

THE BEST PLACE TO HIDE IS IN THE OPEN

“Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? ... Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee” [Ps. 139:7, 12]

“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” [Matt. 5:14, 16]

If law enforcement officers are looking for criminal suspects, where do you think that they will look first? Certainly, they will go to criminal hideouts that are generally located in the poor and dark neighbourhoods of the city. In most cases, they may be successful in arresting all or some of them. However, what if some of the suspects were to hide in the city centres, such as Queen Park Savannah (Trinidad & Tobago), or Times Square (New York), or Trafalgar Square (London), or Tinubu Square (Lagos)? It would hardly occur to the law enforcement officers to go there first, or to go there at all! While America was using sophisticated surveillance technology to monitor threats to its interests abroad, especially in the Moslem and developing world, little did anyone imagine that terrorists would strike in New York and Washington, D.C. The attacks were even watched live worldwide on CNN.

Most of us obey the “Eleventh Commandment” which is, “Thou shalt not be caught!” We do dirty things in secret while we present a public image of spirituality and piety. We cheat in marriage, church, business and work and do everything we can to cover our tracks. We can succeed to a large extent, but not for too long for, according to Scriptures, “be sure your sin will find you out” [Num. 32:23]. We can hide from fellow human beings but we cannot hide from God [Ps. 139:7]. So, why not hide in the open by making our private lives match our public conduct? That is the only way that we can be the light of the world [Matt. 5:14]. It may surprise some of us to know that others know so much more about us than we can imagine, and God knows everything! So, why do we behave like the ostrich, which buries its head in the sand and boasts, “no one can see me now!”

In today’s lesson, we shall use Scriptures to demonstrate that staying in the light of God is the best road to take for “the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more into the perfect day” [Prov. 4:18].

1. What “Self” are you?

When we look at a mirror, we can at least see our faces, which ordinarily we do not see. We are still unable to see our backs unless we put another mirror behind us. However, there are certain distortions. For example, when we raise the left hand, the person looking at us from the mirror raises his/her right hand. At the same time, we also notice that just as we cannot see his/her back, they cannot see ours too! If we use a magnifying glass, our features that we see in the mirror are exaggerated and certainly not our true selves. What lessons can we learn from that simple illustration? Here are some of them:

- ❑ There are many things that we do not know about ourselves and others equally do not know [the Unknown Self]
- ❑ There are certain things that others may know about us that we do not know about ourselves [the Blind Self]
- ❑ There are many things that we know about ourselves that are hidden from everybody else [the Private or Confidential Self]
- ❑ There are many things which both us and others know about us [the Open or Public Self]

A management technique for analyzing and understanding interpersonal communication is called the **Johari Window**,¹ which is presented in the box below.

THE JOHARI WINDOW			
As Others See Us		As We See Ourselves	
		<i>Known</i>	<i>Unknown</i>
	<i>Known</i>	<i>Open/Public Self</i>	<i>Blind Self</i>
<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Private Self</i>	<i>Unknown Self</i>	

In our relationships with other human beings, we present different kinds of selves but none of them represents our true self! Only God knows everything about us which **neither others nor ourselves may know about us, and that is our True Self** for “the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance but the Lord looketh on the heart” [1 Sam. 16: 7]. Therefore, unless our Open/Public Self matches our True Self, we are not yet hiding in the open, and until we hide in the open, we are not yet safe!

2. Analysis

We shall analyse the 4 types of self in terms of our relationship with others and, more especially, with God.

¹ See, for example, J. Luft and H. Ingham, “The Johari Window: a graphic model for interpersonal relations,” University of California Western Training Lab., 1955; J. Luft, “The Johari Window,” *Human Relations Training News*, 5.1, 1961, pp 6-7, and “The Johari Window,” Business Open Learning Archive, <http://sol.brunel.ac.uk/~jarvis/bola/communications/johari.html>

(a) The Unknown Self

There are certain things about us that we or others may never know about. For example, our early childhood experiences may be impacting on our adult behaviour and the influences may be coming from the sub-conscious. Psychoanalysts may use hypnosis to unearth the unknown information in some cases, but the full picture may never emerge.

The underlying factors may have a spiritual origin. For example, God told Moses, “I am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments” [Ex. 20:5-6]. After Joshua had taken Jericho, he said, “cursed be the man before the Lord, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho; he shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it” [Josh. 6:26]. Several hundreds of years later, during Ahab's reign, Hiel of Bethel rebuilt Jericho. He laid its foundations at the cost of his firstborn son Abiram, and he set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub, in accordance with the word of the Lord spoken by Joshua son of Nun [1 Kgs 16:34]. Sometimes, the true situation around us is due to a contest in the spiritual realm between God and Satan, concerning us. For example, after Satan had with God’s permission destroyed Job’s family and wealth and put illness on his body, neither Job nor his three friends could explain the cause(s) of his ordeal [**study the whole book of Job**].

Therefore, even if we confess our known sins, it is not enough to think that that is all there is. That is why David prayed, “O God, Thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from Thee” [Ps. 69:5]. He added, “who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from secret faults” [Ps. 19:12].

(b) The Blind Self

There are many wrong things we do without realizing it. Our mannerisms, such as way of speaking, how we drive bargains during negotiations, how we monopolize discussions, our perfumes, breath, those things that we do that irritate others, etc, all these affect the way that people see us. Unfortunately, we do not know unless they tell us.

Joseph’s brothers sold him into slavery in Egypt where, by God’s divine plan, he became governor. In search of food, following the great famine foretold by Joseph, his brethren came to Egypt to buy grains “and Joseph knew his brethren but they knew not him” [Gen. 42:8]. They spoke in their language “and they knew not that Joseph understood them; for he spake unto them by an interpreter” [v. 23]. There is so much that is hidden from us but known to

others. That is why David prayed, “behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden part Thou shalt make me to know wisdom” [Ps. 51: 6].

