

God gives us a new clarity when we come to Him. We begin to see life a whole lot better. We see ourselves. We see our problems. We see our past, our present, our future. Everything gets a little clearer the closer you get to God.

This morning I want to talk about seeing ourselves through God's Eyes or seeing life from God's point of view.

In Matthew 6:22 the (Message) Bible says this

"Your eyes are windows into your body. If you open your eyes wide in wonder and belief, your body fills up with light."

God is not talking about physical eyes and physical light. He's talking about spiritual insight. He's talking about seeing in a new way spiritually. The Apostle Paul calls it seeing with the eyes of your heart. Seeing from God's perspective. Paul prays this prayer for us in Ephesians "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened [This is where the song "Open the Eyes of My Heart" comes from.] so that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints and His incomparable great power for us who believe."

This morning as we talk about seeing from God's point of view we're going to look at seeing yourself as God sees you. That's so important because the Bible says, "As a man thinks in his heart so is he."

(Proverbs 23:7) If you see yourself as a loser you're going to lose a lot in life. If you see yourself as a victim, you're going to let other people victimize during your life. If you see yourself as not too creative, you'll never create anything. If you see yourself as a failure in life, you're going to fail often. What you see is what you get.

The Bible says our beliefs determine our behavior.

Jesus says in Matthew 12:35, "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things."

The way we think determines the way we act. And what we see comes out in our lifestyle. Our beliefs determine our behavior. The problem is a lot of stuff you believe is just false. It's just not true. Often we're acting on false or inaccurate information about ourselves.

Do you remember growing up and going to the fair and in the funhouse, they have these crazy wavy mirrors? When you look at those funhouse mirrors as you look at the image of yourself, is the image clear or distorted? It's distorted because it's not a perfect mirror, it's an imperfect mirror.

When you were growing up the adults around you were the mirrors of your life. They reflected you how you began to see yourself. The problem is there are no perfect adults so as a result all the images that you got of yourself, even from people who loved you, were distorted. We all grow up with an inaccurate picture of ourselves because some adult tells you something as a kid and you think, "This is an adult, he/she must know." And you tend to believe it whether it was right or wrong, said in anger, said in jest, or said in hurtfulness. You internalized that and put it in your memory bank and you've operated on that false information for years and years. It's not true or accurate but we've allowed it to shape who we believe we are.

We have to start seeing from God's point of view. We have to look with God's binoculars because we all grow up with these distorted images that we get from our parents, our teachers, from other people, and our problems. Some of you can remember things that were said to you twenty or thirty years ago. "You're never going to amount to anything..." and you just filed that. You've been acting on that information for a long, long time.

Everybody has wounds. Everybody has emotional scars. Everybody in this room. So how do you get rid of them? How do you deal with the past?

The antidote is to learn to see your life, learn to see yourself, from God's point of view.

The truth in this message is one of the most important truths you can learn in your entire life. If you grasp what it means to see yourself as God sees you, it will change your life. Jesus said, "You know the truth and the truth will set you free." (John 8:32). So when we learn to see ourselves the way God sees us it makes all the difference in the world.

Today we're going to look at God's view of you. Five things that God says about you because of His grace. If you have accepted Jesus Christ into your life, you've accepted His grace. God says I see you very, very differently than the way you see yourself and that's our prayer, Lord, that today we'll not only see You but that we'll begin to see ourselves through Your eyes.

So, how does God view you? Because of His Grace . . .

1. God says I see you as acceptable.

Titus 3:7 (CFV) says this

"Jesus treated us much better than we deserve. He made us acceptable to God and He gave us the hope of eternal life."

One of the most hurtful things in life is rejection. When you're rejected by a parent, a spouse, a boyfriend, a girlfriend, a teacher when you're rejected nothing hurts you more. So as a result we spend most of our lives doing everything we can to avoid rejection. We want acceptance more than anything else in life. We want acceptance from our parents. We want acceptance from our peers. We want acceptance from our neighbors. We want acceptance from people we respect, people we envy. Sometimes we even want acceptance from people we don't even like! We buy things we don't need with money we don't have to impress people we don't even know. Why? Because this need to be accepted is so profound it drives almost everything in your life. It drives the kind of clothes you wear, the kind of car you drive, the kind of house you buy, the career you choose. So many of our decisions in life are based on this desire for approval, the desire to be accepted. To be recognized, to be significant.

