

How Is Your Eyesight?

November 26, 2017

Many of us have had to get glasses because of eyesight issues. It is not just reading the eye chart. The optometrist puts this machine in front of your face and has you reading some of the lines on the eye chart. He does some flipping of something and asks "does number 1 look clearer of number 2?" Sometimes the difference is very minimal. But he keeps on working to get as clear a picture as he can so we can get the right prescription.

For many of us, the prescription changes over time. We go back to the optometrist to get another eye check. We are able to focus in better when we have the right prescription. When our eyesight drifts, it is that much more difficult to focus on the task at hand. Some of us have had surgeries to bring our eyesight up to speed. Eileen Rexroad recently had cataract surgery. She told me it not only made things clearer but also more vivid as the cataract had caused things to have a yellow tint.

I am fascinated that the Bible has much to say about eyesight. I know we see passages about other body parts as illustrations. Revelations talks about those who have ears "let him hear what the Spirit says." Romans says that "faith comes by hearing the word of God." But there are so many more passages related to what we see.

Our physical eyes many times affect our spiritual eyes. Do you not agree? What we see all around us can affect how we view God. When we see despair and rage, do we not sometimes ask, "where are you Lord?"

So, what is it that we are to focus on? How can we get the right prescription spiritually?

In verse 1 of Colossians 3, he tells us to:

Set your sights on the realities of heaven

For those who have committed their lives to Jesus Christ, this is the best way to refocus.

Colossians 3:1 (NLT)

Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand.

I am at an age where I find myself thinking about the life to come. Especially when I see an obituary in the paper of someone I knew growing up or someone my age.

Do you ever think about the days ahead when we will see Jesus? Think about that for a moment. We will be in the presence of the One who saved us. His glory will be incredible! What will that look like?

Revelation 21:1-4; 22-25 (NLT)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever."

And I saw no temple in the city, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God illuminates the city, and the Lamb is its light. The nations will walk in its light, and the kings of the world will enter the city in all their glory. Its gates will never be closed at the end of day because there is no night there.

Most of you know how much I love Martha. She is the most precious gift God has given me on this earth. I used to be sad when I read the passage in Matthew where Jesus addressed a bunch of Sadducees (a part of Judaism who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead). He told them "in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven." This discouraged me. But when we get to heaven, God's glory will be so all consuming, so magnificent. These words don't even begin to describe what we will be seeing and the joy and love of close relationships in heaven will be more rather than less than it is here on earth. Scripture indicates the eternal glories awaiting the redeemed will be more splendid than anyone can begin to imagine.

We will see Him as He really is! Do you take the time to think about seeing Jesus face to face? In Revelation 4, there was a lot of falling down before Him and worshipping Him by those described as elders.

One of my favorite Jeremy Camp songs is "There Will Be A Day." Some of the lyrics are:

"There will be a day with no more tears, no more pain, and no more fears
There will be a day when the burdens of this place,
Will be no more, we'll see Jesus face to face"

Our eyesight gets fogged by so many things. This passage in Colossians helps us with some of the things that get in our way and some things that help us focus. You may think this is impossible but there were some who were described like this.

Don't let our physical eyes fog our spiritual eyes

Our circumstances will many times affect how we see Jesus.

11/28/2017 Message "How Is Your Eyesight?"

Look at Hebrews 11:27. There is a phrase that fascinates me.

Hebrews 11:27 (NLT)

It was by faith that Moses left the land of Egypt, not fearing the king's anger. He kept right on going because he kept his eyes on the one who is invisible.

This passage refers back to Exodus 2 when Moses did something that Pharaoh didn't like. It says that Pharaoh set out to kill Moses. Dire circumstances but he kept his eyes on the one who is invisible and things began to happen in a great way in Moses' life.

Another example is Stephen, one of the first deacons in a local church

The 7th chapter of Acts is one of my favorites in the book. There were a number of false accusations against Stephen by men who were conspiring to get him out of the way. You can read about that in Acts 6:8-15.

