

*Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always.*

*(1 Chronicles 16:11)*

There is something about our eyes that is extremely fascinating. I'm not talking about how they function physically, but how in some way they are a window to our soul. Looking into a person's eyes can be a very connecting experience. Even animals seem to know about this. A dog will maintain contact by looking, not just your face, but into your eyes. How does it know to do that?

The eyes contribute greatly to the facial expressions that we use from day to day. We react to such expressions from other people, as when we see someone who looks depressed, and want to help. Cain was the first person mentioned in the Bible whose face was downcast (Genesis 4:5-6). He was upset because his offering had not been accepted by God. We read in Mark 10:22 that when the rich young man learned that he must sell all of his possessions to inherit eternal life, his face fell. Somehow I get the picture of a Daffy Duck cartoon where his bill falls off. That would really be depressing.

Of course, there is a certain glow to a face when things are going great. We want to see people with this radiance. Especially we want God to bless us in this way: "The LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace (Numbers 6:25-26)." A smile from someone can lift our own spirits: "When I smiled at them, they scarcely believed it; the light of my face was precious to them (Job 29:24)."

Disapproval is demonstrated by hiding one's face. "I will hide my face from them," he said, 'and see what their end will be; for they are a perverse generation, children who are unfaithful (Deuteronomy 32:20).'" I have had that experience myself with someone who refused to look at me for years. Then there were those who could not see the face of a ruler until they had proven themselves (e.g., Joseph's brothers, Absalom, Moses). Remember, too, that no one was allowed to see the face of God. But Jacob (Genesis 32:30) and Moses (Exodus 33:11) both claimed a "face to face" experience with God.

There is a great need for people to meet face to face. The telephone and the internet are great tools of communication, but they do not come close to the power of being in someone's actual presence. There is something about meeting someone's eyes that provides additional communication. I think about some of the great stories of the Bible and wonder how those involved felt the "look". Consider Jacob, as he worried about whether his estranged brother Esau would still give him a hateful look. But the meeting turned out well, and Jacob was so glad to see Esau's happy face he said, "... to see your face is like seeing the face of God, now that you have received me favorably (Genesis 33:10)." I get the same feeling especially when my son and I are having a great time and I see his smiling face.

Then think about the woman caught in adultery. I am sure that she didn't want to meet anybody's eyes, and to her probable relief Christ stayed bent down writing in the dirt. But when the accusers had all left, he straightened up and, I am sure, met her gaze. But as Ken Durham has written, "There is something very different in the way this man looks at you. None of that cold, judgmental look you get from the Pharisees; none of that demeaning, lustful look you get from men in the marketplace; not even the vacant, indifferent look most men give you because you are 'only a woman.' No, this man looks at you different - with concern, with compassion, even with pain for your humiliation. His gaze somehow grants you dignity..."

Another example to consider is Peter, who while in his emotionally confused state denied his Christ. After being accused of being with Christ, Peter replied, "'Man, I don't know what you're talking about!' Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times. (Luke 22:60-61)" How would we have dealt with the power of that look? It was a probing look, but a forgiving one.

Finally there is the face of Christ on the cross, as He looked at the people and said, "Father, forgive them, for they know do not know what they are doing (Luke 23:34)." We receive looks of hatred and hostility from those who have not seen the face of Jesus. To comprehend that forgiveness we must seek that face, for when our eyes connect, we will understand. And those who do "will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads (Revelation 22:4)."

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