

God Revealed Through the Spheres of Society

© 2014 by David Joel Hamilton
Singapore, August, 2014

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The following reflections are extracted and adapted from two prior publications by David Joel Hamilton:

- *SphereView™ Genesis Sampler* (August, 2012). The printed beta-version of SphereView™ is no longer available. In the future, SphereView™ will only be available electronically. The SphereView™ app – scheduled to be released in iOS in the second half of 2015 – introduces a whole new concept in digital Bibles. Most Biblical tools use the digital technology primarily as a platform to distribute that which was previously printed on paper, thus displaying digitally the traditional analog Biblical tools. In contrast, the SphereView™ app will be among the first Bible tools fully designed for the digital age, harnessing the full potential of a digital framework. It’s unique design will allow the maximum digital expression of God’s Word. It will be able to be displayed in 127 different ways and will have a new, never-before-experienced way to interact with the Scriptures. It will enable new discoveries of and insights into the Biblical text. Built on the engaging format of the SourceView™ Bible, the SphereView™ Bible is one of a series of tools that will be released to encourage a new generation to engage with God’s Word and to help eradicate Bible poverty wherever it exists. As this collection of cutting-edge resources is released, you can stay informed by checking out the website: <http://www.sourceviewebible.com>.
- *Entering God’s Presence: Biblical Foundations for Curriculum Development* (September, 2012). This is a “Draft Document of Miscellaneous Notes” which begins to explore 63 of the many myriads of divine attributes (21 nouns, 21 verbs, 21 adjectives). The full text of 55 pages can be downloaded as a PDF online at <http://www.enteringgodspresence.com>. Check out the overview chart and follow the link under “Writing Meditations and Lessons”.

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Introduction

God's Dream

God's heart – expressed through the commissioning vision of Jesus' final words on earth – is to see every expression of humanity, both individual and corporate, restored by the Spirit of God through the redemptive message of the Gospel. He wants every person to have the opportunity to be experience God's life and be adopted into the community of the family of God (Mar 16:15). He wants every nation to be able to experience the transformative impact of the kingdom of God in every dimension of its cultural life, shaping every sphere of society. This is a compelling dream; a dream which calls us to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength until it has become an experiential reality here on earth. Until then we work and pray as he taught us, "your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Mat 6:10 NIV).

God's Design

We are entering a new era in mission's history; an era in which God's heart for the nations is being better understood. In this season we need a fresh and intentional engagement with God's Word to discover more fully what God's design and purpose is for each of the spheres of society.

When God designed human beings, he did so with great wisdom and purpose. He made them with a skeletal structure, a full complement of digestive organs, lungs and everything needed to breathe, a heart with a circulatory system, etc. Each of these biological systems help make individual human life possible. If any one of these were to go missing, there would be no life. If one of the systems malfunctions health is compromised. For humans to thrive all systems must be functioning optimally as God had originally designed them to work.

The Scriptures clearly tell us that even as God created individual human beings (Gen 1:26-27), so also has he made the nations (Act 17:26). As surely as he designed the systems that give life to an individual, so also has he designed the systems that give life to a nation. We call these systems the "Spheres of Society" – each designed by God, but over time since Genesis 3, twisted by humans. They are no longer functioning healthfully and therefore nations fail to thrive. How can they be restored to full, God-designed functionality?

First of all we must understand God's original design if we are to collaborate with him in the restoration process. To this end every page in this brief document begins with a description of God's design for the given sphere. This reflects my attempt to understand from Scriptures why God designed that particular sphere. It is by no means a definitive statement and it is presented to spur the reader to reflection and discussion. It is important to state here that we understand that understanding itself will not disciple nations. The means of the redemption – both for individual and corporate humanity – is the transformative power of the cross of Christ.

God's Delight

Secondly, after ascertaining God's original design, we must understand God's design purpose: Why did he design nations as he did? Just after Paul affirms that God is the author of the nations in his Mars Hill message, he goes on to say, "God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us" (Act 17:27 NIV). Every sphere of every nation is designed as a vehicle for revelation, as a means to make known some aspect – or rather various aspects – of God's remarkable character. Thus each page of this introductory document proposes at least three things God wishes to reveal about himself through the given sphere. This list is by no means exhaustive. It is but a starting point that we might "seek him and ... find him."