People will do the craziest things just to be accepted. Do you remember when you were a kid and somebody would dare you? "I dare you to do ..." and you did it because you wanted to be accepted in the crowd. You wanted to be accepted as cool, like him. 'Steve's a rad dude!' And you wanted everybody to like you so you did some really stupid stuff – just to be accepted.

There's a myth about acceptance and it's this: if I can just get everybody to think I'm perfect they will all accept me. So we put on this mask and we walk around like we've got it all together, that everything's in fine condition and we're balanced, that we are perfect and we think everybody's going to accept us. Three things: One, nobody believes it. Two, you aren't ever going to be perfect.

And three, even if you were they still wouldn't accept you. Because acceptance is not based on how perfect you are. It's based on the other person's maturity and love. The Bible says Jesus was perfect and yet it says He was despised and rejected by men. Even Jesus was not accepted by everybody. And He was perfect. So even if you were perfect and you're never going to be, you would not ever be accepted by everybody. The one minute you get Crowd A happy with you Crowd B gets upset with you. You just can't please everybody.

Even God can't please everybody. Somebody's praying for rain. Somebody else is praying for sunshine. Who's He going to listen to? Only a fool would try to do what even God can't do. But we want to be accepted and we want to be loved, we want people to see our value. God says I settled this a long time ago.

Titus 3:5-7 (LB) "God saved us, not because we were good enough to be saved but because of His kindness and grace by washing away our sins. All because of what Jesus Christ our savior did [not because of what we did but because of what Jesus did] so that He could declare us good in God's eyes."

I don't care what you've done. I don't care how many times you've done it or where you've done it. I don't care how many things you've done wrong in your life if you have invited Jesus Christ in your life God says you are a good person. He says He declares us good in His' eyes. I don't care how much bad you've done in life, if you've accepted the grace of God, God says, "I look at you and I say she's a good person, he's a good person.

He is acceptable to Me." Not because of my merit but because of His grace. You may have accepted God, you may have accepted Christ. But do you realize Christ has accepted you?

Many of you are like me in that even though I have been a Christian for a long time sometimes I forget that God has accepted me. In our minds, we are still trying to earn God's favor. We treat Him like an unpleasable parent. "I'm just never good enough for God. I've got to do more.

I've got to rush more. I've got to hurry more because I'm never good enough." God says, "You are good in My eyes because of Jesus. You are acceptable to Me." God has already accepted you. He won't accept you any more than today or any less than today because it's based on His grace.

You know as a kid you loved to be chosen. It's good to be chosen for an award, to be chosen for recognition.

It's fun to be chosen for a promotion. It's fun to be chosen and singled out. You remember when you'd go out at P.E. or recess and they'd have

two captains choosing teams and they're choosing the people. If you got chosen first you felt really good. And you were praying, "Oh, God, please don't let me be chosen last." Because everybody knows the last person chosen is the dufus. And nobody wants to be the dufus.

You were just going, "Don't let me be chosen last!" because it hurts to be rejected. We all want to be chosen. We all want to be selected. Because it gives you a lot of confidence. Being chosen does a lot for your self-esteem.

Do you know why I have great self-esteem, a lot of confidence? I was chosen by Rebecca Isaac. You may not think that's a big deal but I know I had some tough competition that I beat out.

There were many different guys that I competed with! It's true! And I beat them all out. Rebecca Isaac chose me out of all the men in the universe. I feel good about myself because my wife chose me. It feels good to be chosen.

Look who's chosen you.

