

Cybercolumn by Berry Simpson: Looking through lenses

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CYBER COLUMN: Looking through lenses

By Berry Simpson

Nowadays, one of our favorite fall-back movies—that is, movies on DVD that Cyndi and I watch again and again while doing other things, like grading papers or writing journals or playing Soduko on the internet—is *National Treasure*. In the movie, the lead character, Ben Gates, uses Benjamin Franklin's secret spectacles to read treasure clues written on the back of the Declaration of Independence. The specs have several movable lenses, each a different color, and it takes multiple combinations of all the lenses to read every clue. He can't see all the clues he needs until he looks through every one of the lenses.

Berry D. Simpson

People are like that. In order to know someone well, you have to see them in all their different ways. You have to spend time with them, talking and asking questions and listening to their stories. But even conversation goes only so far. We can all think of people we've worked with for years, people we've talked with for years, and yet we really don't know so much about them. Often, we're surprised to learn they love to paint, or they are trained

musicians, or widely known and respected outside their workaday lives. In order to really know someone, you have to be with them in all the things they do. You have to see their lives through every available lens.

For example, if you want to know Cyndi, my loving wife who has dedicated her life to making me a happy man, you're going to have to talk to her about teaching and computers and multimedia and her family and her children, about God and his peace in her life, and about music. You'll also need to talk to her about me. But talking will only get you so far; you'll never know Cyndi well unless you watch her dance, watch her teach dancing, watch her run, watch her race, be in one of her exercise classes. In other words, you'll have to watch her move. Those are the times when she's boldest and bravest and takes the biggest risks.

Knowing God is similar.

We can never really know God, or have a deep relationship with God, by using only one lens. We have to see him in all his ways. We have to read his word, over and over, and converse with him in prayer and meditation. We must learn about him from other believers, for each of us in our uniqueness reveals different aspects of God's character. We must experience him in his world, in creation, in nature, to see his boldness and courage and when he is risky.

One of the ways I have learned to see God is by celebrating the Lord's Supper—Communion. This particular lens has grown more and more important to me as I've gotten older, and especially since I've been allowed to help serve as a deacon. In my church, we participate in the Lord's Supper together, the entire church body, simultaneously, as a public statement that we are in this together and we need the whole body of believers to survive and sustain in this world. To me, it shows the "come be one of us" side of God.

Sometimes, I get to vary the technique a bit and take Communion in a different way. The believers come to the altar one at a time, as individuals, and take the bread and drink alone in contemplation with God. It shows me the “individual nature of salvation” of God.

I also see God through music, especially when I get to play or sing. A few weeks ago, they even let me play my harmonica during Sunday morning worship, and I had a great time. I thought, maybe we need more blues music in church. David certainly saw God by singing blues all through the Psalms.

But mostly, music shows the joyful side of God. Sometimes, singing about his love just lifts my heart up and over the room and opens my eyes to the “isn’t this great” side of God.

I also see God while I am teaching. I don’t really know what I know until I teach it, or until I write about it. So, teaching brings me to the “deep insight” nature of God, a place I don’t get to any other way.

To be honest, I am still working through this multiple-lens idea. I have many God-viewing lenses in my life, such as reading, friends, movies, hiking and solitude, and it’s hard to which are more important.

How about you? What are the lenses through which you see God? Which have become more important recently?

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