

Within this brilliant treatise, Ray Case presents a thought-provoking study that guides Christians toward a deep covenant relationship with the Lord. *Sight and Insight* addresses profound concepts such as Christian identity, the priesthood of the believer, and God-honoring rituals. Yet Case’s down-to-earth, well-crafted presentation distills these complex ideas into applicable practices that will enhance the spiritual life of any Christian seeking a solid Christ-centered foundation for growth and true discipleship.

—Sue Harrison, best-selling author of  
*The Ivory Carver Trilogy* and *The Storyteller Trilogy*

*Sight and Insight* is a walk with the giants of the Christian faith. With brilliance and keen accuracy, Professor Case offers incredible insights into the central call of disciple making as the primary response to joining the priesthood of all believers. This book is sure to become another great resource for churches and pastors who are looking for practical and refreshingly biblical perspectives on disciple-making.

—Wayne Otto, DMin, adjunct professor and lead pastor,  
Providence Church (SC)

Professor Ray Case’s *Sight and Insight* provides readers with both accessible—even conversational-styled prose—and deep, ponderable insights into the central role of the “priesthood of all believers.” Discussion questions at the end of each chapter provide opportunities for individual readers and groups to digest the manna before them. Even his appendix provides further contextualizing definitions for important concepts and are very much worth the read. Case invites his audience to re-examine the “lens” through which they observe, encounter, cultivate, and care for God’s earthly creation.

—Paul D. Patton, PhD, professor emeritus, Spring Arbor University (MI)

Discipleship has become the buzz word around evangelical circles, but one thing that is rarely discussed is how a person’s identity should be shaped and lived out in every facet of their lives—both private and public—when he or she comes to faith in Christ. Looking at discipleship through an apologetical, historical, and theological lens, *Sight and Insight* is set up to take individuals or groups on a wonderful journey of what it means to live out one’s Christian faith without apology. This is not just a how-to book but also a why and what for. Take the journey!

—Dr. Devon Smith, district superintendent of the Tri-State District  
of The Wesleyan Church and developer of CROSS Training  
ordination program at Oklahoma Wesleyan University

# *Sight and Insight*

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AN INTRODUCTION TO  
CULTIVATING SPIRITUAL LENSES

RAY G. CASE III

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# Introduction

This book is intended as a beginning. It is a brief overview of Christian discipleship, coming from a slightly different perspective than you may have seen before. I trust that it will bring some clarity to the often opaque world of Christian jargon and the overwhelming variety of church practices.

Some of the terms you encounter in this book will be familiar, but my hope is that you will think of them in a fresh way after having seen them from another vantage point. I do not wish to obscure or overshadow any beloved associations you may have regarding the terms and practices addressed here; I want to expand and, perhaps, enhance your appreciation of them.

Some of the subject matter introduced in this book is exceptionally deep. I invite you to plunge in vigorously, while understanding that we will not be delving to the utmost depths. That's because this book is introductory in nature. The journey has to begin somewhere, and for some, this may well be the first step of a lifelong pursuit. I believe, however, that even those who have followed Jesus for many years

will find the focus of this book both enlightening and refreshing, and will not suffer for the lack of “difficult” content.

Sometimes the complexities that plague the topic of discipleship are entirely man-made. Sometimes we’re just a little too smart for our own good. I would like to avoid the temptation to climb the ladder of intellect when we should be digging to the depths of wisdom. My aim is to keep this content simple and strive for clear meaning and application.

Why am I concerned with simplicity? I have found that the words of Jesus are profound—and sometimes shocking—because of their simplicity. However, they are often so poked, prodded, and stretched that they become essentially academic theological arguments rather than the simple, divinely inspired rabbinical teachings they were intended to be. Some have forgotten that our teaching comes from a teacher, not a teller of riddles. Jesus did not set out to impress us with his genius, but to save us from our sin. You do not save someone by baffling them and rendering yourself incomprehensible.

For those already intimately acquainted with this book’s subject matter, I refer you to the venerable Dr. Samuel Johnson, who wrote, “What is new is opposed, because most are unwilling to be taught; and what is known is rejected, because it is not sufficiently considered that men more frequently require to be reminded than informed.”<sup>1</sup> If nothing else, I am reminding myself, and the good doctor is absolutely correct in assuming my need for it. In all honesty, I am confident that any familiarity you have with the subject matter will only heighten your refreshment, as you recognize new ways of looking at old, familiar terms and practices. The Christian who has walked in the way of Jesus for a long while may in fact be the one who will most appreciate the content they encounter here.

