

Seeing God with 20/20 Vision  
Ps 19:1, Is 40:25-28, Rom 1:20-23, John 1:1-4, 17-18  
June 17, 2012

based on "God: As He Longs for You to See Him" by Chip Ingram

What is the most important thought you have ever had? What is the most important thought anyone has ever had or could ever have? Those sound like questions that might come up in an ethics or philosophy class. Those kinds of questions might lead some people to answer "Who cares?" But the answers to those questions have ramifications that reach from here to eternity.

The most important thought you will ever have is the thought that comes when you see or hear the word God. That thought is the deciding factor in everything you say and everything you do. Whether you are a Christian, a Hindu, a Muslim, or an atheist, your entire life is filtered through and orchestrated by what you think God to be.

Because how you see God is so important, today we are beginning a journey in an effort to achieve a more accurate picture of God. Unless you strive to see God with 20/20 vision, your life will never be what it should be. Your witness for Christ will never be what it should be. Your joy and contentment in life will never be what they should be. Your earthly relationships will never be what they should be. I could go on listing the problems of having poor eyesight when you look at God, but I think you get my point. Everything in your life finds its root in your perception of God.

This begs the question, "What's wrong with my perception of God?" Left to our own senses and reason, we tend to make three mistakes when we think of God:

- ! We tend to assume that God is **just like us**.
- ! We tend to **reduce** God to measurable and controllable terms.
- ! We tend to **overlook** the obvious and significant ways that God has revealed himself to us.

As we spend the coming weeks sharpening our vision of God, keep in mind the words of A. W. Tozer: *What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. The history of mankind will probably show that no people has ever risen above its religion, and man's spiritual history will positively demonstrate that no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God. [Because] we tend, by a secret law of the soul, to move toward our mental image of God.*

So, let's spend some time on each of the three things that cause our vision of God to be out of focus.

God is not like us. It seems like common sense, doesn't it? When you take an honest look at God, you don't see yourself. The Bible tells us that we are made in God's image.

That means we have been given special gifts that only God can give, but God is not like us. We are made in his image – he isn't made in our image. God isn't just a bigger and better form of man. At our very best, we are only a dim reflection of all that God is.

God is not like us! We need to get a clear focus on that fact if we are to ever see God with 20/20 vision. Listen as Isaiah paints an accurate picture of God: *"To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?" says the Holy One. Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing. Why do you say, O Jacob, and complain, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the Lord; my cause is disregarded by my God"? Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom (Is 40:25-28).*

God is not like us! People get tired – God never tires. There are things people don't understand – there is never a question in God's mind. God is **all-powerful, all-knowing, all-wise**. He is not like us!

Listen to King David: *"How great are you, O Sovereign Lord! There is no one like you, and there is no God but you" (2 Sam 7:22)*. God tells us through another psalmist: *"Be still and know that I am God" (Ps 46:10)*. Until we are still, until we are ready to humble ourselves before God, we will never know God.

The apostle Paul was no stranger to the power and otherness of God. Paul was also a master at wordsmith. In his letter to the Romans, Paul delivers a beautiful doxology for God. Doxology comes from two Greek words and literally means glory talk. In glory talk Paul writes: *Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him? To him be the glory forever! Amen. Rom 11:33*

The answer to all of Paul's rhetorical questions is – no one. No one knows God's mind, no one gives God advice, and God doesn't owe anyone anything. As Paul says, all things are "from him" – God is the source everything. All things are "through him" – God is the creator of everything. All things are "to him" – all things exist for God's glory. God is most certainly not like us!

Our second vision failure is that, left to ourselves, we tend to reduce God to manageable terms, but God is not **our servant**. In other words, we shrink God. When we are faced with such an all-powerful, all-knowing, all-wise God, we are so intimidated that we try to put God in our mental compactors and shrink him, not to our size, but to something less than us. That way we can control him. We can call the shots. However, since this is impossible, we are left with no choice other than to create gods for

ourselves that we can control.

Instead of admitting the dichotomy of who God is and who we are, instead of falling down and being his servants, we try to make God our servant. Paul tells us how this happens: *For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.* Rom 1:21-23

Paul explains that there is a universal knowledge of God and people run away from this knowledge. They exchange God for things. They turn from the Creator and pretend to create for themselves.

