

# Coffee Connect | More Than Meets the Eye

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

perspective, God, Christ, reflection, cultural context

## SPEAKERS

Blake Smith

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Hello and welcome to Coffee Connect, a Project Zion Podcast series where we share inspiring stories and thought-provoking reflections of life and ministry that remind us of God's loving presence in the world. I'm your host, Blake Smith, and today's reflection is about the importance of being open to the perspectives of others. It's called "More than meets the eye."

Things aren't always as they seem. Just when I think I've understood something to its fullest, having observed the world around me and taken from it the necessary information, I find that there is more to be known or learned, another perspective that I hadn't considered, a broader context for the issue at hand.

When we surround ourselves with the same people day after day, doing the same things, watching the same shows, gathering our news from the same news outlets, only making space in our lives for those things with which we are comfortable, or that confirm what we already believe, it is easier to convince ourselves that our perceived reality is reality for everyone, that our truth is the only truth, that what matters most to us *is* what matters most. It is not a new phenomenon. As a matter of fact, it is so deeply entrenched in most of our lives, that it is eating away at the fabric of our communities, splitting families, dividing neighborhoods, blocking the formation of new relationships, and distracting us from what really matters most Christ's mission of peace and justice for all of God's creation.

A couple of weeks ago, I had the pleasure of attending Community of Christ World Conference, where folks from nations around the world gathered to discuss and prayerfully consider important issues affecting our global community. As has often been the case, I went to the event believing that I had a solid understanding of the issues at hand, only to find that there was so much more to the issues than I could have imagined. Without going into all of the issues, suffice it to say that I had much to learn, and I still have much to learn.

Listening to the stories and concerns of others, as well as seeing things from a different perspective or cultural context opens us to discomfort because it demands a new way of thought. Something that in turn may, if we are truly open to the leadings of the Holy Spirit, bring about individual and communal transformation.

I understand that the need for truth and assurance and consistency become more and more important in the midst of the chaos. That is our current world situation. Unfortunately, rather than opening up our horizons to new cultures and ways of understanding that need for absolute truth has caused us to retreat into familiar spaces, drawing lines in the sand, building walls, and re-embracing worldviews which serve to strengthen oppressive systems and create false hierarchies with regards to the worth of persons.

If I've learned anything from opening myself to the lives and stories of others, it's that there is more than meets the eye when we take the time to listen to one another. There is brokenness and beauty, pain and joy, grief and celebration, hurt and healing. And in the midst of it all, there is God.

I encourage you to consider to whom God is calling you to listen. What perspective do you need to hear? How do you need to be transformed? What might God be able to accomplish? If we were willing to open ourselves to the more that exists beyond what meets the eye?

May you be blessed on your journey?