

The God Who Sees

Genesis 16:7-14

One of the many ways that God is different to us is that He sees everything, there is nothing that He doesn't see and know about. The first person to realise this in the Bible was a woman called Hagar and we see in her story three things that God is looking to do with His vision.

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Hagar had a very complicated life and things got so bad that she ran away from where she was living. She was sad and lonely, with a difficult past behind her and an uncertain future ahead, when God met with her (Genesis 16:7-14). He knew everything about her (verses 8, 11) – and we believe that this is true for every one of us. This story is similar to Jesus and the Samaritan woman (John 4:4-42), and both women responded with praise of God (Genesis 16:13, John 4:29).

1. God is looking to bless us.

Hagar was wonderfully blessed. She says that God is “him who looks after me”, He gave her a promise that her child would be a man of significance (however complicated that turned out to be), He gave her the privilege of seeing Him, and of being the only person in the whole Bible who gives God a name. 2 Chronicles 16:9 tells us that God loves doing this for anyone who is seeking Him.

2. God is looking to challenge us.

As well as doing Hagar good, God also says something that she probably didn't want to hear: “Return to your mistress and submit to her.” Most of us probably don't want God to see everything we do, even everything we think and feel, but there is no escaping this (Hebrews 4:13, see also 1 Samuel 16:7 and Psalm 139:7-12). All the work we put into our appearance, everything we do to display ourselves to others in the way we want to be seen – it may have convinced the whole world but it means nothing to God, He sees who you really are. Most of us try to hide when we want to do something wrong but God is there, and God sees. This is a serious warning to each of us, to flee from sin and flee to God.

3. God is looking to comfort us

Hagar's response to a command that she probably didn't want to hear isn't resentment but rather amazement at all of the goodness God has done to her, that He has seen her and shown Himself to her gives her peace and joy. Her situation hadn't really changed but God had changed her, now she knew that God was with her and that He cared for her. This is even true for us if we've been doing wrong and hoping God hasn't seen (Luke 15:20). If you, like Hagar, are in a difficult situation, you need to know that God sees you and everything that happens to you, and cares for you. You are not alone, and God sees everything you do in

faith and will reward you for it (Matthew 6:4, 6, 18). This gives us great comfort because our deepest need is to be known, to be seen.

Questions for group discussion

Psalm 139 can be seen as a lyrical commentary to this story (and the doctrine of God's total knowledge). You could use it to praise God together.

What is your response to the fact that God sees everything that happens to you and everything you do, even your thoughts?

Is there a particular situation where you feel isolated like Hagar did, and need to know that He is there, that He sees you and cares for you? How can we help each other at those times, as part of God's care for us?

If God sees us, there's no need to pretend or perform. What tempts you to still do those things, even if you know this truth about God? (If you use social media, how should this impact what you post?)

If there is secret sin in your life, you probably aren't going to share it with your small group. In His mercy, God is getting your attention in order that you confess it to someone and get help with getting free from it.