## INTRODUCTION

. . . . .

So, this book focuses on clarity and simplicity. It is not meant to cover every base and it will not. Instead, it is designed to distill down some complex, intimidating, overarching ideas to make them simpler and more accessible. Due to its subject matter, this book cannot help but demand something of the reader. The reader will be asked to think about the content and evaluate it. In truth, I intend to challenge some of the reader's commonly held perceptions and, hopefully, shift their perspectives. In doing so, however, I do not intend to confound the reader, nor do I intend to offer anything more than a call to a deeper beginning—a new vantage point from which to examine the Christian walk.

Now we come to the point. What is this book actually about? This book is about lenses. No, you do not need an eye exam, and it's not about optics, at least not in a literal, physical sense. This book is about the way we see the world and, more importantly, how we see ourselves in it. So yes, it is about examining our figurative lenses and the way those lenses impact us as we engage—or disengage from—the world in which we live. Let's begin.

PART ONE

THE PRIMARY LENS—

*Identity*

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**BECOMING AWARE OF OUR LENSES**

While we all have lenses that cause us to see the world in a certain way, we may not be fully aware of our lenses and the lenses of others, where they come from, and how they can be enhanced and even changed.

Be honest, how much have you thought about your worldview today? How much have you considered the way you view the world around you? You have been leaning upon your worldview to make sense of what you see and hear, but have you considered where you got your lenses? Have you checked your lenses for possible defects? Have you considered that another set of lenses might bring more clarity? If you are like most people, you probably haven't given these questions much, if any, thought. Most of us wander through life with little awareness of how our lenses affect our perspective. Most of us have never considered the possibility of discarding the lenses other people have provided us in favor of intentionally choosing or crafting our own lenses. This lack of awareness about our lenses is a recipe for confusion, misinterpretation, and disharmony—yet this is the condition in which a great many people live their entire lives.

Developing an awareness of our lenses and how they may be different from the lenses of others naturally raises the possibility of enhancing or replacing our existing lenses. If you're having trouble seeing something in the distance, you can enhance your vision using glasses, contacts, binoculars, or a telescope to bridge the gap. In each case, you supplement the lenses in your eyes with a new lens that will bring the object into focus. As we age, and our eyes deteriorate, we may end up trading out one set of glasses for a

stronger prescription. Our internal lenses—intellectual, emotional, and spiritual—work in a similar way.

*Oh no, he said it! If we don't like the way things look, we can just switch out the lenses.*

That sounds pretty wishy-washy, right? Actually, that's not what I'm saying at all, so please bear with me, and my meaning will become clearer in a moment. This book is about helping people in the church, both clergy and congregants, gain awareness of the lenses they use every day to view the world and to gain skill in choosing the best, most appropriate lenses for the task they're given—the ones that allow for the greatest clarity and understanding. In this context, no lens can be a “one size fits all” solution.

## MOVING BEYOND PRECONCEPTIONS

The lenses we use affect what we see. The lenses in our eyes, for example, permit us to see certain wavelengths of light while omitting others; still other wavelengths are actually bent in one direction or the other. If our eyes no longer effectively filter the light we see, we can use corrective lenses to restore them to within a normal range. The lenses we use can either help clarify what we see or distort it.

In his book, *Provocative Grace*, Robert Corin Morris wrote, “It is not all that easy to see what's in front of us. What we expect to see determines what data we let in. We often see the preconceptions in our mind rather than the reality.”<sup>1</sup> When it comes to our worldview, having the appropriate lens can make a huge difference in the way we see the world. Lenses determine what gets into our minds and hearts—and what is rejected. They determine whether our perception

is bent or warped. Lenses determine the data we receive about the world, and that deeply impacts what we call our reality.

Prior to becoming aware of our lenses, we tend to rely on our *preconceptions* or *preconceived notions* to understand the world around us. You might think of your preconceptions as simply what you've always thought or believed, without any deep reflection. Preconceptions color our understanding of everything we see, so it's important that we examine our preconceptions and consciously choose our lenses—in cooperation with God—if we wish to see the world as it truly is, instead of how we might wish it or imagine it to be. When we have the right lenses, we are much less dependent on our subconscious preconceptions, and we increase the positive actions of attention and observation. We will cover observation in detail later in the book.

