



Seeking God's Perspective is Key to Understanding, and Patience

With the pressures of the work environment, seeking to walk with Christ and let the Holy Spirit guide all one's work decisions can often be challenging. How can one seek to be a Business Executive Leading with Integrity, Entrusted Values, and Expectancy (BELIEVES) in the work environment?

How do we continuously invite God into _____ and find real joy – even if it's messy?"

The 2024 BELIEVES season maintained its focus on this overarching question on Tuesday, August 13th, with a discussion focused on "Seeking God's Perspective is Key to Understanding, and Patience," prompted by reflections and thoughts from Father Tim Hepburn, Pastor of St. Michael Catholic Church in Gainesville, GA.



"Glad to be here on the theme. At first, I didn't like it, and then I did like it," said Father Hepburn, who is celebrating his 31st year as a priest this year. "It brought to mind a time when I was in jail as a seminarian. I was in a minimum-security prison playing pool with a guy. The guy said, 'You know, everyone has got their thing. You pray. I steal. Everyone's got their thing.'"

Father Hepburn, who is from Atlanta (though born in Germany) and was ordained at the Cathedral of Christ the King, then added, "The guy was not in reality – probably why he is in jail. Seeking God's perspective is reality. We are really talking about seeking God's reality."

In Romans 1, Hepburn mentioned that Paul speaks about God's eternal attributes, which have been evident. However, people didn't accept the perspective on reality.

"I want to give two ways to get God's perspective on things," he then commented. "The first way is more on understanding – it's through the word of God. It seems obvious, but it's powerful. I cannot tell you how thrilled I feel when I grasp God's perspective."

As a kid, Hepburn, who grew up at St. Jude's Parish in Atlanta, recalled that he used to always eat paper.

“In Ezekiel, and Revelation, it talks about eating paper and it’s sweet.”

However, he emphasized that receiving understanding through the word of God is not just Bible study. It’s receiving what God is disclosing.

“It’s like a living God,” Hepburn said. “We have to be willing and ready to receive it. Cardinal Raniero Cantalamessa, who has been a preacher to many popes, has said, ‘Many theologians have preached the word of God, but have they experienced it.’”

The second way to get God’s perspective, according to Hepburn, brings us to patience, and is more significant.

Like earlier remarks, Hepburn said, “In Jeremiah it says when God’s Word is found it’s sweet but then turns bitter in the stomach. He says he can’t ‘preach on,’ but then says, ‘but Your Word burns inside.’ Bible study’s wonderful, and we can read the Bible – but then stuff happens.”

“Ever since the fall of Adam and Eve, it requires patience to get to where God wants us to be,” Hepburn added.

What’s key in Hepburn’s view, drawing from Psalm 44, is to be real with God.

“In Psalm 44 they are crying out saying, ‘And all this has been done to us. Is that real or what? And they are saying this to God.’”

If there is one person in the Bible Hepburn believes is perhaps detached from reality, it could be St. Peter.

“Peter told Jesus, ‘Even if everyone else leaves You, I won’t,’” Hepburn stated.

For Hepburn, that’s like Peter is at the stage where one could say, “OK, you went to Bible study,” but then things get more real.

“One thing I like about St. Peter,” he said, “is he allowed his life to be displayed openly – good, bad, or other. He said, ‘I am a sinful man.’ Jesus didn’t deny Peter was sinful, but He said, ‘You will be catching the souls of men.’ Through patience, Peter gains understanding, but that is not the same as precise knowledge. Peter asks Jesus, ‘To whom shall we go?’ He comes confident not in the facts of the matter, but who he is seeking.”

All this discussion brings up something else Hepburn believes is challenging – *Can we think as God thinks?*

“Jesus is giving God’s grace,” Hepburn related. “St. Peter doesn’t realize the Holy Spirit’s about to pour out. As Romans 12 and Ephesians 2 point out, ‘Be not conformed to this age, but be renewed.’ This can happen through Bible study or other ways, but it can also happen through disillusionment – *the dark night.*”

Hepburn said he was not aware of how circumstantial the dark night is, such as when St. Peter is told, “Get behind me Satan,” by Jesus.

“For you all it could be when you’re in your business and an expert at what you do, and then they let you go,” Hepburn remarked to relate it to the audience of professionals.

Staying on the “dark night,” Hepburn told everyone he would recommend the book, *The Night is Normal*, by Alicia Britt Chole.

“When we get disillusionment and the night comes on us, that’s the best time to find God,” he said. “Disillusionment is the key word – it’s not a bad thing, it’s good. It’s when we acknowledge we’re weak – only by God. We can be disillusioned with God, ourselves, or other people. It’s not a bad thing, it’s a good thing. We can bail out or grow to God. We can relate to God by faith, nothing else.”

Hepburn then went on to cite another passage from scripture – Psalm 142 – and in particular, the setting for the passage.

“David’s credited in inspiring a number of Psalms,” he told the audience. “Psalm 142 says, ‘Inspired by David in a cave.’ You can hear the faith in there, but you can also find the rawness of the situation.”

Hepburn then mentioned that he’d like to hear everyone’s perspective on experiences when they received God’s perspective through either way, including pain.

One attendee spoke up and spoke of how he turns to Psalm 22 a lot to tell himself of its words, especially when in pain.

The attendee added, “I think it speaks to the patience Ignatius is talking about here. Part of the way is to look for the graces while you go through it.”

Fr. Hepburn then spoke.

“Since you bring up Ignatius, I want to point out something ... and I am not all certain on it. The dark night is not the same as desolation. The key difference is faith. In the dark night, you will persevere through it.”

This brought about a remark from another BELIEVES attendee.

“In times of hardship, I was just grateful for people like my grandmother to know what faith can look like or be.”

She also added that sometimes just going through the motions, like going to Mass, would help in the process to receive God’s perspective.

Hearing this remark, Father Hepburn followed stating, “I think it’s important to have thankfulness even in tough times. It’s like saying, ‘OK, God, this is tough, but I’m thankful You want me to learn something in this.’”

Finally, as the session neared its end, Hepburn was asked if there was any “Big D” (Big decisions) or “little d” (little decisions) that he could recall from listening to people over the years that stood out in particular related to the session’s theme of “Seeking God’s Perspective is Key to Understanding, and Patience.”

“Actually, yes, and it’s from my brother who is an attorney,” he responded. “He’s actually become an in-house attorney, which means he’s been bought and sold a lot by companies – and has lost his job every several years. Then one time, he told me, ‘You know, I realized my purpose at work is just to love people (where I work).’”