

I saw the Lord...



In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord,
high and exalted, seated on a throne.

(Isaiah 6:1)

Isaiah saw the Lord and his life was changed – he saw himself as he was, and he offered himself for service.

Moses encountered God in the burning bush and heard his voice – and nothing was the same again, for

Moses or for the people of Israel.

Elijah saw the Lord passing by and heard his still quiet voice – and was re-energised.

Paul encountered the living Lord on the road to Damascus – and what a transformation that brought about!

Some fishermen saw Jesus, heard his voice and dropped everything to follow him.

Countless people throughout the centuries have “seen” God in some way: directly, indirectly, heard his voice or felt the nudge of his Spirit.

When this happens, when human beings encounter the living Lord God Almighty, lives are transformed and history is made. Nothing remains the same.

As we step into a new year, full of uncertainties and unknowns,
what visions of God will drive or motivate us?

What encounters have we had with the Creator and Sustainer of the universe that will so shape our lives that we will step undaunted into the future, recognising that the one certainty we have is that God is with us?

As we pause to reflect this month, you are invited to reflect on how you have ‘seen’ God in the past, how this has shaped your life, and what images of God you carry with you to shape your future.

Link: <https://youtu.be/oZqskO40tjY>

I saw the Lord...

Call to presence

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying.

³ And they were calling to one another:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.”

⁴ At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.
Isaiah 6:1-4



Scripture

Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means “son of Timaeus”), was sitting by the roadside begging.

⁴⁷ When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout,
“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

⁴⁸ Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more,
“Son of David, have mercy on me!”

⁴⁹ Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.”

So they called to the blind man, “Cheer up! On your feet! He’s calling you.”

⁵⁰ Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.

⁵¹ “What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asked him.
The blind man said, “Rabbi, I want to see.”

Mark 10:46-51

Prayer

Open my eyes, Lord
I want to see Jesus
To reach out and touch Him
And say that I love Him
Open my ears, Lord
And help me to listen
Open our eyes, Lord
We want to see Jesus.ⁱ



Song

Open the eyes of my heart, Lord
Open the eyes of my heart
I want to see You
I want to see You [x2]

To see you high and lifted up
Shining in the light of Your glory
Pour out Your power and love
As we sing holy, holy, holy [x2]

Holy, holy, holy
Holy, holy, holy
Holy, holy, holy
I want to see You



Scripture

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord. ³⁰When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him. ³¹But Moses called to them; so Aaron and all the leaders of the community came back to him, and he spoke to them. ³²Afterward all the Israelites came near him, and he gave them all the commands the Lord had given him on Mount Sinai.

³³When Moses finished speaking to them, he put a veil over his face. ³⁴But whenever he entered the Lord's presence to speak with him, he removed the veil until he came out. And when he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, ³⁵they saw that his face was radiant. Then Moses would put the veil back over his face until he went in to speak with the Lord. Exodus 34:29-35

Reflection

How has God revealed himself to you in the past?

How do the images/visions of God you have impact the way you live out your faith?

Where and in what ways do we see God?

In what part of your life do you most need to see Jesus now?

Prayer of Thanksgiving

(Thank God for the ways He has revealed himself to you in the past. Ask Him to open your eyes to what he wants to show you next.)

Scripture

Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.

⁹Fear the Lord, you his holy people, for those who fear him lack nothing.

¹⁰The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.

Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame.

Ps 34:8-10, 5

Song

You are my vision, O king of my heart
Nothing else satisfies, only You, Lord
You are my best thought by day or by night
Waking or sleeping, Your presence, my light

You are my wisdom, You are my true word
I ever with You, and You with me, Lord
You're my great Father, and I'm Your true son
You dwell inside me, together we're one
Oh, oh, oh [x2]

You are my battle-shield, sword for the fight
You are my dignity, You're my delight
You're my soul's shelter and You're my high tower
Come, raise me heavenward, O Power of my power
Oh, oh, oh [x2]

I don't want riches or a man's empty praise
You're my inheritance, now and always
You and You only, the first in my heart
High king of heaven, my treasure You are
Oh, oh, oh [x2]

High king of heaven, when victory's won
May I reach heaven's joy, O bright heaven's Son
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall
Still be my vision, O ruler of all
Oh, oh, oh [x2]

Heart of my own heart, whatever befall
Still be my vision, O ruler of all
Oh, oh, oh [x4]

You Are My Vision Lyrics © Obo Apra/Amcos

Scripture

Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done.

² Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts.

³ Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.

⁴ Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always. Ps 105:1-4

Prayer

Gracious and Holy Father
Give us wisdom to perceive you
Intelligence to understand you
Diligence to see you
Patience to wait for you
Eyes to behold you
A heart to meditate on you
And a life to proclaim you
**Through the power of the
Spirit of Jesus Christ Our Lord.ⁱⁱ
Amen**



Benediction

May the eyes of your heart be open to see the Lord in all the ways he is at work in the world around you.

