

Worshiping God with Our Eyes

“Eyes that look are common; eyes that see are rare.” — J. Oswald Sanders

“I can’t find my shoes!” And once again the hunt begins for something that is probably right in plain sight. Because, although we look, we don’t always see.

Worshipping God with our eyes is **the practice of godly gazing** which Christians long ago called “visio divina,” or divine seeing. The Spirit of God tunes our senses to notice what God says to us through paintings, sculptures, photographs or any other visual expression – including natural creation. We are drawn toward God through these expressions of the love, faithfulness, and character of God. **Our eyes stir prayers to God** as we let illustrations of scripture settle deeply to nurture our souls.



The Old Testament is filled with images - places, practices and art meant to trigger **opportunities to tell and retell the story of God’s love and faithfulness**. Since then, art has served as an important conduit for the gospel through Christian history. From catacomb graffiti to stained glass windows, art was the way most Christians “read” the Bible up until the 16th century Reformation because many Christians were illiterate. So, when we engage with God through visual art, we are following a well-trodden path.

God reveals himself through visible creation. “Since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.” (Romans 1:20.) As God transforms us, our heart’s prayer becomes an echo of Psalm 27:4. “One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, **to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD** and to seek him in his temple.”

We are invited to pause in God’s presence and explore an image (or a vista) as a whole and in detail, beyond our first impression. We linger with open eyes until we have enjoyed the illustration at a deeper level. We watch carefully so that we don’t miss the reminders of God’s love and care which are at the heart of all beauty. **We look until we are surprised by God.**

The habit of worshipping with the eyes can alter a child’s perspective on all of life as they learn to give credit where credit is due. They recognize that every good and perfect gift comes to us from our Heavenly Father. They acknowledge that the beautiful things in our world reflect our Creator, the one who holds all things in place. They pursue a habit of seeing evidences of God’s touch everywhere around them. **Faith is nurtured by the act of watching for God in a lingering way.** Imagine the joy of a child when the eyes of their heart are engaged in worship and deep connection with God.

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INVITATIONS TO ENGAGE

Start the conversation with your child!

“Come sit with me a minute. Let’s discover how we can use our eyes to enjoy God.”

EARLY CHILDHOOD (2-6 years old)

Repeat this verse after me: The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display his craftsmanship. (Psalm 19:1 NLT) Let’s take our blanket out and lay down to look at the stars tonight. While we lay there, we will **tell God what the heavens are proclaiming to us**. We will tell God what his sky is telling us. And we will say this verse back to God with thankfulness.

ELEMENTARY AGE (5-10 years old)

Let’s read Psalm 24:1 together. “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it.” Ask God to help you choose a picture from this scenic calendar that will make you aware of his presence. Which one draws your attention most? Now let’s **ask God to help us see it the way he sees it**. What responses, memories or feelings does the image bring to you? Take some time to think about how it connects with your life. What does it make you believe about God? What do you want to say to God about what you are feeling and thinking? Look a long time and think.

PRETEEN/EARLY ADOLESCENT (10-14 years old)

Google The Met website or use a coffee table book to find classic paintings. Say: Choose one of these old paintings and I’ll show you how **we can use our eyes to enjoy some things about God**. Let’s ask God to help use Romans 1:20 to see this picture in new ways. Since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

In your journal make three boxes on the page side by side. The first time you look at the picture, ask God to show you what he wants you to see. Use the first box to write down what you notice right away. The second time you look at the picture, use the next box to write down any memories or feelings that the image stirs in your heart. Then the third time you gaze at the picture **respond to God about what you are encountering**. Ask God what he is inviting you to know, or become, or do. Use the last box for those thoughts. Finally, at the bottom of the page write down how your heart is responding to what you are hearing from God: give thanks, ask for help, confess a bad thing, express amazement for who God is.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

[Soularium](#) from Cru (50 original photographic images and 5 simple questions)

Inviso Cards by Gem Fadling at [UnhurriedLiving.com](#) (combines beautiful photography and thoughtful reflection questions)