

PERSPECTIVE



I Am Enough Because God Is Enough

Perspective is all about the stories we tell ourselves and others. We are wired for stories, for making meaning out of the experiences, circumstances, feelings, and relationships of our lives. The stories we tell shape our behavior. And our behavior shapes our lives.

Taking time to listen to the stories we tell about our experiences can be a powerful thing. It can help us connect more with others' stories. It can empower us to make changes or keep going. It can help us see where we are in sync with God's calling on our lives and our own sense of who we are and who we want to be.

Write down (or otherwise record or share) a story from your life about moving from "me" to "we". Maybe it's a story about realizing you weren't alone or the only one. Maybe it's a story about realizing you were part of a community. Or perhaps it's a story about shifting your focus from yourself to something bigger than yourself. What happened? What changed? What difference did it make?

ACTION

This week, do something to serve a neighbor with generosity. Use this space to plan or imagine what that might be, to write down how you are sensing God nudge you toward neighbor, toward generosity. This can be as simple or as elaborate as you choose. After you do something to serve a neighbor with generosity, reflect on that experience below.

REFLECTION

1. Did you experience any anxiety, fear, worry, or doubt in your experience? Describe it. What was the source of any anxiety, fear, worry, or doubt you experienced?
2. Did you experience God's presence, grace, and abundance in your experience? Describe it. How did it affect any anxiety, fear, worry, or doubt you had?
3. What impact, if any, did this experience have on your perspective about the neighbor you served? about yourself? about generosity? about what's possible?

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Come and See

Write down (or otherwise record or share) a story about a way following Jesus has affected the course of your life.

When those first two disciples in John 1:35–42 accepted Jesus's invitation to "come and see" what Jesus was about, their lives took a turn.

They had no way of knowing that would be the case or what kind of life change was beginning in that moment. They would never see the world, themselves, one another the same way again. That doesn't mean they always saw things the same way or even the same way as Jesus. But the more they came and saw what Jesus was about, the more they followed, the more they gained a Kingdom perspective, which impacted and reordered just about everything: relationships, values, understandings, habits, practices, conversations, and more.

Maybe you remember what your life was like before you followed Jesus, and your story is about the difference between before and after. Maybe it's a story about a pivotal moment in your faith where something changed. Perhaps it's a story about a choice, a relationship, a revelation, an experience that happened because you went the way of Jesus. What happened? What changed? What difference did it make?

ACTION

This week do something to "Come and See" what Jesus is up to. Recall the types of things Jesus did, the kinds of places Jesus went, the kinds of people Jesus talked to and ate with, the ways that Jesus moved through the world. What draws you? What questions do you have? How is God nudging you to "come and see" what Jesus is about in our world today? After you do something to "Come and See", reflect on that experience below.

REFLECTION

1. Did anything you experienced or discovered challenge or stretch you?
2. Did you experience God's presence, grace, and abundance in your experience? Did you catch a glimpse of God's kingdom? Describe it.
3. What impact, if any, did this experience have on your perspective? about Jesus and his way? about yourself? about others? about the world?

PERSPECTIVES



Samaila is one of our current pastoral interns. This is his story about becoming United Methodist last year and the ensuing challenges to his perspective:

My name is Samaila Wada Ayuba. I am a Master of Theological Studies (MTS) student at Princeton Theological Seminary. I am the oldest of my siblings—one brother and three sisters—and I was brought up in an Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) in Nigeria. At the age of 13, I accepted Christ Jesus to be my personal Lord and Savior through my Sunday school teacher. Three years later, I was baptized and became a full-communicant member of the church.

Thus, I started teaching in Sunday school and leading youth fellowship and Bible studies. Unlike the Methodist Church, which is more liturgical, the mode of worship in my church is more like a Pentecostal church, where a musical instrument is played and people dance. Also, there is a wide difference between my home church and PUMC in terms of doctrine. These differences changed my perspective on God, church, and ministry when I set foot in this church on the first Sunday morning.

