

The Outer Leaf

Live Oaks
Community Church

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"Leading edge news and views of the ministries of Live Oaks Community Church"

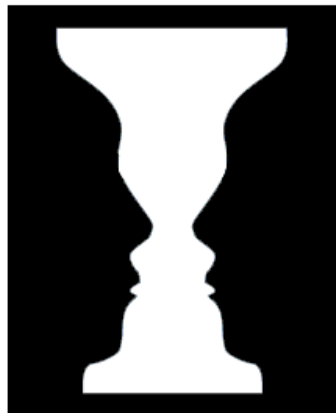
Perception And Reality...

What picture, impression or word/phrase do you think pops into the mind of others when your name is mentioned? Have you ever wondered how family members, peers/co-workers, your group in the church or folks you rub shoulders with in the community would answer? Are you curious? I was recently challenged to ask those around me an important question - **"What do you think of when someone mentions my name?"** It was suggested that asking this simple question could help me determine my real "position" at this point in history - in my family, among my peers, in the church and in the community. Daring to ask this question, and people answering honestly could bring some eye opening revelations. Their answers might also provide the necessary insight and inspiration to make some life benefiting changes or bring confirmation that God is doing something wonderful in you!

To get real answers to this potent question you may need to have someone other than yourself ask the question, record the answers, and ensure anonymity. Notice, this is not a "one-word" answer survey. Rather, a question that will usually have one or more short answers or a general paragraph. You are looking for key or dominant pictures and impressions of the person mentioned in the question. At the same time it may be most helpful to ask this question of people who experience you often or know you fairly well. However, taking a second survey asking the same question of mere acquaintances could prove valuable also.

Next, you may want to ask this question of God and keep it before Him in prayer and in His word until you are satisfied that you heard from Him. Be ready for the answer to

be different than you might have thought and more positive as well. For instance, King David was a man who had committed adultery, murder, and failed many times in his family life. Yet, God describes David as a "man after God's own heart." Why would God describe someone who had obviously failed in many areas as one who was after His own heart? Although David did make many mistakes, his heart was soft toward God and sought to praise Him. David wrote the majority of the Psalms. God honored what was in David's heart, not his perfection. David's heart was for God.



Finally, this same question may prove helpful for Live Oaks and each of our ministries. Wouldn't it be beneficial to know the real perception of others when a ministry area or our church as a whole is mentioned? Wouldn't it be helpful for Live Oak members to know the outcome of this one question survey that they might be able to evaluate the validity of their perception if it was in the minority, as well as, confirm their view if it were in the majority?

Regardless of how we are perceived or really are, the truth of God remains the same. Our Heavenly Father honors us and has a plan to get us to a destination of freedom and blessing. "I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11)

Lord bless you as you seek the Truth, find the Truth, and are set free by the Truth,

P. Kelley
(John 14:6 & 8:32)



Happy Valentine's Day!



Surrender

By Ashley Callstrom.

I usually write because I want to ponder something, share an idea that God has shown me or express my thoughts to an audience greater than one. Although my heart and mind are all over the words, I hope and pray that God will use these words to speak to someone; that my writing will be helpful to someone. Today, things are only different in the sense that the point I want to make is much more personal and something I want to share with you for two reasons: one being that of praise and gratefulness to the God we serve, but the second being that of encouragement to those of you that relating to this—now or somewhere down the road.

The last few months have brought about tremendous changes in my life and in our family. I've spent a lot of time thinking, wondering, praying, crying, pleading, searching and looking for answers to questions from the mundane to the monumental. A few days ago something switched, something changed and I can only tell you that I went from feeling miserable and trapped to joyful, full of hope and peace as well as a renewed sense of freedom.

I could share so many more details, but it is encapsulated perfectly by Psalms 32:2-7 (The Message):

***When I kept it all inside,
my bones turned to powder,
my words became daylong groans.***

***The pressure never let up;
all the juices of my life dried up.***

***Then I let it all out;
I said, "I'll make a clean breast of my failures to God."***

***Suddenly the pressure was gone—
my guilt dissolved,
my sin disappeared.***

***These things add up. Every one of us needs to pray;
when all hell breaks loose and the dam bursts
we'll be on high ground untouched.***

***God's my island hideaway,
keeps danger far from the shore,
throws garlands of hosannas around my neck.***

The point here is that I cannot even remember every single thing that I was trying to figure out, but I was searching and trying to "solve" it all on my own. Then I finally realized that I am not the one that is capable of coming up with the answers. I understood that I was not created to be self-sufficient. I had been trying to go to God on my terms when what I desperately *needed* to do was just surrender. Surrender, there is not another verb sweeter to my ear.

I have no idea if you have felt overwhelmed or scared or frustrated lately. I do not know about any sin you need to place before God or if you have been ignoring His calling, but I pray that you take the time today (and again tomorrow...) to give everything to Him (again). There are too many times that I try to face the world on my own and before long I stop only to realize that I am weak, miserable and not capable of doing any of this on my own. Whatever circumstances you face I hope you remember that God is our refuge. It doesn't matter if you unloaded your worries to him yesterday or if you haven't honestly been open to him ever---He wants you to remember that He is your "island hideaway."

Surrender...

