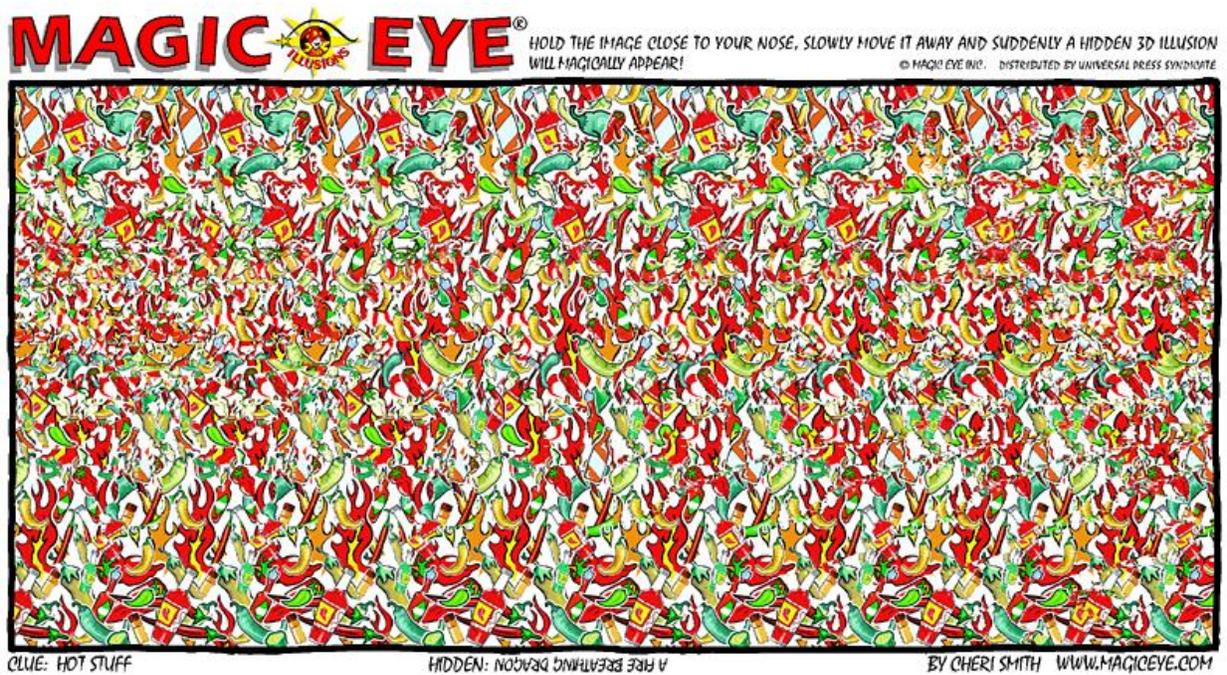


## Magic Eye Puzzles April 24, 2022

When I was a kid, in the Sunday comics, there was a section called “Magic Eye.” It was a rectangle of a brightly colored patterns, and if you looked at it in just the right way, you could see three-dimensional figures.

The problem was that it was really hard to do. You had to hold the paper right up to your eyes until you were cross-eyed, and then slowly move the paper away without uncrossing your eyes. Rare was the person who could actually do the “Magic Eye” puzzles, but these brightly colored boxes were still the craze of the 1990s.



*A Magic Eye sample puzzle (<https://www.magiceye.com/samples/>)*

Then things changed for my siblings and me. One summer, some cereal was having a promotion where you could send in for a free “Magic Eye” poster. So we ate our Frosted Flakes cereal and we sent in our box tops, and lo and behold, 4-6 weeks later, we received our Magic Eye poster.

Well, now we were invested. My siblings and I spent hours trying to train our eyes to see these 3-D images in this Magic Eye poster, and eventually, my brother succeeded. He pointed out how there was a shark right here and a boat right there and how could I not see it.

