

Spiritual Prep for February 2022 NC Weekend
Ruth Harris

Filtered or Unfiltered? Known & Loved, Part 1

Recently I came before the Lord confessing that I was frustrated, angry, discouraged and not reflecting the Spirit of Jesus. I felt unprepared and irritated. I wondered how God sees me when my attitudes are contrary to his attributes. I imagined a displeased God with a frown and a wagging finger. But the Lord spoke to my heart “I always see you through the filter of Jesus’ Righteousness.” Hmm. That got me thinking about filters. In this selfie-era, we hear people talk about pictures of themselves being filtered or not filtered. I haven’t actually done this, but I assume a filtered picture is one where my flaws are diminished and my positive characteristics are enhanced. A filtered picture would look really great. An unfiltered picture would show my “natural state” – flaws and all.

Thinking of how God views us, I know that he sees both my filtered and my unfiltered soul. The Bible in numerous places refers to God as knowing all things.

In the book of Joshua, Israel begins the conquest of the promised land and several chapters cover the division of the land among the tribes. Three tribes chose to receive their inheritance back across the Jordan River on the east side, but they fought with their brothers to conquer the land on the west of the Jordan. After the land had been ceremonially distributed among the other tribes, Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh were dismissed by Joshua to return to their inherited land across the river. They set up an altar to God acknowledging and confirming their devotion to Him as a testimony to themselves and to the other tribes that they planned to be faithful to God, but when the other tribes heard about the altar, they assumed ill of the three tribes and accused them of apostasy. In Joshua 22:22, when the three tribes make their defense, they appeal to God’s knowledge of their intent saying “*The Mighty One, God, the Lord! The Mighty One, God, the Lord! He **knows!** And may Israel know it too!*” Their defense was that God, who knows all things, knew their motives and would defend them.

In I Samuel, Hannah praised God and appealed to him as she gave back to the Lord her son Samuel, for whom she had prayed. In I Samuel 2:3 she declared “*The Lord is a God who **knows!***”

Psalm 44:21 states “*God **knows** the secrets of the heart.*” And Nahum 1:7 reads “*The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he **knows** those who take refuge in him.*”

In some of the passages referring to God knowing all things, it is meant as a conviction, kind of like the motivation intended for children as Christmas approaches – about Santa, “He knows when you are sleeping, he knows when you’re awake. He knows if you’ve been bad or good, so be good for goodness sake!” And this sense of God looking over our shoulder judging our goodness or our badness is supposed to keep us on the straight and narrow. But we all know that we can never be so straight or so narrow that we don’t sin against the Holy One. This type of being known by God can make us nervous, edgy ... maybe even lead us to try to be other than

what or who we really are. We develop an inauthentic self to try to measure up – sometimes to the demands of others, sometimes to our own unrealistic expectations, sometimes to a mis-guided sense of a Holy God. I feel uncomfortable just talking about it, how about you?

So lets look at another verse: I John 3: 19-20 *“This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence: ²⁰ If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he **knowseverything**.”* This passage talks about how our hearts can be at rest in the presence of God, yet it still says that he knows everything – and in our unfiltered state we know that he sees all the good and all the bad. But “God is greater than our hearts” – it is God’s opinion that matters more than our own hearts – and the way he actually views us is through the filter of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Colossians 1:19-22 reads *“For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ’s blood on the cross. This includes you who were once far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions. Yet now he has reconciled you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body. As a result, he has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault.”*

Being KNOWN by God means that God sees our unfiltered selves, completely, and loves them so much, he applies the filter of Jesus righteousness over each of us and says to us “I KNOW you, and I see you as holy and blameless without a single fault.” That brings peace. That allows our hearts to be at rest.

As we prepare for the coming weekend in Hickory, I encourage you to bring your anxieties and your busy-ness and your insecurities to the throne of grace. Remember what God says about you, his precious daughter with the most amazing filter covering her. As you anticipate the missionaries who will come to Hickory, consider them in this way as well. Pray for them as women on the same journey of transformation we are all on, and ask God to give you His beautiful heart for them, as he has for you.

I love Audrey Assad’s song “Known”, which speaks to the thoroughness of God’s knowing of us, and his holding of all we have been and all we will be with the greatest of love toward us. Let’s listen to it together.

Known, by Audrey Assad

<https://youtu.be/wUiyu4TLjig>

Additional songs to use in preparation for the weekend:

Known, by Tauren Wells

<https://youtu.be/FymxITRBBBr4>

In Christ Alone, sung by Kristyn Getty & Alison Krauss

<https://youtu.be/16KYvflc2bE>

Scriptures to use in preparation for the weekend:

Psalms 139, 1 John 3:19-20, Colossians 1:19-22

Known and Loved, Part 2 (Spiritual Prep #2)

Colossians 1:19-22

“For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ’s blood on the cross. This includes you.... [God] has reconciled you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body. As a result, he has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault.”

It is a precious and beautiful truth that God sees us as **holy** and **blameless** because of the work of Christ on the cross. It is this truth that opens the way to freedom and peace in our hearts and in our relationship with God. May I encourage you to pause for a moment and sit in this truth? This is how God sees you as his unique child.

Do you find yourself wondering at times, if this is the truth about me, then why am I not more transformed? Why is the process of transforming so slow? I do. It is a three steps forward, two steps back sort of journey, on average. Sometimes we have a truly transformative experience that leapfrogs us several large steps forward, and we praise God for those moments. Perhaps your Weekend was one of those moments. Mine was. Sometimes we land on just the wrong spot in the Chutes and Ladders game of life and find ourselves sliding back down a chute more than just a couple of steps. God sees it all and knows the intricacies of our individual personalities – he knows what we need, even the peaks and valleys. In him, it is all progress, he is never discouraged.

My husband and I have been reading David Benner’s book *The Gift of Being Yourself*. If you have some time, I’m sure you would be blessed by spending some time in this book. Benner states, “Spiritual transformation does not result from fixing our problems. It results from turning to God in the midst of them and meeting God just as we are. Turning to God is the core of prayer.

Turning to God in our sin and shame is the heart of spiritual transformation.” God is waiting for us at the bottom of that “chute” that seems like a setback. We cannot surprise God by anything we do or say. He knows us **c o m p l e t e l y**! And loves us beyond all depths and heights. Recently one of my pastors said “Transformation comes from beholding Jesus.” He is most holy, most pure, most forgiving, most understanding. Beholding him in our hearts and minds cannot help but cause transformation in our lives, bit by bit.

As you prepare for the Weekend coming soon in Hickory, find some time to set apart. Listen to the two “Known” songs, and then sit and behold Jesus. Your Savior who knows and loves you completely delights to refresh your spirit in his presence and to use you in the service of others. You will be blessed and you will be a blessing in Hickory as you serve the missionaries and facilitate their process of transformation.

Father, thank you for your wisdom and grace. Thank you for your boundless love. Prepare us to serve you and the missionaries the first Weekend of February. Help us to take on your heart for others and to trust in you for your transforming work in our lives. We love you, Lord. Amen.

Listen to "Known" by Audrey Assad <https://youtu.be/wUiyu4TLjig>

Listen to "Known" by Tauren Wells <https://youtu.be/FymxITRBBBr4>

In His service,
Ruth

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