As individuals we have been created to know and love God. Our Creator designed the spheres of society, the structural systems of the nations to be catalysts that would propel us towards that knowledge and love. May we find a fresh impetus to pursue God with a passion, that he might be fully revealed through each and every nation. For when we set our hearts to "truly know ... and understand" God and his ways, it brings great delight to him (Jer 9:24). Therefore, may we be filled with the Spirit and be taught by the Word so that with eagerness we might reach out to know him and to make him known. For the time is coming when "the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Hab 2:14 NIV).

The Sphere of Family

God is the one who had the original idea of family. He instituted marriage at the very beginning of creation (Genesis 2:24) as the life-time commitment between one man and one woman. When the original couple expanded into a family with the birth of their first child we are told that it was “with the LORD’s help” (Genesis 4:1). His purpose for this sphere is that life might be multiplied and that a God-given destiny for every individual may be established. God wants us to engage with families, to serve and strengthen them, to see his purposes of life and destiny restored in them in order to serve an emerging generation.

Through the Sphere of Family, God wishes to reveal himself as:

FATHER

- Jesus calls God “Father” (*pater*) 189 times: 45 times in Matthew, 4 times in Mark, 29 times in Luke and 111 times in John. This initially may not seem unusual for those of us who have grown up in a Christian context, for there it is quite common to refer to God as Father. However, this form of address was anything but usual in Jesus’ historical context. Consider the fact that in the whole of the Hebrew Scriptures God is referred to as Father on only 19 occasions (Deu 32:6; 2Sa 7:14; 1Ch 17:3; 22:10; 28:6; 29:10; Psa 68:5; 89:26; 103:13; Pro 3:12; Isa 9:6; 63:16a,16b; 64:8; Jer 3:4,19; 31:9; Mal 1:6; 2:10).
- The issue is relationship. Jesus uses the term Father to express to us a new possibility of relationship with the divine because he is the Supreme Person desirous of entering into friendship with us. The good news is that Jesus came to make it possible for *his* Father to become *our* Father. This intimacy is offered to all. To those who desire such a relationship the Spirit of God is given to them. “*And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children*” (Rom 8:15-16).

SON

- Jesus is referred to as the “Son of Abraham” (1x), the “Son of Joseph” (5x), the “Son of Mary” (6x), the “Son of David” (18x), the incarnate “Son of Man” (88x), and the divine “Son of God” (124x). The five “Son of...” expressions which point to his human origin comprise 48.8% of Jesus’ filial titles; whereas the term “Son of God” is used 51.2% of the time. There is an amazing textual balance emphasizing the unique nature of Jesus’ identity as the God-man.
- These filial titles (Son of God, Son of Man) also reflect two very important familial relationships. First it describes the close connection/identification with the Father. But secondly it underscores the close connection/identification with the siblings, for Jesus is “*the firstborn among many brothers and sisters*” (Rom 8:29). He is both fully God and fully human. Indeed the Scriptures tells us that “*Christ is the visible image of the invisible God*” (Col 1:15) and yet he was “*made in every respect like us, his brothers and sisters*” (Heb 2:17) and therefore “*understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin*” (Heb 4:15). Because Jesus is the Son he can identify with us and understand us, while showing us a new way to the Father with whom he is one.

FRIEND

- “*Many will say they are loyal friends, but who can find one who is truly reliable?*” (Pro 20:6). God is that “*truly reliable*” friend who “*sticks closer than a brother*” (Pro 18:24), and who “*is always loyal*” (Pro 17:17) in any and all circumstances. He’s closer than blood relatives, for Jesus invites us into a place of intimate friendship with himself. He says, “*You didn’t choose me. I chose you*” (Joh 15:16). It’s ever so extraordinary that he – the God over all creation – has chosen us to be his friends!
- A true friend always stands with you, to champion and support you. “*God is for us*” (Rom 8:31) – as only a true friend can be. His attitude toward us is never negative, cynical, critical, nor contrary towards us. He’s on our side, always seeking the best for us. Jesus calls the Holy Spirit an “*Advocate*” (NLT, NRSV), “*Comforter*” (ASV, KJV), “*Counselor*” (NIV, RSV), “*Helper*” (ESV, NASB), or “*Friend*” (MESSAGE). The Greek word is *parakletos* is used of the Holy Spirit in Joh 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7; and of Jesus in 1Jn 2:1. In the widest sense it means ‘a helper, a succorer, one who aids another.’ In this sense, God is for us, on our side as friend, champion, advocate. God stands up for you against the enemy. So, let us enter his presence and experience his loving friendship and transformational advocacy on our behalf.

