

The Bourne Spirituality - EPHESIANS 6:10-20

But in this diner scene from Bourne Identity, his ability at first seems like some superpower. **But this ability to absorb one's surroundings and make assessments is what trained soldiers or officers would call SITUATIONAL AWARENESS.**

It's not superhuman. It's not a 6th sense. It's using and focusing your 5 senses.

I share this tonight, because **the church in America has long been insensitive** to the needs in our society that God has called us to recognize and respond to. Especially the ones our nation is grappling with now and has been for some 400 years. Racism. Injustice. The Church has lacked sensitivity, and even proactively tried to silence those who would push against the status quo.

As followers of Jesus, this shouldn't be the case. Jesus had next level situational awareness. And this situational awareness is what allowed for him to act with compassion.

An important note on being situationally aware:

***It's not about paying attention to everything.
It's about paying attention to the right things.***

Our present state in our culture? It's not next-level. It's sub-level and sub-par.

Look up Texting and walking on YouTube and have a laugh this week.

But listen to this – **seven thousand** people died in America from texting and walking.

And this lack of situational awareness doesn't just hurt us. It hurts those around us.

COVID and this pandemic has gifted us with a heightened awareness.

I'm way more aware of the flesh and blood human beings (*how many are there, how close are they to me, are they wearing a mask*) around me now.

Our hope is that things will turn back to normal.

But I hope an increased situational awareness is our new normal.

Some would define situational awareness as two words: ORIENT and OBSERVE.

Two major issues with situational awareness that we see in Ephesians 6:

Our Orientation: *We forget the fight isn't against flesh and blood.*

Our Observation: *We ignore the flesh and blood around us.*

ORIENT ourselves according to scripture in our culture.

What am I looking for? Knowing the baseline for a situation helps us to spot anomalies.

So what's the baseline for the believer? Ephesians 6 gives it to us:

For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world

One of the enemies schemes has always been **division**. Us vs. Them. Elevating self over others. One of the fruits of this scheme: racism.

And the systemic issues that flow from it and divide us and sow injustice in our society.

Our orientation isn't one of paranoia. But Paul says in verse 18:
"...with this in mind, be alert."

And what is this call to alertness sandwiched by? Calls to prayer. **PRAYER** orients us to **reality**. The reality that a lot of the fighting we do is to be done on our knees.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood...

You know you've stopped following Jesus and you've started following the scripts of our culture when you see the enemy as those people over there, or the people who voted this way, or protest this but not that... they're the problem. If that's the case you've got a problem in your perspective. The enemy doesn't wear flesh and blood.

With this in mind, be alert...

OBSERVE.

"Woke" – like "justice" - is a heavily politicized word at this point. But like "justice" – it's not some idea birthed in our culture.

In the same letter of Ephesians that we're reading tonight, Paul says:
"Wake up oh sleeper, and rise from the dead."

Our influence as the Church has largely died off because we've been so inward focused, so focused on me getting to Heaven instead of bringing God's kingdom to earth, we might as well be asleep at the wheel. If we haven't been able to feel and mourn with and lament alongside our black brothers and sisters in these times and before them, we're limbs on the body of Christ that have fallen asleep at best, and become disconnected at worst.

Scripture doesn't suggest – it commands us: *Wake up. Be awake. Be woke.*
*Or as Paul says later in Ephesians in our passage tonight: **Be alert.***

But the question in regards to tonight is: OK be awakened and alert to what?
*Again situational awareness is not about paying attention to **everything.***
*It's about paying attention to **the right things.***

First - OBSERVE - flesh and blood

Neighbor negligence. *Instead of living with situational awareness, we live with neighbor negligence, blind and inconsiderate to the flesh and blood around us.*

Jason Bourne would never be caught like that. **Jesus** would never be caught like that. And ultimately we're called to be Jesus, not Jason Bourne. We don't size people up and measure up possible threats. People aren't threats. Our orientation already tells us that our battle isn't against flesh and blood. God wants to bring ministry and healing.

OBSERVE - COLOR

“If you want to change the world, go home and love your family.”

- Mother Teresa (sort of – it’s a synopsis of her Nobel Prize speech closing)

MLK Jr. spoke on his family when he said in his *I HAVE A DREAM* speech-

“I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.”

And taken at face value, and stripped from the greater context of all that MLK said and wrote... (and we sure do love to do this with MLK), people have time and time again inferred that MLK had a dream that society wouldn’t see color.

“We should be colorblind.”

“God doesn’t see color,”

“I’m raising my kids to be colorblind.”

Nobody would go for a nature walk or go to see a sunset and say *“I prefer to not see color.”* Nobody in their right mind would step into an art museum and choose NOT to see the color present in those masterpieces.

