

Seeking God's Face

Psalm 27:8

PREPARED BY
KEN GEHRELS
PASTOR
CALVIN CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH OF OTTAWA
ONTARIO, CANADA

Do you enjoy email? Find yourself checking it regularly? Perhaps even becoming a bit enslaved by it? Using it as your most regular means of connecting with people?

Here's my thought for the day, wisdom for a new week - email sucks.
You heard it first here!

Oh, it has a place, I suppose.

You can make use of it to transfer information such as meeting agendas and minutes, data files, newsletters and the like. You can coordinate your calendar with someone, or drop them a message that is not terribly time sensitive.

In these sorts of ways it has a place.

But beyond that, I stand by that bit of wisdom for the week.

If you find yourself in a position of conflict with another person, don't try to solve it via email.

If you're in a policy debate - well, the best way to get yourself all tangled up or misunderstood is by using email.

If you wish to communicate a message of intimacy and care for someone, buy flowers. And deliver them yourself. Don't use email.

It is a limited means of communication, email is, on a whole BUNCH of levels. Misses the sense of live give and take. Misses out on all the stuff of tone and inflection. No sense of speed of talking.

And email misses out on body language. ESPECIALLY the body language, the signals, that are emitted from a person's face.

One of the strongest ways that a person communicates is with their face. Not by the movement of the mouth and the words that come out - those words account for perhaps 5-10% of all communication information.

But with the position of the face, the movement of the face, the look of the face.

The face is, you might say, a window into the soul of a human being.

Need to really connect with someone?

You speak to them....

how?

Face to face.

And so, a bunch of entrepreneurs, wanting to build a corner in cyberspace for people to digitally connect, developed a web site called....

Facebook - surveys suggesting that among college students it is the most "IN" thing, along with the ipod and beer.

The face -

It's where we find confrontation.

It's also where we find acceptance, and love.

It's where we can find tenderness.

And where we can give it.

After all - what is a kiss, but a touch from the face of a person; two people, face to face, in contact.

Really, think about it - what an odd thing a kiss is. I remember a Star Trek episode where Dr. Spock, the emotionless Vulcan, learns how to kiss. He is, at first, perplexed. It seems so illogical for two people to bring their faces together in this odd touch. And yet, towards the end, even **HE** manages to catch on!

The face vs email – the face wins, hands down, every time. Quite frankly, it wins over just about every other form of communication. Or any other way of getting to know what's really going on inside another person. See their face, and you see that they **ARE** a person.

Think of that when you read Psalm 27.

It is one of my favourite Psalms. Perhaps THE favourite.

You can find **SO** much in this short, but rich passage of God's Word.

It speaks of strength and confidence.

It speaks of security.

It depicts a longing to be in God's temple.

It describes a longing to know more about God, to see Him.

It conveys an attitude of sacrifice.

God's leading, and walking in his path.

Safety from enemies.

The goodness of the Lord.

Life.

God's strength.

It's all there in this wonderful Psalm.

And then - notice.

Right in the middle of the Psalm.

Notice verses 8 and 9 -

"Come," my heart says, "seek his face!"

Your face, Lord, do I seek.

Do not hide your face from me.

Seeking the face of God.

Looking into the face of God.

Right there - right in the middle of the Psalm, right at the pivot point.

Here's a hint for reading the Psalms.

Very often the key point is placed right at the middle -

sort of like the apex of a pyramid.

right in the middle of the Psalm is where you find the highest point.

The face of God - found here in the middle of this Psalm.

Like the axis of a wheel - everything else revolves around it.

There's lots of very valid stuff about the life of faith found here in this Psalm.

Serving.

Trusting.

Knowing.

Doing.

Lots of stuff.

Right at the middle of all that stuff,

is

the face of God.

David seeks the face of God.

Not literally, of course.

The bible is very clear that we cannot actually see God's face.

For one thing, because he is spirit.

God himself tells probably the greatest man of faith, Moses, that no one can see his face and live (Exodus 33:20).

To try and depict the face of God is forbidden in the 10 commandments. Why?

Because we'll always come up short. Or get it wrong.

David seeks the face of God.

Meaning, he seeks to know God's inner self.