The Sphere of Economics (Science, Technology & Business)

God's purpose for the sphere of economics is to release provision and model stewardship. Science is the generative motor of this sphere, for it produces the research and development that allows for the creation of wealth by unlocking new products and services. It is then propelled forward by the distributive capacity of the business enterprise which produces and sells those inventions. When stewarded well, this process of creating and distributing wealth should glorify the Creator who works with humans as co-creators in the desire to multiply life-enhancing innovations.

Through the Sphere of Economics, God wishes to reveal himself as:

CREATOR

- The Bible begins, *"In the beginning God created..."* (Gen 1:1). Right from the start God wanted us to understand that he is a masterful artist, a brilliant innovator, a cutting-edge change-maker. He is not – and never has been – a dull, monotonous, colorless maintainer of the *status quo*, but an exciting doer of new things, an *avant-garde* designer of the future, shaping life-giving realities.
- In Genesis 1:1 the phrase *"God created"* introduces an unusual grammatical construct in the Hebrew. *"God"* – the noun – is in the plural (*"Elohim"* is the plural of *"El"* which means "god, rock, strength, fortress"), and yet *"created"* – the verb – is conjugated in the singular. This grammatical irregularity occurs consistently throughout the Scripture – every time the divine name *"Elohim"* is used. It hints at more than one personality working together in such a unified concert of action that it was as if they were but one being. Why is this important? Because it reminds us that God did not need us. Before creation existed, God lived in undescrivable reality of loving relationship between Father, Son and Spirit. This loving triune relationship is the foundational reality of all that exists and it is the driving force behind all that has been created. All reality – the fruit of God's creativity – is rooted in this divine love relationship.

PROVIDER

- In Genesis 22 we read an emotive story that is both heart-wrenching and heart-warming. God miraculously gave Abraham and Sarah a son in their old age (Gen 17:15-17; 18:10-14; 21:1-7) and then asked Abraham to sacrifice his son (Gen 22:2). Abraham obeyed *"because Abraham believed in the God who brings the dead back to life and who creates new things out of nothing."* (Rom 4:17). When he was about to strike the death blow, God intervened and said, *"Don't lay a hand on the boy!"* At that moment Abraham *"looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket. So he took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering in place of his son. Abraham named the place Yahweh-Yireh (which means 'the LORD will provide')"* (Gen 22:13-14). The story does not end here, for on this same site David experienced God's mercy-tempered justice (2Sa 24:10-25), Solomon built the temple which would house God's mercy seat (2Ch 3:1), and God sacrificed on the cross his son, his only son, Jesus, whom he loved, in order to provide *"purification of sins"* (Heb 1:3) and life everlasting through his mercy and grace.
- The name *"Yahweh-Yireh"* used by Abraham is built out of two terms – the second of which is based on the Hebrew verb *ra'ah*. Its core meaning is "to see, look at, inspect, perceive, consider." We can be confident he will provide because he sees us and his heart is moved by our condition. Many stories tell how people experienced God's intervening provision in their lives because he *"had seen"* their circumstances: Gen 16:¹³ 29:³¹⁻³² 31:^{12,42} Exo 3:^{7-9,16} 4:³¹ 2Ki 14:²⁶ 20:⁴⁻⁵ Psa 35:²² Isa 38:⁴⁻⁵ 57:¹⁸.