Words cannot describe my frustration in that season of my life. It was so clear, so obvious, and yet I was not in on the secret. I could not see what my brother could so clearly see. And for his part, my brother was frustrated with me for not being able to make out the shapes that he could see in the Magic Eye.

That is, I think, the frustration that dear old Thomas must've felt that fateful week after Easter. On Easter evening, hours after the resurrection, Jesus appears to his disciples, wishes them peace, and gives them the Holy Spirit.

But poor Thomas is out taking a walk when Jesus arrives. When he returns, the disciples tell him all about Jesus' visit, but he doesn't believe. And can we blame him? Wouldn't that be us in his situation?

How frustrating that must've been for the disciples as they tried to convince Thomas (without success) that they had seen Jesus. And how frustrating that must've been for Thomas to hear how Jesus had visited the other disciples when he wasn't there! No wonder he wants proof.

Finally, after a week of this tension, Jesus appears to the disciples again. And this time, Thomas is with the disciples. Jesus again comes and wishes peace to his followers. Then he invites Thomas to look and touch his wounds in his hand and in his side.

And I love Thomas' honest statement of wonder and belief: "My Lord and my God!"

Jesus' response then is not only for Thomas but for all of us who follow Jesus: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

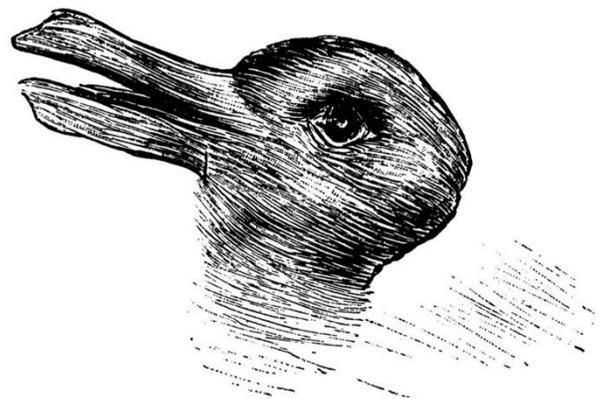
Out of frustration and doubt comes believing and new life.

That was true of Thomas the disciple, and that was true with my brother and me and our Magic Eye poster. My brother (whose name is Thomas, strangely enough) took the time to coach me to help me see the Magic Eye image. And eventually, it worked. I was able to make out the outlines of the shark, and then the boat, and then other shapes in the scene. What a relief, what a gift it was to see what others had seen.

In our lives, we don't see the world as others do. Our perspective, our worldview (as we say) is shaped by our experiences, by our upbringing, our education, our friends and acquaintances, our fears or mental stress, and countless other factors. We do not see the world the same way our neighbors might.

A kind of simple example of this is an optical illusion that you've probably seen before. It is an image of an animal. Depending on how you view it, the animal you see might be a duck or it might be a rabbit.

A lot of psychological research has been done around this image, and the thought was that left-handed people saw one animal first, while right-handed people saw the other animal first. As it turned out, handedness didn't seem to have an effect on the perception of the image, but age, sex, and culture did. Who we are affects how we see the world.



*A rabbit or a duck?*  
(<https://www.today.com/health/rabbit-or-duck-124-year-old-drawing-has-both-if-t73606>)

And like the disciples and Thomas, we can easily get frustrated when others don't see the world as we do.

I think one of the lessons that the Gospel story shows us today, in addition to the importance of faith, is the caution not to become frustrated or entrenched with someone who does not see the world as you do. The 10 disciples who saw the risen Jesus had a very different understanding of their rabbi and of the nature of death than Thomas did for that week after Easter. Our experiences shape how we see the world, and how we see the world shapes what we believe.

So it's good for us to be gentle with the Doubting Thomases of the world. And it's good for us to be gentle with others when we are Doubting Thomas. We see different things from one another, even when we share an experience. And the gift of community is that we can help others see our view, and we can allow our eyes to be opened to the view of others, if we have the patience.

Amen.

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