Now there are those who will say, "We don't grab a tree limb and carve out an idol." No, we don't. We just treat God lightly. We try to make God accountable to us instead of us being accountable to him. We say, "Why didn't he do what I asked, God?" But God is not **accountable to us**.

Consider what the Israelites did in the desert. When Moses didn't come down from the mountain fast enough to suit them, they had Aaron build them a golden calf and they claimed it was the calf that had saved them. We are shocked that they could be so blind, but we do the same. Since we can't actually see God, we act like he is what we want him to be. We add what we like, we throw out what we don't like, we invent new things and say this is our true religion.

We trivialize God. We turn God in our "Self-help Genie." We create God in our own image. Then we tuck God away in a corner of our lives. We make God our "God on demand." We tell God, "Help us when we ask and the rest of the time leave us alone." But God is not **our Self-help Genie**.

Our little hearts just burst with love when God does what we want and our anger burns white-hot when he doesn't. Many of us probably know someone who is angry with God because they were taught that God will do everything you want. I hope you're not one of those people.

Another attempt to make God more manageable is what is called "salad bar religion." In this case, people go to the religion salad bar and they put a little of this and a little of that on their plate. They take a little from the Buddhists, a smidgen of Hindu, some good tradition from the Jews, just a touch of new-age, and one scoop of Christianity.

When they have mixed all these together, they have their perfect God. He comes when they call. He answers all requests with a big yes. And if he ever gets out of line, they just go back to the salad bar and do some customizing.

These people create God in their own image. They mold and shape God until he looks, thinks, acts, and reacts just like they do. In fact, they and their God are so much alike that you can't tell one from the other. That's because they are worshiping themselves.

Our third blurring of God is when we ignore the ways God has and still does reveal himself to us. If we are to see an accurate picture of God, we must see him as he reveals himself, not as we want to see him. The truth is that God is not like us and he will not allow us to reduce or trivialize him in any way. It's only when we recognize what God is revealing to us that the fog begins to clear and we start to truly see him. Here are the three ways God has chosen to reveal himself.

God reveals himself in **all of nature**. There is such order to all of creation that the psalmist was moved to say, *"The heavens declare the glory of God. The skies proclaim the work of this hands. Day after day they pour forth speech. Night after night they display knowledge. There's no speech or language where their voice is not heard"* (Ps 19:1-3).

No matter where you live, the wonders of creation are all around; sky, stars, sunrises, and sunsets point to the creativity of God. Whether in a hut in a jungle or a high-tech hospital, the miracle of birth awes everyone present. Paul supports this fact when he says, *"For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse"* (Rom 1:20).

Drive to a wooded area and watch the animals. Drive to a park and watch children playing. Drive to a lake and watch the sunrise or sunset. Then tell me there is no God. Spending quiet time in the world God created will help to restore your vision.

God has also revealed himself in **his Word**. Nature will give you only a partial picture of God. Hopefully, it will lead you to desire a more complete understanding of God. A better understanding of God comes from his Word.

It's in God's written Word we learn about our Savior. John writes, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men"* (Jn 1:1-4).

God made us to be receptors of his Word. In the coming weeks, as we seek out a clearer picture of God. I hope and pray you will search God's Word to bring him into focus.

God's ultimate revelation of himself is in the person of his Son, **Jesus Christ**. If we continue with the quote from John we find, *"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth"* (Jn 1:14). Jesus not only came from the Father, during his life he

demonstrated every character trait of his Father.

As we explore the truth about God, we will see that the true God has no place on the salad bar of religions. Jesus claimed to be God, and he proved his identity by raising the dead, healing the sick, feeding multitudes, even rising from the dead. His life was one of absolute perfection, love, kindness, and holiness. The Word was not only made flesh – the Word was God.

John goes on to say, *“For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known”* (Jn 1:17-18). The readable revelation of God came through the various authors who wrote as the Holy Spirit moved them. The relational revelation of God came through Jesus Christ.

What will it take for us to see God with 20/20 vision? First, we need to admit that our eyes don't see all that well on their own. Second, we need to go to the Great Physician for a prescription that will correct our defective vision and help us see clearly.

That's our objective for the next few weeks. We're going to take a close look at the prescription that God himself has written – the God who wants to be seen by us. God longs for us to see him as he truly is. If we work with God, he will reveal himself to us and our lives will be changed.