HEALER

- Healing was a prominent aspect of Jesus' ministry. The gospels describe 34 occasions in which Jesus healed someone. His ministry reflected the heart of God who affirmed, *"I am the LORD who heals you"* (Exo 15:26). It is God who *"forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases. He redeems me from death and crowns me with love and tender mercies"* (Psa 103:3-4).
- God's ministry of healing is multidimensional: physical, spiritual, emotional, mental, relational, social. It is seen wherever the consequences of sin – both personal and corporate – are overcome and God's original intent is restored. God not only wants to heal individual human beings; he also wants *"to heal the nations"* (Rev 22:2).

The Sphere of Government

God has appointed government in order to safeguard justice and create a peaceful and safe environment within the nation. Rulers should exercise delegated authority in order to serve the citizens whom they govern. The “Law of the King” found in Deuteronomy 17:14-21 warns those in authority against multiplying that which would lead them into a life-style of authoritarianism, hedonism and materialism. God’s alternative to these three unrighteous value systems is servanthood, purity and generosity. But since we are aware that our civic leaders are often pressed to compromise in the areas power, sex and money, we must pray and work to see every form of injustice, corruption and greed brought to an end.

Through the Sphere of Government, God wishes to reveal himself as:

LAWGIVER

- Isa 33:22 is a passage which is often pointed to as foundational for Biblical thought regarding how political structures are to be organized for governance. The three (triune) titles given here to God describe the three divine governance roles and serve as an inspiration for the modern tripartite separation of governmental powers into the judicial, legislative and executive branches. Some have describes these three roles of God as “the Law-maker, the Law-applier, and the Law-executor.”
- The Hebrew word translated “lawgiver” is *chaqaq*. It sounds like the action it describes. Imagine an ancient scribe with mallet and chisel in hand carving words into stone or clay tablets. The word literally means “to cut, inscribe, or engrave” for in the ancient Mediterranean world law codes were often chiseled into hard material. God himself inscribed the tablets handed to Moses on Mount Sinai with the Ten Commandments: Exo 24:10; 31:18; 34:1; Deu 4:13; 5:22; 10:2,4; 2Ki 17:37; Hos 8:12. Likewise, God says that in the time of the new covenant “*I will put my law in their minds and write [chaqaq] it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people*” (Jer 31:33).

JUDGE

- There are four main verbs in Old Testament which describe the act of judging. They are: 1) *diyn*: 9 of 24x is used of God; 2) *yakach*: 26½ of 59x is used of God; 3) *tsadaq*: 8 of 41x is used of God; 4) *shaphat*: 75½ of 203x is used of God.
- The Lord is a perfectly righteous judge. There is no duplicity, no double-standard, no favoritism, no corruption at all in him. Equity is his unwavering standard. He will not be swayed by a bribe and does nothing for selfish gain. Moses proclaims, “*Everything he does is just and fair. He is a faithful God who does no wrong; how just and upright he is!*” (Deu 32:4). The prophet says, “*you make righteous judgments*” (Jer 11:20). The psalmist declares, “*The LORD is known for his justice ... the LORD reigns forever, executing judgment from his throne. He will judge the world with justice and rule the nations with fairness. The LORD is a shelter for the oppressed*” (Psa 9:16,7-9), for “*He will rule with mercy and truth. He will always do what is just and be eager to do what is right*” (Isa 16:5).

KING

- God is worshiped as “*the blessed and only almighty God, the King of all kings and Lord of all lords*” (1Ti 6:15). Similarly, we are told that “*the Lamb ... is Lord of all lords and King of all kings*” (Rev 17:14) and it is “*on his robe at his thigh was written this title: King of all kings and Lord of all lords*” (Rev 19:16). God reigns over all human kings: “*He controls the course of world events; he removes kings and sets up other kings*” (Dan 2:21). Even Nebuchadnezzar, a powerful king of Babylon recognized that “*God is the greatest of gods, the Lord over kings*” (Dan 2:47).
- In Deu 17:14-20 we read the “*law of the king.*” Here God stipulates what a king should and should not do. Three things are prohibited of the king. He should not use his position to multiply 1) horses, 2) wives, or 3) gold for himself. In other words he was not to yield to the temptations of 1) power/authoritarianism, 2) sex/hedonism, and 3) money/materialism. Lack of self-control in these areas would eventually destroy the king and the kingdom. God’s king would be characterized by the opposite spirit of these worldly kings: he would display 1) servanthood, instead of the love of power, 2) purity, instead of the love of pleasure, and 3) generosity, instead of the love of things.