1 Peter 2:9 (LB) "You have been chosen by God Himself."

There is no higher authority than that one, folks! God chose you to be His child. to love you. and to live with Him for eternity. Not everybody's going to get to do that. You've been chosen. You've accepted Christ into your heart. You've accepted the grace of God. You have been chosen to spend eternity with God and that's better than anything else in the universe. You talk about something to build your self-esteem!

Some of you grew up with unpleasant parents. No matter what you did you just couldn't get their approval. You just knew it. You saw it in your dad's eyes, your mom's eyes, and by what they said to you. If you got C's on your report card they expected B's. If you got B's they expected A's. No matter how hard you tried you just couldn't do it right. It always just felt like this little bit of shame, this little bit of put down – never measuring up to my mom or dad.

Today, even still, subconsciously you're trying to earn your parents' approval. "I'm going to prove that I'm worth something!" Some of you, your parents are dead and you're still trying to earn their approval subconsciously. You're working hard, you're trying to earn it. It drives you. Do you wonder why you're a workaholic? You're trying to earn that acceptance, that approval.

If you had unpleasable parents (or anyone who you tried to please) growing up, let me tell you two very important truths.

One, if you didn't get their approval growing up you're probably never going to get it. Because it's not about you, it's about them. It's their lack of self-worth that's causing them to not accept you. Hurt people hurt people. So it's not really about you, so if they didn't give you acceptance growing up you're probably not going to get it. You've got to let it go. Just let it go.

The second thing I need to tell you that's even more important is this: You don't need their approval to be happy. You don't need it! You don't need the approval of other people to be happy. There are over seven billion people in the world. Is it ok that some people don't like you? I would think so. Especially if it's their hang-up. It's not about you. So let it

go. Quit trying to live for the approval of somebody who's never going to give it. Start living for God who says, I already accept you.

This should be your attitude: God likes me and I like me. If you don't like me, what's your problem? If God likes me and He knows everything about me – the good, the bad, and the ugly and still likes me then I'm ok. Stop trying to be a people pleaser. Live for the love and approval of God. Psalm 27:10 "Even if my mother and father forsake me the Lord will receive me."

God not only sees you as acceptable,
2. God sees you as valuable.

If you're going to learn to see yourself the way God sees you, you're going to have to see your value. You're not just acceptable. You're worth something. You're worth a lot.

The Bible says this in Luke 12:24 "Look at the birds. They don't need to plant or harvest or put food in barns because God feeds them. And you are far more valuable to Him than any birds."

If God takes care of little-bitty birds He's certainly going to take care of you because you are more valuable.

So let me ask you a question. How much do you think you're worth? I'm not talking about your net worth. I'm talking about your self-worth. Your values have nothing to do with your value, whether you're rich or not. Your net worth and your self-worth are not tied together. If they were you could lose your self-worth in an instant.

What is it that creates value? What makes something valuable?

Two things: one, who owns it? The owner creates value. If somebody's famous and they own something, something very common can be worth a whole lot. You go to these auctions and they offer stuff that celebrities have had and it's worth a lot. Which is more valuable your tennis shoes or Michael Jordan's tennis shoes? No question. Your car or the Queen of England's car? No question. Who owns it determines its value.

I don't know if you saw this a while back. They arrested some journalists who were trying to smuggle out some of Saddam Hussein's art from some of his palaces. Did you see that art? It was the most goofy-looking, stupid stuff... It was like Elvis on velvet, or the dogs playing poker or pool. (If you've got that in your home, I'm sorry!) It was horrible. But it was Saddam's so people thought it had value.

Whatever your value depends on whom you belong to. So who do you belong to?

1 John 4:4 (NIV) says, "You belong to God."

It doesn't get any bigger than that. You belong to God! He made you. He created you. He died for you. He saved you. You belong to God.

Imagine your worth.

A couple of years ago there was a famous Kuwaiti oil sheik whose daughter was kidnapped. He put an announcement over the Internet that said he'd pay any price. She's the daughter of the king.

You are a daughter or son of the King. You are a child of God. And He will pay anything including going to the cross to get you back. Jesus loves you so much that He was willing to die than to live without you."

