

A Spiritual Eye Test
Prov 2.1-5, Jer 29.11-13, Luke 19.41-44
June 24, 2012

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

Last week, we began our summer sermon series on seeing God as he wants us to see him. We talked about seeing God with 20/20 vision. That's the goal of this series; that we see God as he truly exists; not a vision of God clouded by the limitations we try to put on him, but seeing God as he longs for us to see him.

However, before we begin to recast our vision of God, we need to take a spiritual eye test. That is, we need to evaluate our current view of God. It's easy to admit we don't think like God thinks. It's easy to claim that we're not trying to mold God into something we can easily manage. And, it's equally easy to profess that we believe God has revealed himself through all of creation, through his holy Word, and through Jesus.

Having made all those claims, we are left with the question, "Exactly, what then is our picture of God?" Who do we see when we think of God? And if we think we have the answers to those two questions, there is still another question to be answered. "How do we know whether or not we're seeing God as he truly is?" We need to take a spiritual eye test.

Did you know there is a spiritual eye test to measure how well you're seeing God? It involves four elements of your faith. The better you score on this test, the more finely tuned your vision of God will be. You have been given a test sheet that you can use to check your vision. After you complete this vision test, don't throw it away. Put it somewhere it won't get lost because you might want to compare these results with the ones you get at the end of our series.

The first measure is energy for God. Those who have a true picture of God have very high energy for God. They have high energy for studying God's Word. They have high energy to tackle problems, both inside and outside the church, seeking constructive and loving solutions. They have high energy to help others in need. They have high energy for prayer and prayer becomes a priority in their lives. Where do you fit on the energy continuum? Put a circle around the number that best represents your energy for God.

The second measure is great thoughts of God. When you see God as he is, there will be times you will find yourself thinking or talking about God's majesty, his glory, his righteousness, his holiness, and his purity. These times might come in your private prayer time. They might come during a conversation with a friend. They might come while you sit quietly and appreciate the beauty which God created in nature. They come after you have discovered that you can love God with your mind as well as with your heart. How great are your thoughts when you think about God? Circle the number which fits your thoughts.

The third measure is great boldness for God. If you are clearly seeing God while you live in this fallen world, then you find yourself constantly choosing between what the

world thinks and what God says.

As soon as you get home today, read the eleventh chapter of the book of Hebrews. There you will find a list of people who made bold choices *for* God and *against* the world. People like Able, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Rahab, Gideon, and the early martyrs of the church. If you don't know these people, read the accounts of them in Scripture. It's good to see how bold other people have become when they have a clear view of God.

If you are bold about your convictions, if you aren't controlled by the garbage the sinful world believes, then you can see God as he is. Circle the number on your spiritual eye test that best represents your boldness for God.

The last measure is those who truly see God have great contentment in God. When you see God as he is, you understand that God is all-knowing, all-seeing, all-powerful, and thoroughly good. God is for you. That means that, when trouble comes, you're not all uptight and worried because you know that the same God, who holds you in his hands, can and will handle everything.

That doesn't mean that you won't have ups and downs. That doesn't mean that you'll never experience hurts and sorrows. That doesn't mean you'll be as rich as Bill Gates, the most handsome, the most beautiful, or that you'll live to be 100 without so much as a cold. That means that when trouble finds you, no matter what that trouble might be, you will have the peace that surpasses all understanding. How's your contentment. Circle the number that tells how content you are.

God wants you to move from knowing him dimly to knowing him vividly. God wants the distance between you and him to be transformed into intimacy. You see, God already knows you intimately, but he also wants you to know him intimately. Last week, we talked about how God has revealed himself, so now let's look at how passionate God is about his revelation.

I told you that God reveals himself through nature. If you doubt that for one minute, get up early and watch a sunrise; go to bed late and watch a sunset; watch as winter turns to spring, spring to summer, summer to fall, and fall back to winter; watch a baby being born. Then tell me this is all one big accident. Look at the beauty of nature and think about how lovingly God crafted it for you and me.

I told you that God reveals himself through Scripture. If you've never given any thought to how precisely God guided the writing and protection of his holy Word, think about this. The Bible contains 66 books, 1,189 chapters, 774,746 words, written over 1600 years, by over 40 different men – and there is not one place where the Bible disagrees with itself. That is humanly impossible. God poured his love into the construction and preservation of Scripture for you and me.