The Sphere of Religion

God's purpose for the sphere of religion is the extension of mercy and the promotion of reconciliation between those who have had relationships broken. This is to occur horizontally between human beings, and vertically between individuals and God. Competing religious worldviews contend for the hearts and minds of men and women everywhere. Without falling into a contentious spirit, we are to enter this marketplace of religious ideas and clearly display why the gospel of Christ is unique. In fact, the gospel is the only means of enduring grace, for it alone makes lasting reconciliation possible through the sacrificial love displayed on the cross.

Through the Sphere of Religion, God wishes to reveal himself as:

PRIEST

- a priest is one who speaks to God on behalf of the people (see prophet). *“Every high priest is a man chosen to represent other people in their dealings with God. He presents their gifts to God and offers sacrifices for their sins”* (Heb 5:1).
- Jesus is described as a priest: Psa 110:4; Heb 2:16-18; 3:1-2; 4:14-15; 5:4-10; 6:20; 7:1-3,15-28; 8:1-3,6; 9:11-12,24-28; 10:11-16,19-22; 13:11-12.
- The work of a priest results in sins being forgiven and relationship with God being restored. Thus it is that in Christ, who doubles both as the high priest and the sacrifice lamb, we have *“forgiveness of sins”* (Luk 24:47) and reconciliation with God (2Co 5:18-20).

PROPHET

- a prophet is one who speaks to the people on behalf of God (see priest).
- Jesus is described as a prophet: Deu 18:15; Mat 12:39; 13:55-58; 16:4; 21:11,46; Mar 6:3-6; 8:27-28; Luk 4:22-24; 7:16-17,39; 13:31-35; 24:18-21; Joh 4:19,43-45; 6:14; 7:40,52; 9:17, 24-25; Act 3:19-26; 7:37.
- The work of a prophet results in God's word being understood and people turning back to God in repentance which leads to obedience. Although one usually associates the predictive with the prophetic ministry; the primary purpose of the prophet is proclamational. The prophet's ministry has a threefold impact on others – it *“strengthens others, encourages them, and comforts them”* (1Co 14:3).

INTERCESSOR

- Both the Spirit and Jesus are described as intercessors: Rom 8:26-28,33-34. The priest Eli raises a crucial issue, *“If someone sins against another person, God can mediate for the guilty party. But if someone sins against the LORD, who can intercede?”* (1Sa 2:25). Job presents his need, *“I need someone to mediate between God and me”* (Job 16:21). Job describes a universal need. Who can meet that need? The answer is found in Heb 7:24-25: *“But because Jesus lives forever, his priesthood lasts forever. Therefore he is able, once and forever, to save those who come to God through him. He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf”* (see also Heb 8:6; 9:14-15; 12:24).
- The work of an intercessor moves the hand of God to do that which he could not justly do without the agency of that intercession. Eze 22:30-31 describes a tragedy that happened when there was no intercessor. God wanted to show mercy, but had to execute judgement because no one was willing to stand in the gap in intercessory prayer. God said, *“I looked for someone who might rebuild the wall of righteousness that guards the land. I searched for someone to stand in the gap in the wall so I wouldn't have to destroy the land, but I found no one. So now I will pour out my fury on them, consuming them with the fire of my anger. I will heap on their heads the full penalty for all their sins. I, the Sovereign LORD, have spoken!”*
- Note that God's mediating/intercessory roles not only deal with restoring vertical relationships between God and humans, but also horizontal relationships between human beings. These horizontal reconciliations include not only those between individuals but also between nations. *“The LORD will mediate between nations and will settle international disputes. They will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will no longer fight against nation, nor train for war anymore”* (Isa 2:4; see also Mic 4:3).

The Sphere of Education

God has designed the educational sphere to be a means of discipleship and multiplication. The purpose of discipleship is the transformation of the student rather than the mere transaction of knowledge. With this perspective education becomes a means of developing a Biblical Christians who have Jesus as their model and the Bible as their foundation. True education should occur in a family-friendly context, for God has delegated to the family the primary authority and responsibility for the education of their children. Every family on earth should have access to a Christian school for their children.

