

“Flourish”: Creating a Culture of Transformation
A Lifestyle of Encounter
3-4-18



Reflection Questions for Personal Use or in a Group Context... (please consider the teaching notes prior to consideration of the reflection questions)

Our Vision...

Woodinville Alliance Church... a community where every person discovers who they really are in Christ, experiences his goodness, and shares this life-changing encounter with their world so that others might value and choose Jesus for themselves.

This new life results in a movement from Self-reliance to God-reliance, Isolation to Belonging, Fear to Trust, Duty to Delight, Insignificance to Purpose, Brokenness to Wholeness.

“God is great, God is good,...” We taught our kids this prayer when they were little. “What are some of the things that you know about God that you think make him great? What causes you to identify him as good?”

“How would you respond to this statement”:

The things that make God great are more observable, but the things that make him good are only realized in relationship with him.

“Could you describe an instance that you would consider an encounter with God? Was there something you discovered to be true of him that he had previously not known? Was there something you discovered to be true of yourself, as a result? Did you feel that the encounter was inviting a specific response?”

“Are there places in your life where it seems that you are striving for the blessing that God has already conferred upon you? How might you better assimilate such truth and find rest?”

“What are you trusting to ensure your security? What does the continued presence of fear/anxiety indicate about the reliability of those things to provide the rest that your heart desires?”

Teaching Notes...

We suggested that within the vision, we discover (4) demonstrations (*gospel-realities*) to be experienced:

IDENTITY—ENCOUNTER—TESTIMONY—NEW LIFE

Identity: I only discover who I am when I know who God is. Any other version of myself, or God, diminishes us both.

All of God's good creation is formed out of the sound of his voice, which means that God gets to define: who we are and why we are. His desires/determinations establishes, for us, an "*authority*"--- meaningful grounds for action.

You can't love a God you don't know.

You'll never know a God you won't seek.

You'll never abandon yourself to a God you don't trust (a God you don't know and love).

From the very beginning, our Story has God acting--- God *interacting*--- not as some cosmic intruder, but as a present and benevolent creator, brooding over his creation, ensuring its purpose and potential.

The writer of Hebrews (1:1-3) tells us that, "*in the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by His Son.*"

Our humanness does not preclude us from experiencing and interacting with God. In fact, it necessitates it. Even the ways in which God introduces himself to Moses put his own personhood on display: "*I AM, THAT I AM...*" Exodus 3:14.

It sounds like an odd way to describe yourself, but at the very least, we would recognize the use of the personal pronoun and the "*being*" verb.

Almost everything we know about God has come to us through another's encounter of him.

Covenant: Abe

Exodus/Law: Moses

Movement into a more promising land: Joshua

Temple: Solomon

Jesus: gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John)

The Father: Jesus

It seemed that each encounter people had with God, there was an awareness of being in the presence of the “other”. They could question it or “*laugh it off*” (Abe and Sarai), but they couldn’t deny it.

The encounter proved to be an expression of God’s self-revealing nature. It wasn’t simply information that they had collected and interpreted subjectively but something of himself, previously unknown, and subject to his own discretion.

The experience anticipated some form of response, so as to signal our understanding and ensure our participation. Sometimes the right response is **confession**: aligning ourselves with a truth that we have experienced. Sometimes the response is **repentance**: a re-thinking of our lives now that I have been made aware of such knowledge. Sometimes perseverance, as the experience reinforces our present course of action.

There is no direct correlation between what we know about God and our ability to live well.

Experience is that interaction with knowledge that allows you to say that you “**know**” it. The experience without the knowing is deceptive and frustrating (e.g. burning bush, promise to Abe, Joseph’s dreams).

It’s the things that you “*know*” which are the things in which you are most confident; what you know has become part of your experience. This is the knowledge out of which we actually live.

If you have no inner-experience of God’s work in your life, you will substitute the law for the life-giving Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:6). Outside of my own inner-experience of forgiveness, I’ll ask the question, “*How many times do I have to forgive?*” (Matthew 18:21) And, I’ll be really impressed with what I conclude to be a generous expression which goes beyond the minimum daily requirements of the Law.

I am not simply attempting to experience more of God but creating an atmosphere in which he is able to experience more of me.

I simply desire to increase my awareness, my responsiveness, and enjoyment of him--- and his enjoyment of me.

Sometimes language frustrates us. Our attempts at getting “closer to God”, conjures images of lack of proximity that must be negotiated.

The things that make God great are more observable, but the things that make him good are only realized in relationship with him.

When we say that “God is good”, that is usually a declaration of faith, rather than an assessment based on our current life-circumstances.

“I will make all of my goodness pass before you and I will call out my name before you.”
Exodus 33:14

“What is good? What does it mean to call God, good?”

“good” (Hebrew): *right, kind, ethical, beneficial, favorable, genuine, serves as the standard by which other claims might be assessed.*

We return to the idea of “blessing” which is the framework for all of life. It is the life of God flowing tangibly in and through his people.

Literally, it is from a compound word: *“the good that someone has decreed; to cause to flourish”* **and** *“the divine plan or reason”*.

Based on their own experience of God, the Jewish people maintained (2) key convictions that solidified their idea of “goodness”:

God is “free” (sovereign): all his movements are self-initiated. He is peerless; unique; unrivaled; in a class by himself--- “holy”.

God is “faithful” (trustworthy): we come to trust his goodness as we rehearse his historic interactions with humanity, expressed most fully in “covenant” [Psalm 100:5; 1 Chronicles 16:34] Covenant says, *“I choose you. I am stubbornly committed to you and I will not be content until you learn to live “rest-fully” in that love.”*

“What qualities of life characterize one who is perpetually encountering/experiencing God’s goodness for themselves?”

You are impressionable.

God gets ‘naming rights’. A healthy, *“Who am I?”*, makes room to hear, *“You will no longer be...”*

Because you have been so lavishly loved (1 John 3:1), you need no longer wrestle for/strive to experience the goodness that is already yours (e.g. Jacob in Genesis 32: he was already blessed, already loved, already identified as belonging to God, yet he became subject to other pursuits, other labels (deceiver), other sources of making life work.)

You are moving from “fear” to “trust”.

In the absence of a good God--- one who can be trusted--- we will always default to control. Control always produces insecurity and fear. I’m left with my own self-imposed strategies and tactics for ensuring that life remains within my grasp.

Because God has so consistently demonstrated his commitment to us, we can consent to both our failures and to love. We understand that grace is never meant to provide a safe-haven for our continued dysfunctionality, but to serve as the impetus for transformation.

You are wonderfully “self-aware”.

You realize how susceptible you are; how vulnerable you are (Psalm 51 “*My sins are always before me...*”). Such a posture actually becomes a strength, not an indication of weakness.

Your honest self-evaluation prevents you from presuming the worst about another. You are “spacious”. You are willing to let yourself out and let others in, therefore, your relationships have depth to them.

You are less controlled by others.

You get let others “go first” (Philippians 2). You are able to celebrate the success of others without fear of losing your place. You are able to receive affirmation and praise without it *puffing you up* and you are able to receive criticism without it *tearing you down*.

You are free to choose and your choices are freeing.

“Everything is permissible for me, but not everything is beneficial” (1 Corinthians 10:23).

There was a sense in which the Law was not really binding upon them because of the way it had been so beautifully and flawlessly brought to completion in Jesus.

The issue is not so much, “What am I allowed to do”, but “What really benefits me (and others)?”.