mark 4:33
2. Matthew 8:17
3. Romans 5:5
4. Psalm 138:3
5. Psalm 103:1

6. Mark 6

7. 1 Chronicles 12:16-17

Summary

In our fast-paced world, we frequently make snap judgments about people based solely on their outward appearance or behavior, often completely missing what's actually happening in their hearts. This tendency to judge according to the flesh creates countless problems in our relationships, especially in marriages where arguments often begin with misinterpreted looks or assumed attitudes. Jesus demonstrated a different approach, speaking to people as they were able to hear because He connected with them spiritually, seeing beyond surface appearances to understand their hearts.

The difference between soul love and spirit love is crucial for building lasting relationships. While emotional attraction and shared interests aren't wrong, they shouldn't be the foundation. The love of God poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit is committed regardless of feelings, based on laying down our lives for others, and anchored in spiritual connection rather than circumstances. When we operate in this divine love, we become much harder to deceive, manipulate, or offend because we're anchored in something deeper than emotions or other people's opinions.