Through the Sphere of Education, God wishes to reveal himself as:

WARRIOR

- Education is often the arena where the war is most fiercely waged for the hearts and minds of the emerging generation. In this light we need to heed Paul's words: *"We are human, but we don't wage war as humans do. We use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments. We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ"* (2Co 10:3-5). *"So we tell others about Christ, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all the wisdom God has given us. We want to present them to God, perfect in their relationship to Christ"* (Col 1:28).
- The Greek word *strateia* (translated as "battles" in the NLT and as "warfare" in the KJV, NASB and NRSV) occurs only in 2Co 10:4 (cited above) and in Paul's letter to Timothy: *"Timothy, my son, here are my instructions for you, based on the prophetic words spoken about you earlier. May they help you fight well in the Lord's battles. Cling to your faith in Christ, and keep your conscience clear"* (1Ti 1:18-19). This is very instructive. The way to victory in God's battles is through clinging to faith and keeping our conscience clear. Faithfulness and integrity will win the day.

SHEPHERD

- The following passages speak of God as a shepherd: Gen 49:24; Psa 23:1-6; 28:9; 80:1-2; Isa 40:11; Jer 30:10-11; Eze 34:11-23,31; 37:24; Zec 13:7; Mat 2:6; 25:31-46; 26:31-32; Mar 14:27-28; Joh 10:1-16; Heb 13:20 1Pe 2:25; 5:4; Rev 7:17.
- Several passages of Scripture refer to people as *"sheep without a shepherd."* They are: Num 27:17; 1Ki 22:17; 2Ch 18:16; Isa 13:14; Eze 34:5; Mat 9:36; Mar 6:34. They need guidance, protection, caring oversight. We are told by Matthew that Jesus, *"had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd"* (Mat 9:36). What was his solution to their confusion? Mark goes on to explain, *"So he began teaching them many things"* (Mar 6:34). Godly kingdom teaching is the loving act of a good shepherd concerned for his confused sheep.

TEACHER

- Two Hebrew verbs describe the teaching action of God. They are: **yarah**; used 80 times, 24 with God as the teacher: Exo 4:^{12,15} 15:^{4,25} Jdg 13:⁸ 1Ki 8:³⁶ 2Ch 6:²⁷ Job 30:¹⁹ 34:³² 38:⁶ Psa 25:^{8,12} 32:⁸ 45:⁴ 64:⁷ 86:¹¹ 119:^{33,102} Isa 2:³ 28:^{9,26} Hos 6:³ 10:¹² Mic 4:²; and **lamad**; used 86 times, 23 with God as the teacher: Jdg 3:² 2Sa 22:³⁵ Psa 18:³⁴ 25:^{4,5,9} 71:¹⁷ 94:^{10,12} 119:^{12,26, 64,66,68,108,124,135,171} 143:¹⁰ 144:¹ Isa 48:¹⁷ Jer 32:^{33a,33b}
- Jesus is referred to as "teacher" (*didaskalos*) 47 times: Mat 8:¹⁹ 9:¹¹ 10:^{24,25} 12:³⁸ 17:²⁴ 19:¹⁶ 22:^{16,24,36} 26:¹⁸ Mar 4:³⁸ 5:³⁵ 9:^{17,38} 10:^{17,20,35} 12:^{14,19,32} 13:¹ 14:¹⁴ Luk 3:¹² 6:^{40a,40b} 7:⁴⁰ 8:⁴⁹ 9:³⁸ 10:²⁵ 11:⁴⁵ 12:¹³ 18:¹⁸ 19:³⁹ 20:^{21,28,39} 21:⁷ 22:¹¹ Joh 1:³⁸ 3:^{2,10} 8:⁴ 11:²⁸ 13:^{13,14} 20:¹⁶. He is honored as *rabbi* or its variant *rabboni* a total of 19 times: Mat 23:^{7a,7b,8} 26:^{25,49} Mar 9:⁵ 10:⁵¹ 11:²¹ 14:⁴⁵ Joh 1:^{38,49} 3:^{2,26} 4:³¹ 6:²⁵ 9:² 11:⁸ 20:¹⁶.
- The Spirit is also involved in the ministry of teaching. Luk 12:12 promises, *"the Holy Spirit will teach you."* Indeed, Jesus affirms that *"the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you"* (Joh 14:26 NIV; see also 1Jn 2:27).
- As is apparent from the above listings, all three persons of the Trinity actively participate in the activity of teaching. God's purpose is not to hide truth but to reveal it, so that we might understand it and apply it to our lives. He does not want to confuse, but to clarify. His intent is to assist us in the discovery of truth, not to encumber our pursuit for understanding.

