

Focusing In by Faye Reynolds
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But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. Matt 13:16

I love the prefix “re”. Take for instance the word, “re-creation”. It contains the invitation to create again our lives by stepping back from the work we tend to define ourselves by and to take the opportunity to create a new definition apart from our employment or at least re-new the person we desire to be.

Another favorite is “re-member” which is better understood when placed beside its opposite, “dis-member” – to pull apart and destroy. To remember is to put back together or reassemble the stories of our lives that form the whole of our identity. We are this body of stories and events and people that have collectively “made us” who we are. When we remember, we allow the story of our lives to come together and make sense. When we chose not to remember, or block painful events, then we dismember a part of our being or identity and we are diminished.

The newest word to catch my attention is the word “re-spect”. Likely it is because I don’t think of “spect” as a word, but when seen in the context of “spectacles” or “spectacular” it is clear that it means to see again. To truly respect another person is to see them for the second time – to see them again. So often we form opinions of people with our first glance and miss their essence that a closer, deeper look could reveal.

It can work the other direction as well. Sometimes we place people on pedestals or get caught in their beauty or glamour and actually do not see them for who they are but who we would like them to be. In the call to respect them – to see them again as they truly are, we come to realize that they are made of clay and have their struggles. To truly respect another, we must see the truth, not the fantasy or the ideal.

It isn’t just new people that deserve a second look. Perhaps the people we see least of all are those that we spend the most time with. Like walking past a picture day after day, we quit seeing it and it simply becomes a part of the wall that it hangs upon. And so when Ephesians 5: 33 tells me to respect my husband, I grasp a whole new meaning. It invites me to see again the man that I married and put aside my assumptions of what I think I see in him and truly see him anew. When I respect my children, I re-see how they are changing and growing and maturing. And what does it mean to respect Creation – to renew our vision for our world?

Re-reading the gospel stories is an invitation to see Jesus anew – to see him again with new eyes - to bring fewer assumptions to the text and more openness to new revelation and thus grow in my respect and love for Jesus. Grammar isn’t my forte, but the word “respect” is definitely a verb. It is the call to action to seek anew my Lord Jesus Christ and to see and see again his beloved children through his eyes. “Open my eyes that I may see glimpses of truth thou hast for me.”

“Respectfully” yours,

Faye Reynolds, Director of Women's Ministry, Women in Focus, CBWC