He not only owns you but the second thing that creates value is...

what is somebody willing to pay for it? How much is your house worth? Probably not what you think. It's worth whatever somebody's willing to pay for it. Let's say I've got a rare baseball card. How much is it worth? It's worth whatever somebody's willing to pay for it. If you've got a piece of art in your house, how much is it worth? Whatever somebody's willing to pay for it.

Look at how much was paid for you.

1 Cor. 7:23 (LB) - "You have been bought and paid for by Christ, [with His life.] so you belong to Him."

The greatest ransom ever paid was for you. God exchanged His own Son for you. Even if you were the only person who ever lived in the world, Jesus Christ still would have come to the earth and died for you. That's how much value He considers you to be. Jesus did not die for junk. And you are not junk. God says you are acceptable and you are valuable. The cross proves your value. The people, who told you growing up that you're worthless, were liars. They were wrong. You are of great value. If God says you're of value it doesn't matter what anybody else has said to you.

In Isaiah 43:4 God says "You are precious to Me."

God says in His eyes you are valuable and you are acceptable and...

3. You are lovable.

God sees me not just as acceptable and valuable but lovable. With deep, deep love. The most famous verse in the Bible talks about this. John 3:16 "For God so loved the world He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."

God so loved the world – it doesn't say, God so loved beautiful people. God so loved intelligent people. It doesn't say, God so loved cool people. It doesn't say, God so loved religious people. It doesn't say, God so loved people who are perfect – because there aren't any. It says, God so loved the world. That means me, you, and everybody that the world considers unlovable. God so loved the world – everybody in it because He made them all. God sent His son Jesus to die for you so He didn't have to live without you. That's the kind of love God has for you.

God says in Isaiah 54:10 "The mountains and hills may crumble but my love for you will never end," so says the Lord who loves you."

There are two characteristics of God's love you need to never, ever forget.

1. It is consistent. God is not fickle. He is not erratic. He does not have good days and bad days and good moods and bad moods and bad hair days and says, I don't like everybody today. God is consistent in His loving.

He never stops loving. It's different than human love. All human love is inconsistent. I heard a woman once said, "My mom was such a moody person I never knew from day to day whether I was going to be hugged or slugged. I didn't know because I didn't know what mood she was going to be in." God is not like that. He doesn't get moody. He is consistent in His love for you.

2. His love is unconditional. God doesn't say, "I love you if... and here are the conditions." "I love you because... and here are the conditions." He just says, "I love you. Period" because it's not based on your performance. It's based on His character. He just says, "I love you. You're Mine. I made you. I saved you. I bought you. I want you with Me for eternity." You wouldn't exist if it weren't for God's love. You never need to ask yourself, "Is God going to love me today? Did I pray enough today? Did I do all the right things? Did I cross the T's and dot the I's." God will never love you more than He does right now. He will never love you any less than He does right now. Because His love is consistent and unconditional.

There's a fourth way that God sees you.

4. God sees you as forgivable.

That word – "forgive" – it's easy, we're in the church so we hear it all the time." It's very easy to pass right by it. We do not realize how forgiven we are.

Ephesians 1:4 says, "Long ago, even before He made the world, God chose us to be His very own through what Christ would do for us. He decided then to make us holy in His eyes, without a single fault. We who stand before Him covered by His love."

What an incredible verse that tells us how forgiven we are by God's love and what He's willing to do in us. Before God made you He knew everything you were going to do in your life. He knew all the mistakes, all the sins. He knew the worst thing you were going to do. There is one thing you will never hear God say, "I didn't see that one coming." You'll never hear that. He sees it all. And God who sees it all says in advance "I'm willing to forgive you, no matter what. No matter what, I am willing to forgive you." That is good news. If I receive Christ my sins are wiped out. They are erased. That is what God's grace is all about. And it is such a great gift. We have a tough time receiving it. We have a tough time believing it.

