

The Attributes of Personhood



How do you recognize someone? *The attributes of personhood.*

A typical response is “by their face” or “by their shape”. And if not visually present, “by their voice.”

This was true of Jesus as you read the gospels up to the time of His crucifixion, burial, and resurrection. Old Testament scripture prophesied (*ex. Isaiah 53*) and the New Testament gospels recount such horrific flogging and torture when He was on trial, that we are told He was not recognizable, so disfigured was he.

Once

At His tomb, Mary Magdalene wept with sorrow. It was not until He spoke her name, “*Mary*”, that she knew immediately who He was. His face, shape, and even His voice had not served to reveal Him. She mistook Him for the gardener. Post-resurrection there was something different about Him. The Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead gave life to His mortal body ¹, temporary tent that it was. For Mary who had loved Him with her life, *it was the essence of His personality that exposed Him.*

She *knew* she was personally known by Him. That had been well-established within her before He went to the Cross. In this first moment of revelation that He was *not* dead but *very much alive*, Jesus the triumphant connected with Mary in the close, personal way of relating they had developed since He first set her free.²

Twice

The two disciples on the road to Emmaus³ were fascinated by Jesus’ knowledge of the scriptures as He shared in chronological order everything prophesied beforehand about *Him*. But, *they did not recognize Him until they “knew”*⁴ who He was by the recognizable action they had witnessed many times before.

Three Times

The third time Jesus appeared in “flesh and bones” after His resurrection was to the Eleven⁵, while the Emmaus two were telling them *what had happened on the way and how they had recognized Jesus*. The group was startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost - unlike Mary’s ‘gardener’.

Finite minds awaken slowly sometimes. He had told them all the details *before* and still they needed proof. He showed them His hands and feet. Nail scars are hard to refute, and joy and amazement set in. Even while, as Scripture says, they were *still disbelieving*, but now out of joy! This calls for a definite *Selah* moment.

He asked for and ate fish. This same Jesus who had fed the multitudes was hungry for what they had to offer.

And then ...

“He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.”⁶

"This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.

I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

On each of the above three occasions, He revealed Himself as *alive* in the same manner by which we experience Holy Spirit's interaction with us today -

First, at a deeply personal level – like Mary. She cherished Him but did not keep the good news to herself, for others loved, and would come to love Him, too.

Then, in companionship with another, as were the two on the road to Emmaus. Together, they spent treasured hours eating and drinking with Him after He opened their eyes. There was a physical meal they set before Him; Holy Spirit sets the table before us ([*sometimes in the presence of our enemies*](#)⁷) to satisfy our hunger and quench our thirst as He unveils Christ to us. The companions, like Mary, were filled then compelled to share.

Finally, He presented the larger group with His larger than death Personhood. Standing in their midst in all His *aliveness*, the Jesus they had lived life with charged them as witnesses of what they *now knew and had seen*. Their eyes shortly before had seen Jesus tortured, crucified, dead, buried. How they mourned, unaware (*despite the fact He had told them numerous times what was going to occur, which they greatly objected to*) that joy was coming!

Jesus came alive to them in a whole new way, gave them His parting instructions, then ascended leaving them the assurance of the Father's promise: the [Holy Spirit who would indwell](#) and clothe them with miracle power.⁸

In each progressive interaction, He caused their eyes to be opened. It was then they *knew* Him as they bore witness with unspeakable joy that He was very much alive! Consumed with grief, questions, and disillusioned natural reasoning moments before, how quickly their reality shifted. Death had become the servant of *Life*.

The Father's Promise

Did Jesus make good on His Father's promise? He did! Recall with me from [Divine Third Person of the Trinity](#) -

After Jesus' resurrection and ascension to His Father, Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 and has never left. He faithfully remains, doing the work the Father sent Him to do. The spirit of Christ, who came in bodily form, now resides in our midst and the hearts of believers in the Person of the Holy Spirit. ncb

The *Person* of the Holy Spirit will take on deeper meaning as our minds are opened to understand the Scriptures, *accomplished by none other than Holy Spirit himself*. As Fuchsia Pickett said,

"It is our privilege today to have the Holy Spirit, a living Person, dwelling within us, opening the classroom of our spirits 24 hours a day and letting us ask about anything we want to know. He never closes the classroom and He never scolds us for asking."

Join me again when the attributes of personhood will be unpacked further in an additional article.

~ Nancy

¹ Romans 8:11 ² Mark 16:9-11 ³ Luke 24:13-35

⁴ "knew" (absolutely) Greek 1097 in Strong's – also *be aware of, have knowledge of, perceive, be resolved, be sure, understand*

⁵ the Eleven - after Judas, one of the original twelve disciples, upon betraying Jesus went out and hanged himself

⁶ Luke 24:45-49 ⁷ Psalm 23:5

⁸ *Dunamis* power – to be able or possible, ability, might (-ily, -y), specifically miraculous power (usually by implication a *miracle* itself)