

Alive to God III: SONSHIP: SEEING MYSELF AS GOD SEES ME

By Lisa Sharafinski

Mother of God Prayer Meeting
May 26, 2002

Review

The last couple of prayer meeting talks have been about being alive to God. About six weeks ago we heard a talk on seeing God as he really is. Our current picture of God may be faulty, as it reflects aspects of our encounter with imperfect parents and authority figures in our lives. A month ago we received a teaching on hearing God. He wants to speak to us often each day. Not just to other holier or more important people but to me, each day, a lot. My job is to expect him to speak to me and to listen. Tonight we will build on these teachings by asking: What does the true God say to me about who I am?

Seeing Myself as God Sees Me

For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. (Rom 8:15-16)

But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave but a son: and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir. (Gal 4:4-7)

The Spirit always affirms our sonship. The Spirit never prompts fears, distance or indifference. If you are living with these there is good news for you! God has chosen and predestined us to be his sons and daughters! The Holy Spirit always speaks to us about sonship, but do we hear his voice?

Our goal is to hear God's voice speaking to us about who we really are. But there are other voices, the world and the self have a lot to say about who we are. For example, the world says, "you are a good sales person" - very success-oriented. Since my sister was the organized, dependable one, I got labeled as the one who didn't do any work. My own voice says I am a homemaker, etc... - very task-oriented. These are horizontal perspectives. I'm too busy making (or keeping) a name for myself, or doing my daily chores, to hear God's voice.

But we are not just creatures who work, play, age and die here on earth, we are children, offspring of God. There must be a vertical emphasis to our lives. We must be looking up, listening to God, tuning in the Spirit and tuning out the other voices.

Our Distorted Identity

Perhaps we don't often look vertically because of low expectations. As Christians we often embrace redemption but not sonship. His original intention for humanity was always

intimate sonship (Gal 4:4-7), not merely redemption (since he never intended for us to fall into sin).

Jesus knew this. Upon rising from the dead he didn't say "OK, you knuckleheads, you're off the hook! I've redeemed you." Yes, we are wonderfully, mercifully redeemed but he wants more for us. He wants us to share in his sonship! The first thing he said out of the tomb was "go tell them I am returning to my Father and your Father, my God and your God" (Jn 20:17). "The Father himself loves you because you have loved me and believed that I came from God" (John 16:27). This is a joy to him, he is not jealous or competitive like the older son.

Satan wants to destroy our destiny which is to live eternally with God as his children (John 14:2). If he can keep us from hearing God's voice then we might eventually, slowly turn away from God.

He does this by speaking lies into our identity. Examples: God is distant, God is critical, God is disappointed in me, I'm not good enough, not smart enough, I don't deserve God's love. I'm too busy, I'd never do anything immoral, I'm OK on my own, I know how to turn to God when I need to.

Even as Christians we can be like Gulliver, tied down by many little ropes and a few big ones. God wants to reveal those lies and break their power in our lives, restoring our destiny, our freedom and speaking truth into our identity.

Sonship

We often draw conclusions about ourselves based on what others think or say about us. Jesus did not do this. John 2:24 says, "But Jesus would not entrust himself to them (those who marveled at his miracles)." Jesus knew who he was based on what he heard from the Father. "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased" (Mt. 3:17).

In the parable of the temple tax Jesus leads Peter to see that we are not just subjects of the King, but sons (Mt 17:26). We are not subjects or even just friends, but really children of God. This is not just a kind compassionate attitude on God's part but a real communion. (Example of Katherine in emergency room vs. kid in the next bed.) There is something of God himself in us who believe which is not in the next guy. We are his offspring. We have received into our spirits the Spirit of sonship. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit. The Spirit does not lie, God doesn't just treat us like children, we are children of God.

Sonship is the nature of the relationship that exists between the Father and his beloved Son, Jesus. The Holy Spirit becomes in us the Spirit of sonship. He removes our fear and causes us to cry out to God as our "Daddy." What do I believe about God or about me that keeps me from calling out to God as daddy? Why are we not comfortable with it? Do you believe that God is crazy about you? He has your picture in his wallet. Do you believe that God celebrates your birthday? That he wants to play with you? These questions identify a certain discomfort we have about intimacy with God.

Each one of us is created for love. I love my two children not for what they do or how they behave but for who they are. It's like I took a love potion and I am enamored with them. Yes, they can be willful or disrespectful and need discipline but that doesn't change my love

for them. In them I see a masterpiece (even though they have imperfections that need my attention).

Rom 8:17, Gal 4:7 - Sonship is about our inheritance in Christ. We are co-heirs with Christ. God the Father invites us to sit at his right hand with Jesus. Because we have humbled ourselves, confessed our sin, and believe in Jesus, we have full rights to every spiritual blessing in heaven. When Jesus said in the parable, "the host will say, Come up to a higher place" (Lk 14:10), this is what he was ultimately talking about! In God's eyes the only difference between Jesus and us is that Jesus is begotten but we are adopted.

Knowing our Sonship

In order for us to know our identity as a beloved child of God we will need to allow God to meet us in our pain, our sin and our unmet longing.

Example:

- pain - abandonment and neglect by my father and by MOG leaders/members,
- sin - anger and resentment because of unjust way I was treated.
- unmet longing - the way I limp around not expecting much from God or others in the areas of faithfulness, protection or provision.

My practice is to look at my sin and to repent. This is good but it would only take me so far. What the Keys of Transformation workshop taught me is that I need to also look at the root, the wound to which my sin was a reaction.

Seeing our pain, sin, and God's love for us as his children will occur in different ways and in different order repeatedly as we grow in sonship. Example: my Father's leaving the family has come up before and I have been healed but it's like an iceberg, deal with the tip and then the next portion rises to the surface.

We must be willing to see whatever God wants to show us even when it is difficult. We can look pretty good in the mirror because our eyes have adapted to what we see, but then scale tells us the truth. Our vision can be distorted. If I say I'm OK, then I don't have to deal with the pain. Many of us have become numb to the pain, like someone who has grown up in a war zone. "Everything is fine, normal," even though there are bombs going off around us.

When we are insecure, hurt, offended, hopeless, in sin, do we know that it is our right to run to our Father God or do we run away? Do we run away from love to some other comfort or place of refuge (sleep, food, radio/TV, people, phone, activities, sarcasm, cynicism, indecision)? Our sinful nature insists we find comfort somewhere other than in God.

It is the Holy Spirit who will leads us in knowing who we are as God's beloved children. We can only approach sonship and removal of the obstacles that tie us down, in a spirit of surrender to the Holy Spirit. We cannot work this up.

Listening to God

God wants us to know his thoughts, how vast they are and how precious they are. Lets ask:

- How can I use my imagination or my intuition to hear from God?
- Do I believe that his intention is to speak to me through every moment of every day, through people or scripture or nature?
- Do I believe God wants to pour out blessings on me in a river, or only in a trickle?

The Father delights in us and will speak to us even now if we ask him to. "Father speak to us now, send your Holy Spirit into our hearts to remove fear of intimacy with you and bring us into the truth of our identity as your beloved children."

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. How has the voice of the Lord helped form my understanding of who I am? What other voices (world, self, etc...) have contributed to my image of myself?
2. What do I believe about God or about me that keeps me from calling out to God as "daddy"?
3. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you identify any pain, sin, or unmet longing that may be obstructing your experience of sonship. (You may want to consider prayer ministry to address these areas.)
4. Concentrate this week on knowing the thoughts of God. What is he thinking about me right now? About my family? About the community? The Church? The world?