



Closely—Deeply

“But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Don’t judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The Lord doesn’t see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.’” 1 Samuel 16:7 (NLT)

When you look at someone who do you see?

Taking a risk, Sue signed us up for a dinner/discussion event. As an icebreaker, the facilitator asked our diverse group of fourteen to share a time when we’d felt awe. Immediately, my mind jumped to my commitment to use the word *awesome* only when describing God. Sensing that none of the others knew him—and that a few could be hostile—I dove into dialogue with the Spirit: “What should I say? Will they slam the door if I’m too direct?” There was no way I could avoid bringing up God, but how?

It was my turn...

“All of my life, whenever I’ve seen mountains, oceans, or night skies, my reaction has been, *‘Wow, so beautiful... I can hardly take it in!’* But over the last couple of years my eye has shifted. Now when on a hike I stop and look Closely—Deeply at a tree, flower, or lichen. I see it’s mystery, every part working together—I see its life! I find myself saying, *‘Wow, God, I’m blown away by what you’ve made!’*

It hasn’t stopped there. I see people differently now—not just their outward appearance, but more Closely—Deeply. I find myself saying, *‘There’s a person under there! Wow, God, I’m blown away by who you’ve made!’*”

Reflect: When did I last see someone Closely—Deeply?

How easily we gloss over others’ lives—we’re busy! More than that, we’re conditioned to see through a lens shaped by a broken world and past experiences—we’re biased toward outward appearance. I’m guilty.

Not long ago, the Spirit challenged me: *“Are you really seeing people?”*

Right then, I understood how Far—Shallow looking had caused me to miss seeing countless lives.

How about you? *“Are you really seeing people?”* What might happen if

you begin to look at those you encounter Closely—Deeply?

“Ears to hear and eyes to see—both are gifts from the Lord.” (Proverbs 20:12)

Our dinner discussion topic? “Is the American Dream Still Alive?” That evening, I sought to engage the Lord’s gifts. Seeing Closely—Deeply, I discerned the lives below the surface of several: smart, caring, good-intentioned, talented... yet hopeless. Politics, wars, natural disasters—they were afraid. Their worlds were crumbling, their spirits crushed, and their absence of God laid bare.

“The human spirit can endure a sick body, but who can bear a crushed spirit?” (Proverbs 18:14)

The Spirit urged, “Sow hope!”

*Consider: **While seeing Closely—Deeply, Sow in the Spirit.***

How could I sow hope into the hopeless having just a few minutes?

One woman, a social work counselor, shared her *awe* story. She’d reached a point where it was necessary to be frank with her long-term clients: *“The system cannot help you. All I can do is love and encourage you.”* (Apparently, counselors are not supposed to show love to their clients—a faux pas. Can you imagine?)

What awed her were her clients' responses—they were indeed encouraged! Mystified, she wondered *"How could that be?"*

"Don't be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant. Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit. So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up." The Apostle Paul (Galatians 6: 7-9)

Later, I seized a minute to talk with her. *"You gave those people hope! People can't live without hope—it reaches far beyond circumstances."* Her soul brightened—she needed encouragement and love too!

A little more time, a little more boldness on my part... where might our conversation have led?

Sowing a little encouragement, a little love... I watched the Spirit use my hope to produce hope in her—and my hope was encouraged. We reap what we sow!

Imagine: Seeing Closely—Deeply and creating countless awe stories.

As you shift your eye to see Closely—Deeply, the Spirit will remind you of what Jesus has done for you and draw you into unity of Mission with himself—you'll discern the troubled souls of others. When you do,

release control and follow the Spirit's lead.

"He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us." The Apostle Paul | 2 Corinthians 1:4

Be encouraged—the Spirit will have you sow the same comfort he's given you... and in doing so, you too will be comforted... a blessing!

What awe stories might you have to share once you begin to see...

Closely—Deeply?

Go off the grid and ask these questions:

Coach's Questions

- **Reflect:** How well have I been seeing others' lives under the surface? Consider a recent encounter—who did I miss?
- **Commit:** This week, when I'm in conversation with others, I'll seek to see Deeply—Closely... prepared to ask the Spirit, "What do you want me to sow?"
- **Later:** Ask yourself, "Who did I see beneath the surface? What did the Spirit lead me to sow?"
- Don't know my Mission? [Start here!](#)

Spirit Talk

Post this where you will see it regularly.

See Deeply—Closely

"Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too."

The Apostle Paul | Philippians 2:4 (NLT)



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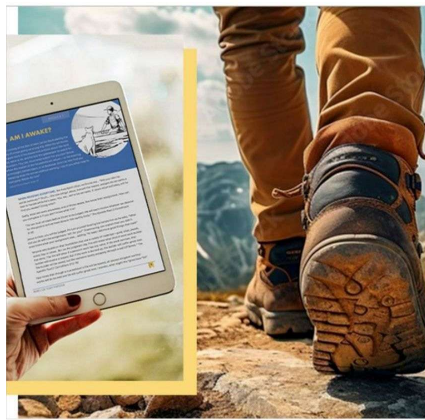
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