When chapter 7 starts with the high priest asking Stephen "are these things so?" From there, Stephen rehearses a Cliff Notes version of Jewish history. 52 verses worth. I imagine at some point during Stephen's homily, the high priest was thinking "I wish I hadn't ask that question!" Stephen reached a crescendo by accusing these men of being "stiff-necked and uncircumcised of heart and ears, always resisting the Holy Spirit." With that, those who were listening were enraged and it says they "ground their teeth at him." Stephen saw how their great anger at him. This is what happened next.

Acts 7:55-56 (NLT)

But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed steadily into heaven and saw the glory of God, and he saw Jesus standing in the place of honor at God's right hand.⁵⁶ And he told them, "Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing in the place of honor at God's right hand!"

WOW! Stephen is seeing and feeling the great rage of men who hated him. Any yet, he kept his eye on the one who is invisible. He, like Moses, was focused with his spiritual eyes on the goal.

What fogs our spiritual eyes?

Fear must be tamed

Two weeks ago, Pastor Darin taught through Philippians 4:1-9. He made a statement in his message that I found interesting and, quite frankly, startling.

He said, "You probably know that the most frequently stated command in all of Scripture is not to worship God or to love God or to serve others. The most commonly stated, the most repeated direction and command in Scripture is: "Do not be afraid."

Depending on what phrasing you go with, there are at least 70 and thematically speaking over 300 times believers are commanded to “Fear not.” That is five or six times more than we are exhorted to praise God, love God or serve Him.”

Many of you know verse 6 well but struggle to live it out. It says

Philippians 4:6 (NLT)

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.

I contend that worry or fear is the biggest culprit to clear eyesight. It shrinks our faith and causes us to make critical mistakes in our walk with the Lord. It blurs our vision.

Saul's example of this is striking.

Samuel, the prophet and the one who had annointed Saul to be king, had given Saul a clear directive in chapter 10 verse 8 about what to do in Gilgal.

1 Samuel 13:8-15 (NLT)

Saul waited there seven days for Samuel, as Samuel had instructed him earlier, but Samuel still didn't come. Saul realized that his troops were rapidly slipping away. So he demanded, “Bring me the burnt offering and the peace offerings!” And Saul sacrificed the burnt offering himself. Just as Saul was finishing with the burnt offering, Samuel arrived. Saul went out to meet and welcome him, but Samuel said, “What is this you have done?” Saul replied, “I saw my men scattering from me, and you didn't arrive when you said you would, and the Philistines are at Micmash ready for battle. So I said, ‘The Philistines are ready to march against us at Gilgal, and I haven't even asked for the LORD's help!’ So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering myself before you came.” “How foolish!” Samuel exclaimed. “You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you.

He freaked out so he took matters into his own hands. He paid the price for that later in life.

I get stuff via e-mail from Andy Stanley on a regular basis. For those who don't know who he is, Andy is the lead pastor of North Point Church in Atlanta. Gifted communicator. One of his recent series dealt with this very subject. This is how he summed up Philippians 4:6 passage.

“When faith in someone exceeds our fear of something, fear loses its grip.”

When our eyesight is clear and focused, fear's control is gone. Fear will never leave us in this life but the its control over us will diminish.

Change our eye chart

In John chapter 9, there is a story of a blind man that is familiar to many here. But the ears play a part in how people see things. Look at what is happening here.

John 9:4-7 (NLT)

We must quickly carry out the tasks assigned us by the one who sent us. The night is coming, and then no one can work. But while I am here in the world, I am the light of the world." Then he spit on the ground, made mud with the saliva, and spread the mud over the blind man's eyes. He told him, "Go wash yourself in the pool of Siloam. So the man went and washed and came back seeing!

