



As of last August, it is officially acceptable to use the word “selfie” in the game of *Scrabble*. And now you know.

Have you ever taken a selfie?¹ I’m not a huge fan, but I’ve taken a few of them, too. There are several tricks to the project, including figuring out how to get your phone to take a front-facing photo, paying attention to your background, including all the people you intend to include, and not falling off of or over anything while not paying much attention to your feet.

Generally, selfies are taken for the purpose of posting them online in some fashion, where, for good or ill, they achieve a certain immortality, since once anything hits cyberspace, we lose most of our control over it. The fact of the matter is that “achieving a certain immortality” likely plays a significant role in the selfie phenomenon for reasons of many sorts.



On the negative side, “digital immortality” has a certain feel of self-obsession and narcissism, neither of which appears to be in short supply these days. Our photos flash and bounce around the Internet, crying out, “Like Me!” “Comment on Me!”



At the same time, we should note that many famous artists have painted and many famous photographers have taken self-portraits, a good many of which are considered classics, and without which we wouldn’t have any idea what they looked like. Most of us are grateful for that information about the “greats.”

While the blossoming of the selfie phenomenon awaited the arrival of ubiquitous cell phones and their cameras, the general idea is probably as ancient as humankind itself. I’m reminded of a famous conversation in the book of Acts, where the Spirit told Philip to approach a chariot on the road to Gaza. The chariot’s owner was reading these words from Isaiah:

*He was led like a sheep to the slaughter,
and as a lamb before its shearer is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.
In his humiliation he was deprived of justice.
Who can speak of his descendants?
For his life was taken from the earth
(53:7-8; Acts 8:26-40)*

The charioteer’s poignant question to Philip was, “**Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?**” While we recognize these words as one of Isaiah’s

¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selfie>

prophecies that was fulfilled in Jesus, the charioteer wondered whether—and indeed, he hoped that—these words might have been written about him.

The charioteer, you see, was a eunuch. Although he was the Treasurer of the Ethiopian government, he had been castrated in order to remove any threat he might present to the royal lineage through his close contact with the royal family and the royal harem. If you read those words again with this in mind, I think you'll appreciate the pathos in his question to Philip.



The point is that, just as did the Ethiopian eunuch, so you and I, too, come to the Scripture hoping to find our own names written there. The desire to be seen and to be known is a universal human quality. It drives us toward each other and toward taking selfies, and it also drives us to God.

Part of the wonder of the Good News is that you and I do indeed find our names “written” in Scripture. David put it this way:

You have searched me, LORD, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. . . . Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast (Psalm 139:1-3, 7-10).

Four year-old Jonathan Newton learned the Lord’s Prayer by saying it in church each Sunday. On one particular Sunday, Jonathan’s voice carried above all the others as he said, **“Our Father who art in Heaven, I know you know my name.”**² My friends, the Good News of the Gospel is that your heavenly Father does indeed know your name, and everything associated with it, both good and bad. And God loves you anyway. Rejoice!

Dave



P.S. Today is the 10th anniversary of the “9/11” of the UK. On 7.7.05, nearly 60 people were killed and hundreds were injured in four attacks on the London transportation system.

² Jeff Newton, Lowell, Indiana.