The Sphere of Media (Communication)

God's purposes for the sphere of media is the transfer of wisdom and the promotion of healthy relationships. Proverbs is full of pithy axioms which emphasize the power of communication to do good or to do ill. There is great power not only in what is said but in how it is said. Today, with new media technologies emerging one after another, we have more and more capacity to communicate than ever before. But what are we communicating? Is it bringing life or death? Is it enhancing wisdom or promoting folly? We must enter into this arena as followers of Jesus to use every tool available to advance the ways of the kingdom of God.

Through the Sphere of Media, God wishes to reveal himself as:

THE WAY

- Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me"* (Joh 14:6). This insight gives us a very instructive paradigm. Jesus is:
 - *"the way"* – that is, the means, the method, the media
 - *"the truth"* – that is, the content, the curriculum, the message
 - *"the life"* – that is, the end, the goal, the desired outcome
- It was prophesied of the Christ: *"the Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD"* (Isa 11:2). Wisdom was to be a hallmark of the promised Messiah. Jesus was *"filled with wisdom"* and even so, he *"grew in wisdom"* (Joh 2:40,52). We are told that people were astounded by his wisdom (Mat 13:54; Mar 6:2). James describes wisdom thus: *"the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere. And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness"* (Jam 3:17-18). These characteristics aptly describe the way Jesus lived his life, leaving us an example that we should imitate.

THE TRUTH

- Jesus is *"the truth"* (Joh 14:6) – he's not a truth, he's the truth (the definite article is used in the original Greek to underscore this). He doesn't just have truth or teach truth, he is truth, he embodies it fully, totally, completely – indeed he is *"full of grace and truth"* (Joh 1:14 NIV). When Jesus was on trial before the Roman authorities, Pilate asked him *"What is truth?"* (Joh 18:38). Jesus did not answer Pilate verbally for it was not necessary to do so. Pilate was looking truth straight in the face, for truth is not a propositional abstraction to be analyzed, but a person whom we are called to know and love.
- We are told that *"wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom"* (2Co 3:17) and in like manner, that it is *"the truth [that] will set you free"* (Joh 8:37). If the Spirit frees us and truth frees us, it is because the Spirit of God is truth. Indeed, the Scriptures speak of the Spirit as *"the Spirit of truth"* (Joh 15:26; 16:13; 1Jn 4:6; 5:6) who *"leads us into all truth"* (Joh 14:17).

THE LIFE

- Jesus declared, *"And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth"* (Joh 17:3). Eternal life is not only a future quantitative experience which one experiences after death. It is the qualitative nature of life lived in close, intimate relationship with God. And it can begin even now. Jesus comes so that we may experience a *"a rich and satisfying life"* (Joh 10:10).
- God is a life-giver and calls us to be life-givers too. Life is God's greatest and it is therefore to be treasured and protected. Nothing is to be done which harms or undermines life. This is the primary presupposition undergirding the rationale of the last six commandments (Exo 20:12-17 and Deu 5:16-21) dealing with the horizontal relationships between people in God's foundational *Torah*.
- The goal of all communication (media) should be to enhance life. *"The tongue can bring death or life; those who love to talk will reap the consequences"* (Prov 18:21). In light of this, Peter said to Jesus, *"You have the words that give eternal life"* (Joh 6:68). In fact, Jesus is *"the Word [that] gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone"* (Joh 1:4).

