

The Answer for Aching Disconnection in Your Soul

Just over four years ago, a group of friends both encouraged and challenged me to begin a ministry based on my writing and work with men. I decided to listen to their voices because in them, I distinctly sensed God's calling upon my life.

But the jump from a safe and secure teaching job into the unknowns of a start-up felt like a jump out of an airplane. I was assured that the parachute would open, but there were many times when I was sure this free fall would end in disaster. Perhaps I felt it most keenly in the anxiety attacks that began to haunt me during the first couple of years. They ranged in intensity from the distressing to the debilitating. There were many causes—financial peril, emotional turbulence and spiritual confusion—but I'll never forget the surprising solution.

It was all in the eyes.

During one of those anxious days, I went to have coffee with an older man who had been a great encouragement to me. When we greeted each other, he put both hands on my shoulders, looked into my eyes, and said, "It's so good to see you." My eyes continued to lock in on his at moments as we talked about our lives. He shared some of his concerns, as did I. But at some point, I became aware that my anxiety was lessening, and by the end of our time together, it had vanished. Instead of anxiety, I felt a calm and a peace that completely surprised me. But later, as I thought about it, I realized what had happened: my friend had loved and heard me.

It was all in his eyes.

Feeling heard and loved by others is critical to our emotional health as men, but this experience is also woven into the

fabric of the gospel. In fact, it's the whole point of the gospel. The older theologians called it the Beatific Vision. Paul spoke of it this way: "yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and blameless and above reproach in His sight" (Col. 1:21-22). There it is—in God's sight, in His eyes, we are completely holy. There is nothing left to separate us from His love. We are His beloved sons, perfect and cleared from all charges. In that love, we are sustained, guided, nourished and comforted, but most of all, we are known and heard. This is not just one gift among others God gives us through the death and resurrection of His Son. It is *the* gift—the gift of Himself.

One day, our eyes will fully see His eyes of love for us, but for now, we can all catch a glimpse of that experience. We can enter prayer knowing we are heard and walk through the day aware His eyes are upon us. We can approach Jesus in our minds and imaginations, seeing Him watching us, and allow ourselves to "waste time" in His presence, enjoying His delight in us as His brothers.

This posture is not just the remedy for anxiety, fear and loneliness, but for something far greater: the aching disconnection in the human soul. Ultimately, we all long for union with God. To be seen and loved in His eyes moves us gently yet tenaciously toward that union.

It truly is all in the eyes—His eyes. {eo}

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