May you see his grace, love and mercy wherever you are.

May you see his amazing love for you in everything you do.

And in all that lies ahead in this new year, may you always look to the Lord and find your hope in him.ⁱⁱⁱ

“But now, Lord, what do I look for?

My hope is in you.

Ps 39:7

(For further reflection on this theme, there is a guided meditation below.)

Guided Meditation

One way to more deeply allow the truth of Scripture to impact our lives is to meditate on it. And one effective way of meditating on Scripture is to use our imagination to place ourselves at the scene and really put ourselves into another person's situation. We often receive new insights and experience a fresh encounter with the living God in this way.

One person who saw Jesus, recognised who he was, and whose life was transformed because of it was the woman who met Jesus at the well. If you would like to more fully explore this encounter, using all your senses, I invite you to sit back and close your eyes for a moment. You can read the story yourself (from John 4) or read the following narrative based on the Biblical encounter.

Take a few slow, deep breaths, and imagine it is a hot, dusty afternoon, just outside a Samaritan town. Imagine what you might be experiencing: the sun on your face, dust on your feet and perhaps the taste of it in your mouth. It is quiet – this is the hottest part of the day and there is no-one around. The air is still and heavy. Your mouth feels dry and you are longing for a cool clear drink of water. There is a deep well nearby. Can you smell or feel the coolness of the water? Place yourself at the scene and focus on what you see, hear and feel as the scene unfolds. Where do you place yourself in the story: are you a silent observer, standing on the side-lines, or are you one of the speakers in the conversation? Find your place as the story unfolds...

A man, Jesus, arrives, and tired as he is from the journey, he sits down by the well. It is about noon.

A Samaritan woman comes to draw water.

(What do you notice? Where/who are you in the story? Can you see where the characters are in relationship to each other? Allow yourself to feel and respond as though you truly were part of this encounter.)

Jesus says to her, "Will you give me a drink?" He is alone.

(If you are the woman, how do you respond? What do you feel about being addressed by an obviously Jewish man? Look around you – what do you see?)

The Samaritan woman says, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

Jesus answers her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

"Sir," the woman says, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?"

(As the dialogue unfolds, keep in character. Are you puzzled? Confused? Do you feel you are in control of the conversation? Are you standing or sitting? What is it like to be there having this conversation? Pause any time you feel you need to put yourself more fully into the scene. Focus on your breathing and what it feels like to be there, on a hot, dusty afternoon, near the well.)

Jesus answers, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

The woman says to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”

He tells her, “Go, call your husband and come back.”

“I have no husband,” she replies.

Jesus says to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.”

(What are you thinking and feeling at this stage? If you are the woman, this man has said some strange things to you. What thoughts might be running through your mind?)

“Sir,” the woman says, “I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”

“Woman,” Jesus replies, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”

(This conversation is going much deeper than you expected. What is it like for you? Are you feeling uncomfortable? Eager? Confused? Irritated? Is this strange, or does it all make sense?)

The woman says, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”

Then Jesus declares, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he.”

(What do you feel, notice, recognise at this moment? How do you respond?)

Just then his disciples return and are surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asks, “What do you want?” or “Why are you talking with her?”

Then, leaving her water jar, the woman goes back to the town and says to the people, “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?”

(How does this happen? Is the woman running? Walking slowly? What are you feeling? How would you like to respond?)

Take a few deep breaths and come back to the present.

Reflect on these questions:

- What did you notice in that encounter that you have never noticed before?
- If you were the woman, what were some of the significant moments in the conversation for you?
- If you were Jesus, or an observer, what did you notice? What did you notice about the woman?
- How did you feel as the conversation came to an end?
- How will this encounter change your life?

Speak to God in prayer about your experience.

GOING DEEPER

Here are some suggestions that may help you to engage more deeply with this theme.