I don't know if you heard about the guy who was driving up to Payson to his cabin. Just before he got to his cabin He hit an oil slick and his car slid off into a ravine. The car was totaled. He was alive but scratched up. He got up and climbed out of the ravine. Just then a storm came over and he got drenched. He's climbing up out of the ravine. he's drenched and shivering. He sees his cabin just in time to see a lightning bolt hit it and burst into flames. He looks up to heaven and says, what all of us would say, "Why me, God? Why me?" Then he hears a voice from heaven saying back to him, "Because some people just really tick me off!"

That's not the way God is, but that is typical of what we think about God sometimes. That somehow God is mad at me. that somehow God is getting even with me. We think every little thing that happens in our lives "I must have done something wrong. That's why God's doing this." You go into Taco Bell and order a taco. You get it and it doesn't have any meat in it. You think, "What did I do? Why is God letting this happen? What did I do?" The vegetarian sitting across the room that got your taco is thinking, "What did I do? Why is God letting this happen?"

Sometimes we believe that God is this way in dealing with us and it's just as silly as my example. Would God treat His children that way?

Isaiah 43:25 (GN) - "I am the God who forgives your sins. I do this because of who I am. I will not hold your sins against you."
God doesn't carry grudges. You might. I might. But God does not hold grudges.
Romans 8:1 says, "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

God is not sitting up in heaven rehearsing your sins, looking at them again and again on His own personal Master Snapchat account. He has erased your sins. He doesn't rehearse them. He releases them. Maybe you're here and you have just recently asked Jesus Christ into your life for the first time, you told Him "I want a relationship with You." Let me tell you what changed in your life when you came to know Christ. You've probably had your whole life a picture of what it's going to be like when you get to heaven. A long line heading up toward the pearly gates. You're in this line hoping that you're going to make it in. You're stepping forward one little step at a time hoping that when you get to the front you're in heaven and not in hell.

Do you want to hear some incredibly good news? The minute you got to know Jesus Christ it means you don't have to stand in that line anymore. You get a fast pass into heaven – you die and "Bam!" you are with Him. You're there. Because there is a judgment for those who don't know Christ. That's why Jesus came into this world so we wouldn't have to face that judgment. You do not have to face that moment. You're already in God's family. You're already in. It's already settled. God has already erased your sins. Take a deep breath and say, "Thank God! Thank God that I am forgiven because of what Jesus has done."

Then there's a fifth way that God sees you ...

5. God sees you as capable.

2 Corinthians 3:5-6 (TEV) talks about this, "The capacity that we have comes from God. It is He who made us capable of serving the new covenant."

There is an epidemic of low self-esteem in America. One study shows that it is the number one problem among women in America. Why is that? Why can't we escape that sense of insecurity?

Remember when I talked about how we replay what people have said about us in our minds over and over again. As we continue to replay those old tapes in our memory of what people said a long time ago about us, we still live by those words 10-20 years later. Studies show that the younger you were when you were rejected, the greater an impact it has on your life. And in a sense for some of you, you had people in your life that cursed you. They cursed you with words like, "You don't matter. You're a failure. You'll never amount to anything. You can't do anything right."

So here's the question. How do you release the curse? You don't do it by focusing on the curse. You don't do it by thinking about what they

said all the time. And you don't even do it by thinking, "I'm going to prove them wrong." You're still trying to build your life on a negative.

You do it by building your life on a positive. You begin to focus instead on the truth. You start affirming the truth. You start believing what God says about you and God says you're capable. I don't care what anybody else says. I don't care what you think. God says you are capable. He has created you for a purpose. He has a purpose for your life. There are two reasons why every one of us is capable.

1. We are all capable because we have God's word for insight and wisdom.

2 Timothy 3:17 (NCV) "Using the scriptures, the person who serves God will be capable of having all that is needed to do every good work."

What a gift God has given us in this book, the Bible. It's given to help us live the kind of life He wants us to live, to make us capable to live that life. That's an incredible gift but He's given us an even bigger gift than that. Not only has He given us His Word, but the Bible also says...