The Sphere of Celebration (Arts, Entertainment & Sports)

God's purposes for the sphere of celebration is to strengthen hope and build community. Ever since the days of Jubal (Genesis 4:21), balladeers and artists have used their skills to entertain people and speak to the heart of their culture. In the Bible, these artistic gifts are often identified with the prophetic ministry. When the ideas of God are embedded in story form, the truth resonates with both heart and mind, maximizing the potential impact in the life of those who are drawn into the story. At the same time, story has the power to create identity and community. Stories of God's work in the past build hope for the future, giving strength and courage to face the ever present challenges of life's journey.

Through the Sphere of Celebration, God wishes to reveal himself as the source of our:

RIGHTEOUSNESS

- *"For the kingdom of God is ... a matter of ... righteousness, peace and joy"* (Rom 14: 17).
- One of God's "covenantal names" is *Yahweh-Tsidkenu* found in Jer 23:5-6; 33:16. It means, "the LORD is righteous; the LORD our righteousness; the LORD my righteousness," because the root, *tsidkenu*, means "straight right; righteous; just; justify." This title represents God's dealing with men under the ideas of righteousness, justification, and acquittal.
- God's perfect righteousness contrasts with our universal unrighteousness. The Scriptures affirm that *"No one is righteous— not even one"* (Rom 3:10), but *"The LORD is righteous in everything he does"* (Psa 145:17). Indeed, God's righteousness *"reaches to the highest heavens... Who can compare with you, O God?"* (Psa 71:19). When we consider this aspect of God's character, we are confronted with our great need for his intervention in our life, a need which is met at the cross of Jesus.

PEACE

- One of God's "covenantal names" is *Yahweh-Shalom* found in Jdg 6:24. It means "the LORD is peace; the LORD my peace; the LORD our peace; the LORD is or sends peace," because the root, *shalom*, means "peace; welfare; good health; whole; favor; perfect; full; prosperity; rest; make good; pay or perform in the sense of fulfilling or completing an obligation."
- It is worthy to note that God uses the word *shalom* 54 times in his communication – more than anyone else recorded in the Bible. Some of God's notable statements about *shalom* are found in: Lev 26:6; Num 6:24-26; 25:12; Isa 45:7; 54:10,13; 55:12; 57:18-19; 60:17; 66:12; Jer 33:6-9; Hag 2:9; Zec 8:12. In these passages God is the one who promises peace, who gives true peace, who leads us forth in peace, who desires we be led by peace, who plants seeds of peace in our midst, and who makes an enduring covenant of peace. *"Great peace"* is the fruit of being taught of by the Lord (Isa 48:22; 55:21; Eze 7:25; 13:10,16). He exhorts his people, among whom he has planted *"seeds of peace"* to *"Tell the truth to each other. Render verdicts in your courts that are just and that lead to peace... Stop your love of telling lies that you swear are the truth. I hate all these things ... So love truth and peace"* (Zec 8:12,16,19).

JOY

- One of God's "covenantal names" is *Yahweh-Nissi* found in Exo 17:8–15. It means "the LORD is a banner; the LORD my banner; the LORD our banner," because the root, *nissi*, means "a banner; an ensign; a standard (Isa 5:26; 49:22; 62:10; compare Psa 20:5; 60:4); a sign (Num 26:10); and a pole like that upon which the bronze serpent was forged (Num 21:9)." In a similar manner (Joh 3:14-17), through his sacrifice on the cross, Jesus has become our banner of victory, of triumph, of joy and celebration. In this regard both the bronze serpent and the cross are *nissis*, "banners lifted up" as symbols of war or victory. Compare the words of the psalmist: *"We will shout for joy when you are victorious and will lift up our banners in the name of our God"* (Psa 20:5 NIV). This is no superficial or casual joy, but the exultation resulting from achieving a great victory over the enemy.
- In God's *"presence there is fullness of joy"* (Psa 16:11 NRSV) for he is indeed *"the source of all my joy"* (Psa 43:4). Those who seek God will *"be filled with joy and gladness"* (Psa 70:4) and this *"joy of the LORD"* (Neh 8:10) will strengthen them! *"God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy to those who please him"* (Ecc 2:26).