- **The Bible** records many times when people ‘saw’ God in some way. There are visions in both Old and New Testaments that reveal something about God – often something new and powerful. Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Paul and John are some of those who saw God in rather spectacular ways. There are countless other people who simply saw Jesus and recognised who He was. Think of a Bible passage that records someone’s experience of seeing God. Spend some time reading it through and thinking about how God might be revealing himself in it – and how he might be revealing himself to you right now (eg. 1 Kings 19; Moses and the burning bush, Ezekiel’s visions, Paul on the Damascus road, etc).
- **Reflect** on how God has revealed himself to you in the past. What did you learn about God from this experience and how has that impacted your relationship with him?
- You could use one of the Bible passages or one of the songs provided in the material to practise **Lectio Divina**. (see page 8)
- **Visualise Scripture!** Choose a Bible passage that describes someone seeing God, either in a supernatural or incarnational way. Read it through slowly – all of it or some selected verses. Close your eyes and picture what is being described. What do you see, smell, hear? How is God revealing himself to you through this? You could either record this experience in your journal or share it with someone.
- If you enjoy being **creative**, reflect on a time when you have ‘seen’ God in a new way and find a way to express that creatively. You can create a collage of different images you have of God, or draw, paint, use clay, write a poem or compose a song. Think about what how he has shown himself to you and be creative.
- Go for a **walk**. What do you notice as you walk? Where do you seem some revelation of God’s character or being? Use your mobile phone/device to take a photo and reflect on why that image conveys something of God to you. You might want to write your own psalm to go with it.
- **Remember** a time when Jesus may have revealed himself to you in a particular way, eg, as light, vine, etc. Relive that experience and take note of what it was like and how you responded to His presence. What does this tell you about him? What does it tell you about yourself?
- If you are **sharing** this retreat day with someone else, spend some time sharing your experiences. Pray together.
- If you like to **journal**, make a note of what you have experienced during this retreat time in your journal. A simple way to do this is to:

Thank God for Who He is and what He is doing in your life

Notice what is happening around you and in you

Respond to what God has shown you, by thanking Him, repenting, or recommitting yourself to Him

- **Simply sit in His presence.** We don’t have to do anything to enjoy being in His presence! We are in His will when we are fully and completely in His presence, with our hearts focussed on Him.

EVEN DEEPER

LECTIO DIVINA

Lectio Divina is an ancient spiritual practice from the Christian monastic tradition. Its title derives from the Latin words meaning reading and divine/holy. In Lectio Divina, we seek to experience the presence of God through reading and listening, meditation, prayer, and contemplation. Lectio Divina can be practiced both by individuals and in groups.

Practicing Lectio Divina Individually

1. Text

Begin by choosing a section of Scripture that you would like to read and pray. You can choose the text randomly or use a liturgical book, such as The Book of Common Prayer. Try not to set a goal for how much content you will cover; the goal is to listen for God and to experience his presence.

2. Preparation

Do what you must to quiet and prepare yourself to hear from God. If you need to find a quiet room, sit in silence for several minutes, or sit in a comfortable chair, take whatever posture will help you prepare to receive and experience God's presence.

3. Reading/Listening

When you sense that your heart is prepared, begin by slowly reading the passage of Scripture that you have selected. Move slowly through sentences and phrases. As you read, pay attention to what word, phrase, or idea catches your attention.

4. Meditation

Begin to meditate on the word, phrase, or idea that has captured your attention. Repeat it again and again.

Consider:

What thoughts come to mind as you meditate on this word, phrase, or idea?

What are you reminded of in your life?

What does it make you hope for?

Meditation is no easy task—as you try to concentrate don't be disappointed if random thoughts enter your head. As they do, offer them to God.

5. Prayer

Now begin to speak to God. Tell God what word, phrase, or idea captured your attention and what came to mind as you meditated upon it. How is God using this word, phrase, or idea to bless and transform you? Tell God what you have been thinking and feeling as you've listened and meditated. Tell God how you hope this word, phrase, or idea will change your heart to be more like His.

6. Contemplation

Finish by focusing your attention on the fact that God's presence is with you. If as you try to focus on God's presence you sense a need to read the text again, to continue meditating, or to simply continue talking with God, allow yourself to do so. As you do, know that you are in the presence of God.

THE PRAYER OF EXAMEN - Finding the movement of the Spirit in our daily lives as we review our day.

This is something that can be done throughout the day or at the end of the day. It helps us to become more aware of and focused on the presence of God in the midst of everyday life.

1. Recognize the presence of God

Be still and know that you are with God.

2. Look at your day with gratitude

Acknowledge God in the big and small things of life.

3. Review your day

When or where in the past 24 hours did you feel you were cooperating most fully with God's action in your life? When were you resisting?

Ask yourself

- What habits and life patterns do I notice?
- When did I feel most alive? Most drained of life?
- When did I have the greatest sense of belonging? When did I feel most alone?
- When did I give love? Where did I receive love?
- When did I feel most fully myself? Least myself?
- When did I feel most whole? Most fragmented?

4. Reconcile and Resolve

- Seek forgiveness
- Ask for direction
- Share a concern
- Express gratitude
- Resolve to move forward

Mars Hill Bible Church marshill.org/teaching/sp

SONGS:

Open the Eyes of My Heart: Paul Joseph Baloche © Capitol Christian Music Group

You are My Vision: Rend Collective © Obo Apra/Amcos

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ⁱ Unknown

ⁱⁱ St Benedict (c.480-c.547)

ⁱⁱⁱ J. Brown