

Looking at God Looking at Us

Reflections on the Gospel of John and Cultivating Awareness

Cultivating Awareness of:

- God with me
- God with us
- God's movement around us

Tension: We all experience to varying degrees an uncomfortable disconnect between what we believe to be true about God and our actual experience of God. (Discomfort and distance)

(Steve Cuss, *The Expectation Gap: The Tiny, Vast Space between Our Beliefs & Experience of God*)

Examples:

- I know God loves me, but I don't feel it.
- I believe God is with me, but I don't see him.

"We all are born into the world looking for someone looking for us, and we remain in this mode of searching for the rest of our lives." Curt Thompson, *The Soul of Shame*

Jesus **reaches into humanity** to bridge our belief and experience of the Triune God.

Those who **see and believe** experience relief from the tension.

John 1:1-18

What did Jesus do to address the tension?

(Insert manuscript picture)

Jesus actively reaches into humanity to reveal the Father and make him known.

- The Incarnation of Jesus is the most complete revelation of God and his redemptive purposes for humanity.
- Revelation and redemption given through Jesus bridge the gap between belief and experience.
- As both the Lord AND Immanuel, he eases the tension.

When we feel the tension, how do we **see**?

Look at Jesus who is looking at us.

- We are not the center of his universe.
- We are in a relationship with the Triune God.

1 John 4:14-16, 19 And we have seen and we testify that the Father has sent his Son as the world's Savior. **15** Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God—God remains in him and he in God. **16** And we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us....**19** We love because he first loved us.

"A step or two away from the place where I will make my contemplation or meditation, I will stand for the length of an Our Father. I will raise my mind and think how God our Lord is looking at me, and other such thoughts. Then I will make an act of reverence or humility." St. Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*

“Looking at God Looking at Me”

- For about 30 seconds, imagine what God is seeing about you in this moment
- Make an act of reverence
- Be aware of your imaginings

(Val McIntyre, *Transformative Intensive: Prayer Resources*)

In Practice:

- Be aware of how you instinctively characterize God’s gaze toward you.
- Be aware of overrationalizing or dismissing the work of the Spirit. He gives us the Spirit of *knowledge and revelation* of himself (Eph 1:17)
- Be aware of conviction vs. condemnation, illumination vs. accusation, does it move you toward the fruit of the Spirit?
- Share your experience with a trusted friend

When we feel the tension, how do we believe?

Believe: to know and to trust, knowledge and experience

Belief involves some form of surrender. Surrender is a process. If we skip the process, we will not likely experience lasting trust.

Ps 127:1 Unless the LORD builds a house, its builders labor over it in vain; unless the LORD watches over a city, the watchman stays alert in vain.

Mt 11:28-30 “Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. **29** Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, because I am lowly and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **30** For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Phil. 2:12-13 ...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. **13** For it is God who is working in you both to will and to work according to his good purpose.

Surrender:

- **Acknowledge my “reality”, what story am I telling myself?**
 - In the moment of tension, what do you think you want or need that you’re afraid you won’t get?
 - What do you believe about yourself or your circumstances?
 - What do you think you know about God? What might be getting in the way?
- **Look to God’s reality through the redemption given by Jesus, let his love speak into your understanding**
 - How does Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension shed light on our perceived reality?
 - What thoughts, attitudes, or actions might need to change to relax into his truth?