



Look and Live

by Matt Papa

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QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH MATT PAPA

1. Where did the title of this book—*Look and Live*—come from?

It's from a famous story in the Bible found in the Book of Numbers, chapter 21. God's people are in the wilderness, and they're whining about it, as usual. God punishes them with serpents, and the people cry out for mercy. God tells Moses to make a bronze serpent and whoever looks at it will live. This is what should be happening today on Sunday mornings and throughout our week. Rather than simply stand and sing, we need to look and live.

2. What is worship?

Worship is admiration becoming adoration. It is a rhythm of revelation and response. We see something great, and we respond in the praise of its greatness. The "seeing" part is really what this book is all about. Authentic worship is never forced or coerced. Worship never begins with a call to do anything. It begins with a call to see. Come and see.

3. Is there a Scripture verse that was particularly important for writing the book *Look and Live*?

2 Corinthians 3:18 says, "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." This verse is telling us how we change as believers—that we don't ultimately change through our resolve or willpower or even decisions we make for God. We change by "beholding the glory of the Lord."

4. Some of these concepts are very abstract. How has the message of *Look and Live* worked in your own life?

The two greatest sins I have battled in my life are lust and the idol of approval. I have found that if I don't wake up in the morning and "look and live," I will need applause. Need it. I will give a certain weightiness to it, because I am always giving weight, or worship, to something. Lust has been broken in my life by a greater thrill—God.

5. Your book begins by looking at what "glory" is? Why is this important for you? What exactly is "the glory of God"?

Let me begin by saying I would rather be ravished by the glory of God than know how to define it. Nonetheless, it is important to think about, and here's why. We are commanded, whether we eat or we drink or whatever we do, to do it all to "the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). But what is the glory of God? A cloud of smoke? A bright white light? How do you tie your shoes to the glory of God if you don't know what "glory" or "the glory of God" is? This began to scare me, that perhaps the most pervasive and practical verse in the Bible is also the least understood.

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6. You talk a lot about idolatry in your book. What is “idolatry”?

Harold Best, a professor of music at Wheaton College, perhaps said it best: “When we sin, worship doesn’t stop. It changes direction.” The essence of idolatry is a “mis-aiming” of worship. Worship is always happening. We never begin worship. We aim it. But we have aimed it at the wrong things: money, power, sex, popularity, success, comfort. And worship always breaks these brittle things.

7. How can we discover our idols?

Trace your most unyielding emotions. Anger usually happens when our idols are threatened. Anxiety usually happens when our idols are collapsing. Despair usually happens when our idols are vanishing. What’s the thing in your life that you must have in order to be happy? That is what you worship.

8. What does idolatry look like in our lives?

Augustine called idolatry “disordered love,” and I say in the book that disordered love leads to a disordered life. If we worship money, we will cheat and manipulate people to get ahead. If we worship romance, we will throw ourselves at anyone, anytime. If we worship success and fame, we will overwork and burn out. All this because the soul is hungry . . . for glory.

9. How do we get rid of our idols?

It has been said: We worship our way into sin, we must worship our way out. This is true. A Puritan named Thomas Chalmers once preached a sermon called “The Expulsive Power of a New Affection.” In the sermon he basically says that the heart is a throne, and the throne will always be occupied with *something*. Idols are never removed. They are replaced. And so it is a sight of God’s glory that pushes our precious idols into our periphery.

10. In your book you talk about how we can even read our Bible and pray as an idolater. Explain this.

We all wear a lens. And if we come to the Bible in order to benefit ourselves or just fix our problems, we will never see Jesus. The Bible is not about us. It’s about Jesus. And its purpose is to reveal Him so our souls can rest and be happy. The same is true with prayer. When we pray, we are supposed to begin with “Our Father in heaven,” but many times we essentially begin with, “Give me my idols.”

11. Where do we see “the glory of God”?

In Exodus, when Moses prays, “Show me your glory,” God responds, “I will make all my *goodness* pass before you.” The goodness of God is the glory of God. The Bible says, “The heavens declare the glory of God.” But there is one place we see the glory of God more than any other place, one place where He makes all His goodness pass before us: the cross of Jesus Christ.

At the cross the veil is lifted and we are free to live for God and obey Him because we are totally sure that He loves us. We are free to obey the difficult commands because we know He loves us. We are free to suffer and experience hardships because we know He loves us. The cross is, as it’s been said, “the blazing center of the glory of God.” The cross is where doubt dies.

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12. You emphasize the word “behold” in your book. What does it mean to “behold the glory of the Lord”?

Again, 2 Corinthians 3 tells us we must behold the glory of the Lord. This is more than just looking. It is meditating. And this is something that we as a culture have an extremely difficult time doing. We are so busy. We have “ADD” of the soul. We go from thing to thing to thing, and God is really one of those things. Blaise Pascal said, “All of humanity’s problems stem from man’s inability to sit quietly in a room alone.” This is why we must “preach the gospel to ourselves every day,” as Martin Luther said.

13. In the book, you encourage the reader to see the world as “scattered beams.” Please explain.

This phrase is based on a quote by Jonathan Edwards that has changed my life. Essentially he says that the world is “scattered beams” and that God is the sun. This means Christianity is not religious escapism. We are commanded to enjoy the world—to enjoy the beams (1 Timothy 4). But nor is Christianity overindulgent secularism. We don’t worship the world for its own sake. Idolatry looks *at* the world in amazement. Christian worship looks *through* the world in amazement.

14. What does “seeing the glory of God” look like on a daily basis?

John Piper once said that he wakes up in the morning with Satan sitting on his face. This resonates with me. Seeing the glory of the Lord on a daily basis means fighting through the cacophony of distraction that I wake up to every day—email, social media, deadlines—and putting my nose in the Bible and begging to see Jesus.