

The Bigger Picture

Dan Nelson – pastor

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There is something about seeing a movie on the big screen that makes it magical. While it seems that there are not that many movies worth going to the theater for these days, when a good one comes along, only the big screen will do it justice.

I like looking down at the city lights from the window of an airplane. From the perspective of a high altitude my view becomes enlarged and I can observe much that I didn't see previously. It's beautiful. There are some nuances to the landscape that you can really only appreciate from an aerial perspective. Sometimes you will find homes and even whole neighborhoods that you didn't even know existed. When you peer through the bird's-eye view of an airplane portal you become aware of things you never saw before.

I believe the same thing can be true about life. It is possible to have a very narrow perspective and not realize the larger picture. It seems quite common that we don't view the world around us from the wide-angled lens that God has, and we miss so much of what he is doing in our own community. The Bible teaches us that Jesus the Christ is God's only begotten son who lived, died, resurrected and ever lives to fulfill a plan of salvation for his people that he loves and that as many as would put their lives in his hands would have the promise of eternal life in him (John 3). As Christians, however, we can easily miss "the big picture" of what God is doing through various people, churches, and communities. If we are not very careful, we can assume that our own local church is the only place where God is doing something great. I believe this is a huge error and shows how distant we can be from the mind of God.

The Bible tells us that God's thoughts are so much above our thoughts, beyond our figuring him out (Isaiah 55). But there are some things that he has made known. Among them, is that it is part of God's divine plan that we would not all be the same but instead are created to be quite diverse in our personalities, styles, thoughts, preferences, cultures, and the like. Isn't it interesting how God can take a few basic features such as two eyes, a nose, and a mouth, and create such variety and uniqueness in the way we look? This is true also in spiritual things.

The Scriptures teach that God gave out spiritual gifts in diversity so that we would not all be the same (I Corinthians 12). Further, while we have common faith in Christ, the callings on our life can be quite different, as well as the function that we have

in the Church. Yes, I just spelled Church with a capital "C" There are local church communities but there is also "the Church": the family of believers, which can be quite diverse, and yet part of the one body. We are as different as a hand is from a foot, and an ear is from an eye, and yet all part of the same body. Every part is important yet each looks and functions differently to benefit the whole body. In a similar way, many of God's people, and I would say individual churches, are quite different, and yet members of the one body; the body of Christ.

So let's step back and attempt to see what God is doing through a wide-angled lens. Let's pray that we might see our environment from the aerial view and we might discover that God has been doing his work through people that you didn't even realize were there.

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Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.

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