## TWO MAIN LENSES

A natural question for you to have at this point might be, *What lenses need to be in the tool belt of the Christian?* In reality, though, no one can give you a definitive list. In this book, I'll identify and explore two main lenses that every Christian needs—but even these are just a start. Keep in mind that I do not intend to provide an exhaustive list—and I couldn't if I tried. My aim is to give you the main lenses you'll need to get you started down the road toward a more conscious, intentional discipleship at the feet of Jesus. From there, you'll be able to find and add new lenses, as needed and required by your situation and vocation. While the two main lenses I'll be exploring are important for every Christian, additional lenses may be

as individual as each person, based on each one's unique character, vision, and calling.

The first lens we'll explore is primary—it will impact the way you see anything and everything, including any additional lenses you might add. The second lens enhances and supplements the first, providing clarity and depth.

### ADDITIONAL LENSES

Any other lenses you may add as you walk with Christ are likely to be deeply connected with your personal gifts and experiences. Obtaining each lens is part of the maturing process, and with each new lens, there is typically a cost involved. New lenses are never free. They are crafted of tears, sweat, questions, answers, more questions, relationships, successes, disappointments—and a whole host of other things.



The struggles involved in procuring our lenses may not sound particularly appealing, but we cannot simply skip from the beginning to the end without crossing the long, often difficult, middle. Though the end result of an endeavor is almost always more attractive than the trials endured during its achievement, most of our growth and wisdom is encountered in the midst of those trials. To gain some perspective on this predicament, consider these words from C. S. Lewis's book, *Pilgrim's Regress*. In this allegorical story, the character Mr. History says to John, "Do you know what happens to people who set about learning

to skate with a determination to get no falls? They fall as often as the rest of us, and they cannot skate in the end.”<sup>2</sup>

If, as this quotations suggests, the difficulties and trials of life will come, even if we seek comfort over substance—a risk-free path—then would it not be best to choose the more direct route and take our lumps as they come? I, for one, have no interest in enduring falls if, in the end, I have not obtained the ability to skate. If I have to choose, I will take victory along with my trials, rather than defeat with what I would surely perceive to be abuse. To become a person of the Way—one with well-crafted lenses who uses them wisely for the glory of God—it is necessary to endure the education, while remaining in communion with Jesus. In the next chapter, we’ll explore the primary lens through which we view life: our identity.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What does the author mean when he refers to lenses?
- What are two important obstacles to be aware of when considering the way we use our lenses?

### ACTIVITY

- Answer the following questions (in a group or independently) to help determine your worldview.
- Who is God to me?
- Who is God to the world?

PART ONE: THE PRIMARY LENS—IDENTITY

. . . . .

- Who am I to God?
- Does a person's acceptance or rejection of God impact who they are to God?
- What is sin?
- What authority does the Bible have over my life?
- How do I understand the kingdom of God and my place in it?

## Chapter 2

### WHAT IS IDENTITY?

When people choose to follow Christ, they are gifted with a new lens that will help them move beyond their preconceptions to understand their life and all of reality as it really is. That new lens is the person's unique identity in Christ.

Our identity gives us information about who we are and who we are not. It reveals what we are, and are not, expected to do with our lives. Without this information—without the perspective offered by the identity lens—we are very likely to become something other than what we are designed to be.

Identity doesn't occur in a vacuum. In order to fully understand who we are, we need to discover who we are in relation to others. Our lives are designed to include a portion of *us*—a communal aspect. We like to feel connected and be a part of a larger group. If we do not actively seek to understand our identity, we are not likely to see that happen on any recognizable scale. Without a real, known identity, we cannot fully participate in our own lives. We are likely to become, to quote a great song from my distant youth, “dust in the wind.”

# Notes

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## Introduction

1. Samuel Johnson, “The Necessity and Danger of Looking into Futurity,” in *The Rambler*, No. 2, March 24, 1750. Samuel Johnson’s Essays, [www.johnsonessays.com/the-rambler/no-2-the-necessity-and-danger-of-looking-into-futurity/](http://www.johnsonessays.com/the-rambler/no-2-the-necessity-and-danger-of-looking-into-futurity/).