2. He's given us Himself to make us capable.

Maybe you've heard people talk about how God sends His Spirit to us when we trust Him. What does that mean? That means that God sends Himself. He gives us His strength, His ability, His insight. He is willing to come into our lives. That's how much He loves us.

Philippians 4:13 says, "I have strength for all things in Christ Who empowers me. I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him Who infuses inner strength into me. That is I am self-sufficient through Christ's sufficiency."

Through God's word, through God Himself you are capable.

Psychologists say that your self-concept, your self-worth, the way you see yourself is largely determined by what you think the most important person in your life thinks about you. If that's true I want to highly recommend that you make Jesus Christ the most important person in your life. Because in Christ He says you are valuable, you are acceptable, you are forgivable, you are lovable and you are capable.

It doesn't matter what anybody else thinks about you. Who are you going to believe? God? Or that funhouse mirror? That imperfect person? And the bigger question is: Who are you going to live for? The approval of other people? Who isn't going to give it, or they'll be inconsistent. Or will you live the rest of your life for a God who says you're lovable, valuable, capable, forgivable, and acceptable?

This story is told by a man named Fred Craddick. I found this online and it helps to illustrate what I'm talking about here. Mr. Craddick tells about the time he was vacationing in Tennessee. Fred and his wife were seated at a table in a restaurant when an old man came up to them and asked, "Are you folks on vacation?" "Yes," said Fred, "and we're having a good time." "What do you do for a living?" the old man said. Fred was trying to get rid of the guy and he said, "I'm a preacher." "Oh," the old man said. "Then let me tell you a preacher story." He pulled up a chair and sat down. "I was born an illegitimate child. I never knew who my

father was. That was very hard for me. The kids at school made fun of me and they called me names.

When I walked around our little town I always felt that people were staring at me and asking that terrible question, 'I wonder who is the father of that little boy.' I spent a lot of time by myself and growing up I didn't have any friends. One day a new pastor came to town and everybody was talking about how good he was. I'd never gone to church but one Sunday I decided I'd go hear him speak. He was good. So I kept coming back.

But each time I went to church I'd come in late and I'd leave early [that sounds like some of our Reunion people!] so I wouldn't have to talk to anybody. Then one Sunday I got so caught up in listening to the sermon I forgot to leave early. The service ended, people stood up and I couldn't get out the door. Suddenly I felt a hand on my shoulder. When I turned that big tall pastor was looking down at me. He asked, 'What's your name boy? Whose son are you?' When I heard that question I just shook. But before I could say anything the preacher said, 'I know who your family is.'

There's a distinct family resemblance. Why you're the child of God.' You know, mister, those words changed my life," he said. The old man got up and left. The waitress came over and asked me, "Do you know who that was?" "No," said Fred. "That's Ben Hooper, two-term governor of Tennessee."

A man learned he was the child of God and it changed his life. All the depression and all the wounds and hurts and rejection he'd had through his life were eliminated by the power of God's love. And no longer could people diminish his sense of dignity because he was a child of God. Here's your homework for this week.

Take those verses on the outline. Go home and write them on little cards and write above it "I am Acceptable... I am Valuable... I am Loveable. . .I am Forgivable. . .I am Capable" Start affirming those every day. You take them with you to work or school or wherever. You start to memorize and then internalize those truths because that's what God sees when He looks at you.

Closing Prayer:

Father, I thank You that You can heal broken hearts and bitter memories, and damaged self-esteem. Thank You that patterns can be erased and reversed. Thank You that You turn nobody's into somebody. Jesus, I ask You to help people to begin seeing themselves today through Your eyes of love.

Now you pray. In your mind say, "Dear God, help me see myself the way You see me. Thank You for loving me and sending Jesus Christ to die for me so I could be forgiven. Jesus, today I accept Your love and forgiveness. I want to learn to trust You. Help me to care more about what You think of me than what other people think. May the truth set me free."

Now with our heads bowed I want you to repeat these truths after me – aloud. Say, "Because of Jesus. I am acceptable and I am valuable and I am lovable and I am forgivable and I am capable. Jesus, help me to see

myself through Your eyes of love.