

There's a series on Channel 4 called Four in a Bed. No it's not what you're thinking, what is your mind like? That programme is called Naked Attraction, a name which is mis-selling on at least one count. So. No excess flesh on display, Four in a bed is nothing more salacious than a reality TV come competition show about Bed and Breakfasts. Spread over a week, four B&B owners stay in each other's guesthouse, hotel or glamping site, gobble down the breakfasts, make comments about their stay and then pay what they think they've just sampled is worth, which may be more, the same or sometimes less than what the owner has asked for. At the end of the week, the facility with the amount of money closest to what was asked for wins and basks in temporary glory, the undying enmity of their fellow contestants and a cheap looking winner's plaque to hang on their wall.

It is pretty close to the bottom of the reality TV barrel which is why I know about it, and though you might think, it's difficult to conceive of anything less likely to be entertaining than people talking about whether they had a good night's sleep and did you enjoy your breakfast, the programme is actually highly dramatic, edge-of-the-sofa gripping, well if your life is as dull as mine. Sometimes Four in a Bed is tragic and frequently it's comic. Unless you're Wei-Wei however you're unlikely to want to watch more than a few weeks of the show because, though the faces change, the backdrops change and unless you're overnighing in Blackpool, the bedsheets change, the drama of each show is exactly the same. Week in, week out, you can pretty much write out beforehand what's going to happen, and you can predict precisely what will be said, by every contestant, before they've even decided to open their mouths. If you're really good, you can lip sync as they say it.

Here's what happens. When you are rating someone else- 'I wouldn't feed that sausage to my enemy's dog' or 'the decor is so out of date it comes with a Cliff Richard soundtrack' or 'I slept so badly I look like Michael Gove freeze dried and turned inside out'; well when you make those comments you are just being honest, reporting entirely objectively what you have experienced. Just trying to be helpful. Don't shoot the messenger mate. And when it's your *petit pension* that's under the microscope, well those other people just being picky to point out that the mattress is so stained it looks like a relief map of Wales, just being childish to complain that the bathroom floor was so sticky they've left half their left foot in there; contestants game-playing when they note that they didn't get the best night's sleep in your glamping site yurst sited as they are under the Hammersmith flyover. You're being honest:they're making it up because, they want to cheat their way to the top.

This is not people being cynical, or even hypocritical: they seem to genuinely believe their own innocence and the machiavellian malevolence of their competitors.

Some of this is the baked in human propensity to see ourselves as just that little bit better than everybody else regardless of the amount of evidence that piles up to the contrary, and the rest of it is down to our very real tendency to stop noticing something when it's always there.

You don't notice the dust in your own house (not that is till the Rector knocks on your door). You don't notice the smell of your own dog, and if you have a shiba inu, of course you don't because they're odour free. You don't notice the dust, the dog, the detritus: you are happy wallowing in your own muck.

You don't notice your own nose, though it's there permanently prominent between both your eyes, you don't notice your breathing, unless you stop and if you have ceased to inspire, well, even then you won't notice it for long.

After a while we don't notice the wallpaper any more. I bet when you first came into this church you thought 'wow', and now you barely blink at its outrageous Victorian gilded gothic and in precisely the same way, we cease to notice our own flaws; they become part of the background, our faults become the default.

When Jesus asked

*"Why do you see the speck in your neighbour's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye?"*

he was accusing his listeners of hypocrisy. It was a wake up call. Until that point they were probably entirely unaware that they were being hypocritical. And it probably took a while more of defensiveness, self-justification and denial before the penny dropped. We don't notice the log in our own eyes because it's always there, we are desensitised to our sin. Of course we want to draw attention away from our own shortcomings and pointing at somebody else is an effective way of doing that, 'Oo, look at the speck on her' but really, most of the time, we really, really don't realise we're doing it.

And now, we do.

Let us hear all Jesus had to say here.

*Why do you see the speck in your neighbour's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbour, 'Friend, let me take out the speck in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbour's eye.*

It's important to note that Jesus is not zeroing in on a small band of the ultra-sanctimonious here. It's easy to hear the condemnation and think 'Yeah, you tell 'em Jesus!' But that's missing the point. The 'log' tendency is universal; Jesus is talking about *us*, and talking directly to us. It's not a comfortable thing to hear, but it shouldn't harm us to hear it.

There are two morals to this. One. You live in a glass house, so best not throw anything harder than a small cushion. Be as easy on others as you are on yourself. And following on from that; 2: be self-aware but don't beat yourself up, deal with yourself firmly but gently.

It's one of the easiest things in the world to make our faith about other people's perceived faults, but of course it's not really about that. It's easy to convince ourselves that we're loving our neighbour by jabbing our finger into their eye trying to remove that speck, but we're not, and anyway, there are many other, better and certainly less painful ways to love them.

Sometimes the realisation can hit hard that we're carrying a log around in our eye, and the desire to extricate it can make us end up hurting ourselves. I am not worthy, I have no worth. Self-examination can be but a step away from self-flagellation. So, be easy on yourself. Remember this. God hates nothing he has made, so why should you? God hates nothing he has made, and that includes you. Only one human has ever been perfect, and it isn't you.

Your sins, your faults are *your* faults, they belong to you and nobody else. Which means that you are uniquely placed to deal with them. And you can. But, please, slowly and gently, without damaging yourself further in the process.

However big that log in your eye is, God loves you. If you never get close to removing that ocular plank, God still loves you. The wood in your eye is not and never will be a factor in God's love for you.

But it's still worth trying to whittle that wood away. The less log in there, the better you will see. And the clearer your vision, the more clearly you will see God. And, you may not realise it, but to see God, to see God, is your soul's only desire.