

EYE CONTACT

1 Chronicles 16:8-13/Psalm 27:8-14

Newbegun United Methodist Church

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Eye contact, that face-to-face encounter, is an essential part of communication. In fact, studies show that babies thrive when they receive lots of eye contact with their primary caregivers, and that babies who don't receive eye-contact don't develop as quickly. You also see this when two people are in love. What do they do? They gaze into each other's eyes. Billy and Ruth Graham were married for 63 years, until her death in 2007. In the last years of her life, when she had become frail and too weak even for much conversation, Billy said, "Ruth and I still have a love affair with our eyes." By making and keeping eye contact with another person you are acknowledging their presence and their importance to you.

On the flip side of this there was once a woman who was going through a divorce who said to me, "I knew there was a problem when I realized that my husband no longer looked at me – not even during conversations." That is so true for refusing to make eye contact with a person you are using body language to say: "You're not important to me. I won't even acknowledge that you are there."

The Bible has its own unique way of saying that we can make eye contact with God. Does that seem impossible? Well, the Bible puts it this way: "Seek God's face." Now, let me just say this, the emphasis is on the word "seek" not on face or eye. We can't physically see God's face or physically make eye contact, but we can "seek" the

presence of God. We can kind of look into God's eyes as we listen and/or talk with God. In fact, it is very important to seek God's face for our health and well-being for it brings us into an acknowledgment of God's eternal presence in our lives. In the Book to the Hebrews the author said, "God rewards those who earnestly seek him." The paradox is that when we seek God just for the sake of eye contact with God, your life does become more meaningful, joyous, and vibrant.

An interesting story is told in the Book of 2 Chronicles about King Jehoshaphat. While the king was minding his own business striving to lead the nation of Israel with integrity, he got the news that three armies from three nations had joined forces and were marching on Jerusalem. The Bible said, "Then Jehoshaphat was afraid and set his face to seek the Lord." By the way, everything turned out alright. But it is interesting for even though king Jehoshaphat was pretty good as a king, he still didn't do what he really needed to do to worship the Lord – seek God's face; acknowledge God's presence, make eye contact so as to make God important in his life.

In the Book of Deuteronomy it reads, "When you seek the Lord, you will find him." In 2 Chronicles it reads, "When my people will humble themselves and pray and seek my face, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land." In other words, God is dead serious about this "eye contact."

God wants us to seek his face, or make eye contact with him. In the reading for this morning from 1 Chronicles 16 we read, "Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always." Eye contact; Seek God's face; God's presence. When we talk about seeking God's face, we are talking about seeking and acknowledging God's presence. We are talking about one-on-one together-in-the-same-room communion with God.

Since it is a communion Sunday and I try to get the message a little short so we have more time at the table, I therefore submit only one proposal this morning. When we make a real honest effort to seek God's face the one thing we all can do is clear out the clutter. That's the best idea there is. Clear out the clutter. For many of us, retired or not, there is so much going on in our lives that we just don't feel like we have the time or energy to pursue a closer time with God. But when someone is serious about seeking God's face, we find that there is a lot in our lives that are non-essential. Clear out the clutter. A little less TV, Facebook, talk radio. A little less of each or a little less of any other non-essential part of your day can free up a lot of time. Taking a few moments each day to just be with God, to be still in his presence, acknowledge God's presence and importance and it will strengthen your relationship with him and will magnify his presence in your life. Psalm 46 reads, "Be still, and know that I am Lord."

God is always with you and God's eyes are turned forever toward you. And now God is asking you to turn your eyes toward him, to acknowledge his presence, to pay attention as he speaks, to keep God front and center throughout the day – in other words, seek God's face; maintain eye contact. King David made this his prayer and I will make it ours: "My heart says of you, 'Seek God's face!' Your face, Lord, I will seek." Amen.