Raising your kids to be colorblind is equally foolish.

Why do we do it? It’s the easy way out for the privileged when you’re surrounded by people that look like you in a society that values and celebrates your color.

MLK didn’t have a dream where all people were *the same*.

He had a dream that they were *equal*.

He didn’t dream for society to no longer *SEE* color.

He dreamed of a society that didn’t *JUDGE* based on color. He wanted justice.

People that say God doesn’t see color often point to 1 Samuel 16:6 where: *the LORD said to Samuel, “Don’t judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The LORD doesn’t see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”*

But this doesn’t say God doesn’t SEE their appearance. It says he doesn’t JUDGE them by it. And he’s not telling Samuel to be blind to appearance either. Just stop judging by it!

In simplistic terms, judging poorly or judging with a bias is what leads to injustice. God has a heart for justice.

Colorblindness makes it hard to do justice.

Because in a lot of cases **colorblindness makes us blind to injustice.**

To be colorblind is to be justice-blind.

You're blind to disparities and systemic issues if you refuse to see color. And this incessant cry to be colorblind is no doubt one reason why the Church has been so insensitive to them.

For me, a white man in America, the temptation to be colorblind is there. Colorblindness enables me to become numb to racism because it doesn't effect me. Rather than deal with a problem, I can adopt a view that acts like it's not there. But the ability to claim colorblindness in times of heightened racial tension is the height of privilege. It's easy to be colorblind when you're in the predominant culture.

But don't compromise for what's easy. Raise your kids to see color.

Raise your kids to be COLOR WISE.

Paul says in **1 Corinthians 9:21** - "I became all things to all people..." He didn't just see and discern ethnic and cultural differences, he was wise enough to let those distinctions GUIDE his ministry!

Being colorblind cripples our ability to love our neighbor that isn't like us. Being color wise recognizes that while I may not need a new perspective, I start in life with a narrow lens and should always push to broaden it.

Raise your kids to be color wise. Discerning, respecting, and responding.

Raise your kids to have COLOR BRAVE.

Ephesians 5:11 says *take no part in the worthless deeds of evil & darkness; instead expose them* Racism is evil. It's darkness. We don't sweep it under the rug in the name of peace keeping. We need to be color brave. We need to raise kids that are color brave. If God has already spoken on an issue like racism, the church can't stay silent.

OBSERVE – WITH YOUR EARS

There's a difference between hearing and listening.

Hearing by definition means the "process, function, or power of perceiving sound"

Listening, on the other hand, means "to pay attention to sound; to hear something with thoughtful attention; and to give consideration."

Thoughtful attention. Consideration. This kind of listening brings awareness. Awareness brings empathy and compassion, which our culture- especially those folks that look like me – we need that in spades these days. But it doesn't come out of nowhere. God doesn't want us to pray it or ask it into existence in prayer. That kind of awareness comes from humbly listening.

We've been socialized into this idea that posting sound bites, comments, and videos that agree with our viewpoint is somehow conversation. Sitting across from a table or a phonenumber and have an actual conversation? That's archaic.

We- especially those like me- need to get to listening in this season.
Sometimes loving your neighbor is as simple as listening.

For those lamenting, there's a healing peace that comes when we realize that God wants to hear our lament. We can talk to him in our pain. We can be honest and raw with him.
And scripture shows us God listens. He listens well.
So the Q is: *Why don't we?*

Psalm 116:2 says: "*Because he has inclined his ear unto me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live*"

NLT: "*Because he bends down to listen...*"

Because the word "inclines" means to bend down, to turn and give one's full attention.

Listening takes humility. Being willing to say I don't have it figured out. Being willing to say my perspective is limited and therefore imperfect. Being willing to lay down our pride and step into humility.

In South America LLAMAS serve as a cultural metaphor for pride.

To keep a herd of llamas in check, you don't need a fence, you just need a rope beneath the head and base of the neck. Rather than stooping low, they will stay where they are. They stand tall. But they remain captive. They won't bend down, and so they remain trapped.

We will be trapped in this cage of racism until the people of the predominant culture- people that look like me- will pause, bend down, and listen. Until then we'll remain stuck.

May we be those who- like God- don't just stand and hear, but bend down to listen.
May we be those who- like Jesus- don't say get it together, but step down to join in suffering.
May we learn to observe with our ears in addition to our eyes.
And may our eyes observe the flesh and blood we're called to love all around us. Color and all.

The Good Shepherd is situational aware.

The shepherd who was watching the 100 sheep had the awareness to know the 1 was missing.

God cares for you. He loves you. He's in pursuit of you.