

“The heavens progressively open to us as our character and understanding are increasingly attuned to the realities of God’s rule from the heavens.”

Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, p. 77

Seeing God

It can be tempting to think of God as distant and unknowable. But the truth is that he is “not far from each one of us.” Learning to see him, though, is a process of growing intimacy with him.

Scripture:

Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, “Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, ‘To an unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For ‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we too are his offspring.’ Acts 17:22-28

Voice of wisdom:

“No doubt God wants us to see him. That is a part of his nature as outpouring love. Love always wants to be known. Thus he seeks for those who could safely and rightly worship him. God wants to be present to our minds with all the force of objects given clearly to ordinary perception....

“Seeing is no simple thing, of course. Often a great deal of knowledge, experience, imagination, patience, and receptivity are required. Some people, it seems are never able to see bacteria or cell structure through the microscope. But seeing is all the more difficult in spiritual things, where the objects, unlike bacteria or cells, *must be willing to be seen*.

“Persons rarely become present where they are not heartily wanted. Certainly that is true for you and me. We prefer to be wanted, warmly wanted, before we reveal our souls - or even come to a party. The ability to see and the practice of seeing God and God’s world comes through a process of seeking and growing in intimacy with him.

“But as we can expect to make progress in the seeing of any subject matter, so also it is with God. Toward the end of his life Brother Lawrence remarked, ‘I must, in a little time, go to God. What comforts me in this life is that I now see Him by faith; and I see Him in such a manner as might make me say sometimes, *I believe no more, but I see.*’ (From *The Practice of the Presence of God*). The heavens progressively open to us as our character and understanding are increasingly attuned to the realities of God’s rule from the heavens.”

(Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, p. 76-77)

Study 10

Contemplation:

What key words and ideas stand out to you? How do they help you take a deeper look at yourself as someone who is “not far” from God?

How “attuned to the realities of God’s rule from the heavens” would you say you are? How can you progress in this journey of intimacy with God, becoming more aware of God’s love in your character and your understanding?

Practices:

Write down one or two of the key phrases that are important to you. Hold them (literally) before God and wait silently on him. Record any further thoughts he may give you.

Dallas Willard also says in *The Divine Conspiracy*, p. 77:

“In a beautiful passage Julian of Norwich tells of how once her ‘understanding was let down into the bottom of the sea,’ where she saw ‘green hills and valleys.’ The meaning she derived was this:

If a man or woman were there under the wide waters, if he could see God, as God is continually with man, he would be safe in soul and body, and come to no harm. And furthermore, he would have more consolation and strength than all this world can tell for it is God’s will that we believe that we see him continually, though it seems to us that the sight be only partial; and through this belief he make us always to gain more grace, for God wishes to be seen, and he wishes to be sought, and he wishes to be expected, and he wishes to be trusted (from *Showings*).

Take some time this week to meditate on Julian’s words, listen to what God may be saying to you through them, and pay attention to your response.

©sharonracke These contemplative studies are the result of the thoughtful and transformative teaching I have received both at The Dwelling Place (dwellingplaceindy.org), and as a student of The Renovare Institute (renovare.org). I pray that as you use them, you will experience the presence and love of God, and learn more about living with Christ daily. Sharon Racke (recess.racke@gmail.com)