## Chapter One

1. Robert Corin Morris, *Provocative Grace: The Challenge in Jesus’ Words* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 2006), 37.

2. C. S. Lewis, *The Pilgrim’s Regress* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 150.

## Chapter Two

1. P. D. Eastman, *Are You My Mother?* (New York, NY: Random House, 1960).

2. Hugh Halter and Matt Smay, *Tangible Kingdom: Creating Incarnational Community; The Posture and Practices of Ancient Church Now* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 12.



3. Ginny Mooney, “Os Guinness Calls for a New Christian Renaissance,” in *The Christian Post*, June 18, 2011, [www.christianpost.com/news/os-guinness-calls-for-a-new-christian-renaissance.html](http://www.christianpost.com/news/os-guinness-calls-for-a-new-christian-renaissance.html), accessed August 10, 2020.

4. Robert Corin Morris, *Provocative Grace: The Challenge in Jesus’ Words* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 2006), 61.

5. Stanley Grenz, *Created for Community: Connecting Christian Belief with Christian Living* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998), 68.

6. Timothy Keller, “Our Identity: The Christian Alternative to Late Modernity’s Story,” November 11, 2015, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ehw87PqTwKw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ehw87PqTwKw), accessed December 28, 2018.

7. Timothy Keller, “Our Identity.”

8. Tom Rundel, Liminal Living Facebook page, August 8, 2020, [www.facebook.com/liminalliving/posts/2776484985908011](http://www.facebook.com/liminalliving/posts/2776484985908011), accessed August 8, 2020.

9. Tertullian, *The Writings of Tertullian, Volume 2*, ed. Anthony Uyl (Woodstock, ON, Canada: Devoted Publishing, 2017), 33.

10. Jane Austen, *Jane Austen: The Complete Novels* (New York, NY: Gramercy Books, 1981), 976.

### Chapter Three

1. Napoleon Bonaparte, as quoted in C. H. Spurgeon, *Spurgeon’s Sermons Volume 19: 1873*, ed. Anthony Uyl (Woodstock, ON, Canada: Devoted Publishing, 2017), 196.

2. Victor Hugo, *Les Miserables* (New York, NY: Penguin, 1987), 50.

### Chapter Four

1. Rowan Williams, *Being Disciples: Essentials of the Christian Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2016), 5.

### Chapter Five

1. Rowan Williams, *Being Disciples: Essentials of the Christian Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2016), 4.
2. Rowan Williams, *Being Disciples*, 4.

### Chapter Six

1. David W. Holdren, *Be Holy: God's Invitation to Understand, Declare, and Experience Holiness*, ed. Joseph Coleson (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2008), 23.
2. Karl Barth, *Community, State, and Church: Three Essays by Karl Barth with a New Introduction by David Haddorff* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004), 137–138.

### Chapter Seven

1. Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership* (Colorado Springs, CO: Lewis and Roth, 1995), 291.
2. Although James says “teachers” and not “leaders,” a teacher who does not lead is not likely to have students who follow him or her into knowledge or wisdom, and for this reason, I contend that leading is, quite naturally, implied.

### Chapter Nine

1. M. K. Gandhi, “Boycotts vs. Construction,” *Young India* 7, no. 43 (October 22, 1925): 357–360.

### Chapter Ten

1. Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1998), 1.
2. Risto Uro, “Ritual and Christian Origin,” 223, [www.helsinki.fi/teol/pro/ihminen/ohjeet/CHAP15URO\\_PP](http://www.helsinki.fi/teol/pro/ihminen/ohjeet/CHAP15URO_PP), accessed August 10, 2020.

3. Risto Uro, “Ritual and Christian Origin,” 234, drawing from Pascal Boyer and Pierre Lienard, “Why Ritualized Behavior? Precaution Systems and Action Parsing in Developmental, Pathological and Cultural Rituals,” (2006), [www.pascalboyer.net/articles/BoyerLienardBBS.pdf](http://www.pascalboyer.net/articles/BoyerLienardBBS.pdf), accessed August 11, 2020.

\*For a great book on how climate and geography can impact a person’s receptiveness to stimuli, read *Foreign to Familiar: A Guide to Understanding Hot- and Cold-Climate Cultures*, by Sarah A. Lanier.