For instance, in my home church, women cannot be ordained as pastors or elders. Coming here marks a difference. I can see God working powerfully in the lives of our pastors and deacons. While my home church is open for people to come in, members of the LGBTQ community do not have a place inside, which is quite different from PUMC. I have learned more in PUMC about the embracing nature of God. God is the God of embrace, and God's hands are always wide open for everyone. I learned that the church is a home where everyone is welcome, irrespective of skin color, gender, or sexual orientation.

Looking at my background and the new developments in my theological understanding from seminary and PUMC, God is currently at work in me, teaching me how to embrace everyone. I look forward to knowing more about God, deepening my relationship with God, and receiving grace to preach the undiluted message in my home country so that all people will have the freedom and right to worship.

ACTION

This week, do something to be compassionately present with a neighbor in their pain. Just as God hears the cries of the suffering and embraces people's pain, God sends us to be God's incarnate love to others. How is God nudging you toward neighbor, toward pain, struggle, despair, grief? This can be as simple or as involved as you choose. Perhaps your compassionate presence involves an act of service or care. Perhaps it is the act of being present, listening well. Perhaps it is the act of tending a wound or praying together. After you've discerned your course of action and followed through, reflect on the experience below.

REFLECTION

1. DID ANYTHING YOU EXPERIENCED CHALLENGE OR STRETCH YOU?
DESCRIBE IT. IN WHAT WAYS WERE YOU STRETCHED OR CHALLENGED?

2. DID YOU EXPERIENCE GOD'S PRESENCE, GRACE, AND ABUNDANCE IN YOUR EXPERIENCE?
HOW DID GOD SHOW UP IN YOUR EXPERIENCE?

3. WHAT IMPACT, IF ANY, DID THIS EXPERIENCE HAVE ON YOUR PERSPECTIVE ABOUT THE
NEIGHBOR WHOSE PAIN YOU WERE PRESENT WITH? ABOUT YOURSELF? ABOUT GOD? ABOUT
GOD'S RELATIONSHIP WITH HUMAN PAIN?

PERSPECTIVE



ENVISIONING THE KINGDOM

Where are you finding hope these days? In what do you place your hope? In times of great division and trouble, hope becomes particularly elusive and extraordinarily important.

When it comes to hope, story-tellers, poets, artists, and visionaries are often the ones to help us find it. Hope-cultivators look to the promises of God, the stories of God hearing the cries of the suffering and delivering people from slavery and death and oppression. Hope-bringers put word and image to the pain and struggle, to that which must be relinquished to discover a promised future, and to God's vision for us. Hope-builders create bridges from where we are and our current perspectives to a promised future and a new view of the world, one of unity and diversity, of flourishing and shalom, of mercy and compassion, of abundance and grace.

Write down (or otherwise record or share) a story of hope. Maybe it's a story rooted in real life—something that happened or is happening to you or others. Maybe it's a fictional story, a poem, a song, or a piece of art that you or others wrote that speaks of hope to you. Maybe you have a vision that God is giving to you of God's kingdom.

ACTION

This week, do something to cultivate hope with a neighbor. Maybe this is the same neighbor you served with generosity in week 1 of this series, or one you discovered in week 2 as you "came and saw" what Jesus was up to, or the neighbor whose pain you were compassionately present with (week 3). Talk with your neighbor about hope and about the ideas on the other side of this paper. Share your story, poem, or artwork. Ask them to share theirs.

Bonus action invitation #1: Do this with a neighbor whose perspective is different from yours.

Bonus action invitation #2: Find a way, together with the neighbor, to take some action toward the hope you speak of.

REFLECTION

1. DID ANYTHING YOU EXPERIENCED OR DISCOVERED CHALLENGE OR STRETCH YOU?

2. DID YOU EXPERIENCE GOD'S PRESENCE, GRACE, AND ABUNDANCE IN YOUR EXPERIENCE? DID YOU CATCH A GLIMPSE OF GOD'S KINGDOM? DESCRIBE IT.

3. WHAT IMPACT, IF ANY, DID THIS EXPERIENCE HAVE ON YOUR PERSPECTIVE? ABOUT JESUS & HIS PERSPECTIVE? ABOUT YOURSELF? ABOUT OTHERS? ABOUT THE WORLD?