This is the essence of the Gospel of Jesus Christ that someone living in the darkness of sin can come to the light of salvation. What is intriguing is the response of the "religious" people who saw this happen. The Pharisees asked this man how he could see and he told them how Jesus had used a mud pack to clean his eyesight. He explained this on the Sabbath when questioned. The Jews did not believe he was blind to begin with so they called his parents to confirm. His parents were afraid of the Pharisees. They verified his blindness but told the Pharisees to talk with their son because they didn't want to get kicked out the church. The Jews called the man back in and asked him again. Here is the exchange:

John 9:24:34 (NLT)

So for the second time they called in the man who had been blind and told him, "God should get the glory for this because we know this man Jesus is a sinner." "I don't know whether he is a sinner," the man replied. "But I know this: I was blind, and now I can see!" "But what did he do?" they asked. "How did he heal you?" "Look!" the man exclaimed. "I told you once. Didn't you listen? Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?" Then they cursed him and said, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses! We know God spoke to Moses, but we don't even know where this man comes from." "Why, that's very strange!" the man replied. "He healed my eyes, and yet you don't know where he comes from? We know that God doesn't listen to sinners, but he is ready to hear those who worship him and do his will. Ever since the world began, no one has been able to open the eyes of someone born blind. If this man were not from God, he couldn't have done it." "You were born a total sinner!" they answered. "Are you trying to teach us?" And they threw him out of the synagogue.

They were so full of their own pomposity, they couldn't see what a marvelous thing Jesus had done. Their eyesight was completely on themselves and what they were doing.

Luke 18:9-14 (NLT)

Then Jesus told this story to some who had great confidence in their own righteousness and scorned everyone else: “Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other was a despised tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: ‘I thank you, God, that I am not like other people—cheaters, sinners, adulterers. I’m certainly not like that tax collector! I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income.’

“But the tax collector stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, ‘O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.’ I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

First guy, LOOK AT ME!! Second guy, please don't look at how I have fallen so short of the mark. I can't read the chart.

Which one are you? Or which eye chart are you looking at? Your own eye chart or God's? The problem is there is only one letter on our eye chart; "I" Makes it easy to read.

Where is the new eye chart?

Hebrews 12:1-2 (NLT)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God’s throne.

Keep our eyes on Jesus. We do this by reading and studying this book that gives us the clearest picture of who He is. I am challenged by so many of you who have committed to learning about Jesus in the Bible. While it is important to have a conviction about different doctrinal issues, the most important thing about this Book is its ability to transform our minds to become more like Jesus. That is Romans 12:2.

Another way we can change our focus is the pay attention to those who are walking with the Lord. Pastor Darin taught 3 weeks ago from Philippians 3. Tucked in that chapter is something I have appreciated for a long time.

Philippians 3:17 (NLT)

Dear brothers and sisters, pattern your lives after mine, and learn from those who follow our example.

Many years ago, God thumped me upside my head and told me to pay attention to some men who were a bit older and watch how they lived their lives. This was early in our marriage so I was particularly attuned to how these men treated their wives and children. This was well before "mentoring" was in vogue. These men mentored me without even knowing they were doing it.

Martha and I continue to watch some of you and are encouraged and challenged to honor the Lord in our marriage because of you.

How about you? Are you watching those who don't display perfection but integrity? That is much harder in these days of the social media noise and increased cynicism about almost everything.

So, how is your eye sight today? Or what are you looking at?

Maybe you have never understood what it means to commit your life to Christ. If not, I would encourage you today to consider the claims of Jesus.

Some of the first people Jesus talked to when He began His ministry recognized very quickly that Jesus had something they needed. When they asked Him "where are you staying?"

John 1:39 (NLT)

He said to them, "Come and you will see." So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour.

For some here today, this may be the time you are encouraged to look at a new eye chart because the one you have been looking at is not very clear or has only one letter.

For others here today, you may have drifted in your eye sight and need to talk with the one who made your eyes in the first place.

Let's pray.