### Chapter Eleven

1. Andrew Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1981), 6.

2. Andrew Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, 9.

3. C. S. Lewis, *The Joyful Christian* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1984), 86.

4. Edward Smith, *An Introduction to the Book of Common Prayer* (London, England: Gilbert and Rivington, n.d.), 15.

5. Jim Downing, *Meditation* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2011), 23.

6. Thomas Merton, *Spiritual Direction and Meditation* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1960), 52.

7. Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2014), 47.

8. John Bartunek and Dan Burke, “What Is the Difference between Meditation and Contemplation?” October 11, 2012, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=6cEvJ4R4Qhc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6cEvJ4R4Qhc), accessed August 13, 2020.

### Chapter Twelve

1. Richard Foster, *Freedom of Simplicity* (New York, NY: Harper-Collins, 1981), 68.

2. Foster, *Freedom of Simplicity*, 68.

3. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 71.

4. Henri Nouwen, *Clowning in Rome: Reflections on Solitude, Celibacy, Prayer, and Contemplation* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1979), 13.

### Chapter Thirteen

1. *Tanakh*. This word is used by the Jewish people to refer to their Scriptures. It is comprised of three separate words: Torah (Law), Nevi'im (Prophets), and Ketuvim (Writings). There is more to Torah than merely our Western understanding of "law," but that is a subject too deep for this footnote. It is sometimes considered offensive by Jewish people to hear their Scriptures referred to as the "Old" Testament, the implication being that these writings are outdated or replaced by an updated edition. This is not the case, or certainly should not be. The Jewish Scriptures are foundational and very important. They are neither outdated nor unneeded. Out of respect for the Lord, and in gratitude for the faithfulness of the Jews in preserving the Scriptures for these many centuries, remember to refer to the Jewish Scriptures as Tanakh when speaking to Jewish people (see Rom. 3:1–2). It is an offering to our High Priest to show love and respect to his people.

2. Philip Yancey, *Where Is God When It Hurts?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1977), 11.

3. Clifford Williams, *The Life of the Mind: A Christian Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 64.

### Chapter Fourteen

1. Charles Murphy, *The Spirituality of Fasting: Rediscovering a Christian Practice* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2010), 5.

2. *Asceticism*. The practice of severe self-discipline wherein self-denial is practiced on an ongoing basis. It is typically characterized

by a solemn or austere countenance, though not always. It is most often practiced in the pursuit of spiritual discipline.

**Appendix**

1. St. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1998), 3.

2. Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain: An Autobiography of Faith* (New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace, & Company, 1948), 92.

# Recommended Reading

## **List of Great Books for Study**

There are many other books I might have included in this list. Please do not let it become a limiting factor in your study. The writings of the early church fathers, for instance, should be read and studied. This list, however, is a fabulous beginning. Happy hunting.

*The Cost of Discipleship* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

*Life Together* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

*Jesus in the Seven Feasts of Israel* by Douglas Carmel

*Celebration of Discipline* by Richard Foster\*

*Options in Contemporary Christian Ethics* by Norman Geisler

*The Story of Christianity, Vol. 1: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation*, by Justo Gonzalez

*The Treaty of the Great King* by Merideth Klein

*Foreign to Familiar* by Sarah Lanier

*The Practice of the Presence of God* by Brother Lawrence

*The Abolition of Man* by C. S. Lewis

SIGHT AND INSIGHT

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*A Grief Observed* by C. S. Lewis

*Mere Christianity* by C. S. Lewis

*The Screwtape Letters* by C. S. Lewis

*Surprised by Joy* by C. S. Lewis

*Christ, the Ideal of the Priest* by Columba Marmion\*

*New Seeds of Contemplation* by Thomas Merton

*Opening the Bible* by Thomas Merton

*Why Trust the Bible* by Amy Orr-Ewing

*The Life You've Always Wanted* by John Ortberg\*

*Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus* by Nabeel Qureshi

*The Epic of Eden* by Sandra L. Richter

*I Dared to Call Him Father* by Bilquis Sheikh

*Living Above the Level of Mediocrity* by Charles Swindol

*The Hiding Place* by Corrie ten Boom

*The Pursuit of God* by A. W. Tozer

*Disciplines for the Christian Life* by Donald Whitney\*

*The Spirit of the Disciplines* by Dallas Willard\*

*Where Is God When It Hurts* by Philip Yancey

\*Resources on prayer/meditation/contemplation