(c) The Private or Confidential Self

There are certain things that we are able to hide from other people, and they only get to know about them through leaks beyond our control. Such leaks may hurt our public image or standing. A very famous leak in recent times was the Clinton-Monica Lewinsky sex scandal. It was leaked long after their relationship had ended by Monica’s close friend who had taped their conversations about the affair without her knowledge. President Clinton was impeached by the U.S. House of Representatives, and tried but discharged by the Senate.

David had an adulterous relationship with Bathsheba, which resulted in an unwanted pregnancy. To cover his tracks, the king killed her husband, Uriah, and married the woman. He would have got away with it [in human eyes, that is] if God had not revealed it to Prophet Nathan. David paid a dear price for this “leak.” God told him, “thou didst it secretly, but I will do this [the punishment] before all Israel, and before the sun” [2 Sam. 12:12]. David’s favourite son, Absalom, rebelled against him and defiled his concubines in public [2 Sam. 16:22]. In another example, Ananias and Sapphira sold part of their possession and kept part of the proceeds while telling the Apostles a different story. However, the Holy Spirit revealed the true situation to Peter who cursed them for lying to the Holy Spirit. They died on the spot [Acts 5:1-10].

The king of Syria was planning an ambush against the troops of Israel. On each occasion, his scheme failed. The king “was sore troubled for this thing, and he called his servants and said unto them, will ye not shew me which of us is for the king of Israel. And one of his servants said, none my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber” [2 Kgs. 6:8-12]. Who can hide from God’s searchlights?

(d) The Public Self

This is the part of us that is in the open. In other words, what we know about ourselves is also what others know about us. Jesus has illustrated this vividly when He said, “the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise” [Jn 5: 19]. Paul admonished the Philippians, “those things, which ye have both learned and received, and heard and seen in me, do” [Phil. 4:9].

A good example of the Open Self can be found in **Acts 9: 36-42**. Peter was ministering at Lydda, near Joppa where there was a disciple named Tabitha or Dorcas, a woman “full of good works and almsdeeds, which she did.” She fell ill and died. Since Peter was not far away, her fellow disciples sent for him. When Peter arrived two days later, “all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them” [v. 39]. Thus, those around her knew what she had done.

Lessons

From the foregoing analysis, we see that it is only our Public Self that cannot be embarrassed. We are as we present ourselves to the public. If we can enlarge it to swallow up the Blind Self and the Private Self, then, there will be no embarrassing leaks by associates or confidantes or nosy reporters, or unhealthy gossips about our mannerisms.

However, the Open Self may not necessarily be our True Self. When God asked Samuel to go to Bethlehem and anoint one of Jesse’s sons in succession to Saul, he looked at Eliab, and said, “surely, the Lord’s anointed is before Him” [1 Sam. 16:6]. God had a different opinion! He said to Samuel, “look not on his countenance, or the height of his stature; because I have refused him; for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance but the Lord looketh on the heart” [v. 17].

Compare that with Job who was an open book both in body and spirit. The writer of the book of Job began thus, “there was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil” [Job 1:1]. When Satan appeared before God with the other “sons of God” [angels], it was almost the same words that God used to describe Job. He asked Satan, “hast thou considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?” [v. 8]. *Certainly it is only when our Open Self corresponds with our True Self that we can know that we are hiding in God’s presence, the best place to hide.*

3. Conclusion: Why we should hide in God’s presence

(a) *So that we will never be disgraced or put to shame*

Before Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they had enjoyed an open relationship with Him in the Garden of Eden, “and they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed” [Gen. 2:25]. However, after their fall, “the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons” [Gen. 3:7]. They were consequently expelled from the Garden and God’s presence.

(b) We cannot even hide from God any way!

God is everywhere at the same time (omnipresent) [**Jer. 23: 24**]. Therefore, we cannot hide from Him. That is why David said, “whither shall I flee from Thy presence?” and “the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee” [**Ps. 139:7,12**]. If we must hide, let us hide under His pavilion for “he that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty” [**Ps. 91:1**]

(c) He puts a hedge around us to ward off Satan’s attacks

When God was boasting of Job to Satan, the evil one replied, ‘hast not Thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?’ [**Job 1:10**]. Certainly, if we are in God’s presence, our enemies will be at peace with us [**Prov. 16: 7**] and no weapons fashioned against us can prosper [**Is. 54:17**].

(d) When we fall, He will pick us up

The Psalmist says, “when my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up” [**Ps. 27:10**]. Also, “the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him; and delivereth them” [**Ps. 34: 7**]. Jesus told Peter that Satan had desired to have him and to sift him as wheat “but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” [**Lk 22:31-32**]. So, Peter who had denied Jesus thrice was restored [**Jn 21:15-17**]. So was David after he had confessed his sins in respect of Bathseba [**2 Sam. 12:13**].

(e) Being in His presence is sheer joy!

The Psalmist says, “one thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple” [**Ps. 27:4**]. When we are in the open, our bodies become His temple [**2 Cor. 6:16-18**] and He will dwell in us. Then, the joy of the Lord that we feel becomes our strength [**Neh. 8:10**].

Let us stop running into the dark corners of fear, doubts, self-deceit and sin. Instead, let us hide in the open space of love, faith, and reliance on God and His grace to overcome sin. Then, Satan and his wicked forces will look for us and fail because you cannot set a trap for a bird that is watching you! [**Prov. 1:17**] Let us set our minds on “things above, not on things on earth for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God” [**Col. 3:2-3**].