He is not satisfied with knowing that there *is* a God.
He doesn't want to only know a series of facts *about* this God.
What God is like - His being, his attributes.
The story of God's working in history.
He can't find fullness simply in *doing* what this God commands.

For there is more.
There is a deeper level of knowing God.
There is the personal level.
David wants to connect with God on a very personal level. Intimately. Deeply.
Hence the picture language use of
FACE.

Abraham Kuyper puts it this way,
"The main thing is that we no longer satisfy ourselves with a conception of God, a scientific knowledge of God, or a speaking about God, but that we have come in touch with God himself; that we have met Him, that in and by our way through life He has discovered us to ourselves, and that personal relation has sprung up between the Living God and our soul."
[Near Unto God, 1925 edition, p.74]

The bible, says Kuyper, speaks of that deep relationship with God in different terms:

secret walk with God
dwelling in His Tabernacle
walking with God.

And yet, the most frequently used term to express this deeper, or - as Kuyper calls it, the **HIGHER** knowledge of God - is,
"the face of God." (p.75)

We can perceive God at a distance.
We can go to church or bible study or christian school and hear all about God.
We can even be aware of the presence of God, that it is real, and that it is present around us,
We can do all that **without**
having approached Him ourselves,
and placed ourselves openly before Him,
so that he looks at us, and we at him. (p.75)

There comes that moment in the life of every child of God where they realize that the only time and place of full rest is in standing before God, alone and personally, placing everything that we are and have out in the open, and realizing that God is looking deep into our soul.

It is not a place in our life that we can manipulate.

We don't control it.

We let down our guard.

We put aside our preconceptions, our doubts.

We surrender to God's Spirit, the Spirit of Grace, the Spirit sent by Jesus at Pentecost, the Spirit who brings the knocking Jesus to the door of our soul:

Look! (says the Living Jesus) I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends... (Rev 3:20).

We let Him in.

It is a space of deep intimacy.

You don't find it in only a moment given here or there for a quick prayer.

You can't realize it when your lifestyle is out of sync with God's Word.

You will not encounter it when living in anger, distance or division from your brothers and sisters in Jesus.

For there the Spirit of the Lord cannot flow out in blessing, like the oil of Psalm 133 poured out in blessing on the priest Aaron.

The space of surrender.

Personal space.

Relationship space.

Face space.

It's right at the centre of the life of faith.

The centre of peace.

Everything else extends out from it.

Revolves around it.

Is connected to it.

Face space - with God.

There's a deep mystery about it.

And yet also something profoundly simple.

Inviting God to enter into your deep, inner, spiritual self.

And trusting that He will.

Elders, deacons - some of you have just been ordained. Others of you have been walking the road of ordained leadership in this church for a year or more. Perhaps your first time. Perhaps you've been in office a bunch of times.

You are called, in the name of Jesus, to provide leadership to this congregation.

And we, as the people of God, are called to follow and support you and work with you in His name and through His love.

We have pledged that we will.

As leaders you will be called to coordinate and supervise the prayer ministries of this congregation. It is your responsibility to see that Biblically-authentic worship services are held each week. You call us into times of Christian learning. You bring us together in times of fellowship. You lead us out into the community with Christ-like service.

There are, really, two dimensions to the life of faith that you help us live.

The vertical.

And the horizontal.

Our walk with God.

And our walk with our neighbour.

At the centre of both is the face to face connection with Jesus Christ.

The openness of our spirit to His mysterious Spiritual presence.

Seeking always for more of it.

Dropping our guard.

No preconditions.

As we begin to explore that part of faith, the vertical and the horizontal will join in proper balance. They will remain connected.

As we try to live either or both of them without having that personal face-to-face connection with our Lord, they will be disconnected. Our minds may go one way, and our hands another. We'll find our spirits becoming restless and hungry. And the Christian faith, and the life of this Church, cannot be sustained.

Elders and deacons - in our ministries and in our pastoral care, call us to seek the face of God.

And, before you take one step out into office -

Come, seek his face.

Your face, Lord, do I seek.

Do not hide your face from me.

Let that be your prayer.

Let that be the central desire of your Christian life.

Let that dominate and guide every meeting you hold, every visit you make, every program you guide.

Make space for that.

Make time for that.

Pray for that.

And -

- please -

- call us to the same.