

394 A glorious vision of God – Part 2

When we see someone's behaviour, we assess it (judge it?) based on what we already know about them. But if we know, say, that they have some psychological or medical condition, we may well see their behaviour differently – we cut them some slack.

That's the positive side of pre-judging, but if we interpret someone's behaviour according to what we *think* we know about them – but we're wrong(!) – that can do a lot of damage. We rightly call that 'prejudice'. So what we think God is like is very, very important.^[391,2]

Many people, both inside the church and out, feel positively towards Jesus, but are less sure about God. Why?! Didn't Jesus say, 'If you've seen me, you've seen the father'?^{Jn 14:9}

Why did Jesus say that to Philip and the other disciples? Because they still had a distorted view of God. They thought God was going to overthrow the Romans and pay them back for the way they had subjugated them.

So I decided to reread Jesus' final words before his death^{Jn 14–17} to see how that would relate to Greg Boyd's 'God looks like Jesus'? With that 'What is God like?' question in mind, I saw Jesus talking to his followers about knowing (a person), loving (a person), trusting (a person), believing in (a person), remaining in (a person) – over and over again.

The other theme was that Jesus wasn't going to be with them physically anymore, but the Holy Spirit would be there to help them know, love, trust, believe, remain in this Person.

The most misapplied bit? '*I am the way and the truth and the life! Nobody comes to the father except through me.*'^{Jn 14:6} What have we conveyed to one another using this verse?

I vividly remember, about 20 years ago, popping my head through the hatch into the kitchen from where my son and daughter-in-law were offering me a cuppa. Flo then asked, 'How did you become a Christian?' Great! But very quickly the conversation turned to, 'How can possibly believe that you're the only people who know how to get to God?!'

I tried to steer the conversation to Jesus and the sort of person he was, but it was difficult. After 15 minutes with my head through the hatch, I was mightily relieved when Sue got back from Brownies!

We've told our 'kids' (now 45 and 46!) that they are sinners and deserve to be punished (by God) but God loves them and Jesus died and took the punishment instead of them. Even though our church wasn't into 'hellfire and damnation', we still managed to give them a distorted view of what is God like!

How much better it would have been if I'd known then what I know now: God loves us and longs to *restore* us and help us sort things out when we've messed up, and that Jesus shows us how self-sacrificing love wins out in the long run. What a wonderful God!