But, more than any other way, God reveals himself through Jesus. While he was on earth, Jesus showered his love on both his friends and his enemies. He helped those in

need. He brought the light of God's truth to the spiritually dead. Jesus passionately wept for the city of Jerusalem because he could see the trouble that was to come to them because they rejected God's anointed One, and it broke his heart. Luke records Jesus saying:

If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace – but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you. Luke 19:42-44

Jesus wept because, as God, Jesus loves all of his creation. Jesus wept because the people were so spiritually blind they couldn't recognize God when he stood in their midst. That is the depth of the passion with which God longs for us to see him as he is. Read the Gospels. See for yourself the lengths that Jesus went to, so we might see God.

What would happen in your life if you actually began to believe that the God of all time and eternity wanted you to know him just as he is? I'm not talking about some intellectual knowledge. I'm talking about an internal, emotional "awakening of your soul" that would compel you to do whatever is necessary to see and know God as he truly is.

If you're at the point in your faith walk where you sincerely want to know God as he wants to be known, then the first thing you need is the answer to two very important questions. Since God is infinite, sovereign, eternal, and beyond all human comprehension – "Is it really possible to know God?" And the second question – "What must I do to know God as he is?"

Can we really pull back the curtain and say, "I've seen all of God"? The answer is yes and no. We can truly know God but we cannot know him exhaustively. That's going to require some explanation.

The *no* part of the answer is easy. If you recall the account when Moses ask to see God, you find the answer quite clear. After Moses asked God to show himself, God responded:

I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But, you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live. Ex 33:19-20

So, can you see all of God exhaustively – just as he is? Not if you want to stay on the green side of the topsoil. However, you can see as much of God as he wishes to reveal and that's all any of us can handle. It is possible to receive a genuine knowledge of God. But demanding to see more of God than he chooses to reveal is simply fatal. Remember, we are not like him.

Everything we need to know and everything we can know about God is revealed in Jesus. Much of what Jesus told his disciples on Maundy Thursday, before his crucifixion, deals with how God revealed himself through Jesus. When Philip asked Jesus to show them the Father, Jesus answered, *“Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father”* (John 14:9). So, yes, you *can* know God. Jesus is the fulness of God in human form. Because of who God is, you can never know all of him, but all you need to know of God is in the person of Christ.

Now let’s take up the question of what we have to do to see God as he really is. How much or how well you see God depends on how much you want to put into your relationship with God. The closer you draw to God through worship, Bible study, and prayer the better your vision of God will become. The more you hunger for the Holy Spirit to consume your life, the more your spiritual eyes will become God-sensitive.

To see God as he is, demands a spiritual change. The first part of this change occurs when the Holy Spirit brings faith to our hearts. But we are not just passive participants in the change that is required to truly see God. We have a job. Once we have faith, our job is to seek God. Listen once again as God tells us, through Jeremiah, what he expects of us:

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” Jer 29:11-12

Seeking God is not a spectator sport. It requires every part of your mind, heart, and soul. Every part of your life must say, “Lord, I want to see you. I long to know you.” Jesus said this with these words, *“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives, he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.”* Matt 7:7-8

God promises you will find him if you seek him. He also promises to give you the Spirit you need to give you will and the wisdom to seek him and to recognize him as he reveals himself to you. Are you seeking? Are you asking? Are you knocking? Are you daily praying, “God, I want to know you”?

One of the reasons we don’t know God better is our unwillingness to follow what we already know. God wants us to see him and be transformed. He wants us to know his love, his grace, and his holiness on a deeper level than ever before. The ball is in our court. The next move is ours. We must seek God.

Seeking God may seem like a vague concept, but God has not left us in the dark. Today’s reading from Proverbs can shed some light.

My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for

understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. Prov 2:1-5

Each verse in that reading gives us a component of the process of seeking God.

Verse one: Seeking God is to accept, learn, treasure, and store up his Word.

Verse two: Seeking God involves submission and teachability, a desire to be taught by God.

Verse three: Seeking God requires the development of a passionate prayer life; earnestly asking God for understanding. Spending extended time with God.

Verse four: Seeking God means making your quest a priority in your life. Seeking God in all parts of your life – high points, low points, fun times and mundane times. Seeking God with all the fervor you would use to dig up your back yard if you thought there was a million dollars in gold buried there.

Verse five: This is the component that gives us the motivation that makes seeking God a lifetime experience. When you actively seek God he will respond with knowledge of himself. That taste of who God really is will leave you thirsting for more.

Seeing God as he longs for you to see him, means discovering the true knowledge of God. Did you notice that the Proverbs reading repeatedly says if *you* do these things? No one can seek God for you – not your pastor, your parent, your spouse, your child, your friend. You will discover the truth of God only because you have sought it. I am sure all of the great church fathers of the past would agree that the best way to know God is to know him personally. And the amazing fact is – that is exactly the way God wants you to know him.