

Prayer: Living God, we invite you into our minds and hearts in this hushed moment of praise and thanksgiving. We listen for your invitation to forget our daily stress and to unwind in your embrace. You enfold us in your peace extending beyond needless worries and everyday troubles. We worship you with these gifts and with spirits renewed by your grace. We pray in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, whose message transcends time. Amen.

LOOKING AT LIFE THROUGH GOD'S GLASSES: – PART 1 ~ OBSTACLES OR OPPORTUNITIES

In baseball, having a "good eye" means that the batter doesn't swing at bad pitches, only hittable strikes. In life, having a good eye means that our hearts focus on the right things, or better yet, the Right One, rather than letting our eyes wander to and covet many things that can't bring us true happiness. We refuse to swing at any of Satan's pitches! Focusing our spiritual sight, our lives, on the wrong things always leads to ultimate unhappiness and destruction. That kind of sight is never satisfied with what it has; it has an insatiable appetite to possess, acquire, and achieve more. Such an attitude ultimately robs life of joy and replaces the Father and his Kingdom with trinkets and temporary toys.

Have you ever been in pitch darkness? Maybe you've gone in to a deep cave. The darkness was quite thick. As sinners, we can live life like that: in utter darkness. Or we can live in the light. And in the light, of course, all of life opens up again.

It all depends on our eyes, says our Lord: "The eye is the lamp of the body." What you focus on, what you see, makes the difference between your whole body — your whole life — being filled with darkness or light. What's a good eye, then? There's an unusual Greek word here, which good translations catch. It's a word that speaks of sincerity, devotion, and also generosity. The opposite — a bad or evil eye — that's a biblical way of talking about being greedy or covetous.

Do we have good eyes? A person with good eyes sees where people are hurting. They see where there is need and sincerely wants to bless others, help them in their struggles and difficulties. A person with good eyes gives: gives from their wallet, time, and themselves. They consider others, how can they encourage them (Hebrews 10:25). But those with bad eyes, evil eyes, are always considering things in the mindset, "what can I get out of it for me?" Their eyes are on riches and wealth. And this eyesight affects their whole life. This perspective is much more serious than you think: "The eye is the lamp of the body." In Proverbs 11:25 we read, "A generous man will prosper. And he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed."

The way to find life for yourself is to live for others. The way to find blessing is to be a blessing. But with bad eyes, when you are focused on your own wants and desires, your whole life is plunged into darkness. Where there is selfish ambition, everything in life is tainted and distorted. You will not see correctly your wife, your children, yourself — anyone, in fact.

How do we work on good eyesight? How can we begin to see life the way it ought to be lived? It begins by first seeing the Lord Jesus Christ. We need to have our eyes focused on him, in commitment, in loyalty. That's an aspect of this Greek word too: being single minded. Christ shows the way for us to live. He gave himself for us. He saw the needs of those around him and he lived, he died, to meet them. If we do not fix our eyes on him, we live in darkness. But if we genuinely give ourselves to him in love and loyalty, our whole body will be full of light.

We also need to see his Kin-dom: the place where Easter is a reality, where life is restored again, in righteousness, joy, and peace. That is what Christ has come to bring. And seeing that means seeing life again. When we look at life, what do we see? Do we simply see places to have fun? Places to make a buck? Places to strengthen our own pride, our ego? Or do we see the Kin-dom of God that claims our work and free time, our marriages and our ministries? Do we see that the time has come for all of life to be taken up in service of Christ, to the glory of God?

"Kin-dom work" is broader than just giving money to various noble causes or non-profits. Marriages are to be kin-dom marriages, where the glory of Christ and his church is displayed. Our work is to be kin-dom work, done to God's glory, reflecting who he is, in his truth, his faithfulness, and his grace. As Christians, we must also have a different way of doing

business. Here, too, we are to love our enemies, to think of others more highly than ourselves, to practice servanthood and self-denial, to show grace – as Christ has shown to us.

If we do not see the Kin-dom of God, if we only see the things of earth, then we live in darkness. We are unaware of that immense reality of the kingdom that Christ brings, and that is already here around us. But if we seek first his Kin-dom and his righteousness, instead of darkness there will be light for all we do.

We all have varying level of visibility: glasses, contacts, surgical correction or no visual aid require. Those of us that sincerely require visual aid, not having them can make life blurry. This got me to discern in this season of conflict, distrust and antagonistic behaviors, about the significance of looking at life through God's glasses to see people and events as God sees them. His glasses give 20/20 vision.

God sees opportunities, not obstacles. Too often in life, we see things from a negative point of view as an obstacle. God always sees it as an opportunity. The difference between an obstacle and an opportunity depends on your attitude, which determines what you see. Every opportunity has an obstacle, but every obstacle also has an opportunity! It depends on what you see.

The life of Joseph recorded in Genesis 37-50 could easily be seen as filled with obstacles. His brothers tried to kill him. The governor's wife accused him of sexual misconduct. He was thrown in prison. At every turn in Joseph's life, you could see an obstacle, or you could see an opportunity. Joseph looked at his life through God's glasses. When his brothers discovered who he was in Egypt, they were frightened that he would kill them. Instead, he wanted to be reunited with them. Looking through God's glasses caused Joseph to say, "What you intended for bad, God has intended for good in order to bring about this present result!" (Genesis 50:20) Human glasses see obstacles – God's glasses see opportunities.

There is a beautiful story about how years ago, a young man asked a young girl to go with him on a picnic on a nearby lake. After rowing the boat to get to the other side of the lake, they started to spread the food. The girl commented that he had forgotten the ice cream. Could he go get it? He rowed back across the lake and got the ice cream and brought it back to the young lady he was trying to impress. She then commented that there was no chocolate syrup and asked him to go get some. He rowed back across the lake, got the syrup, and returned to the picnic area, exhausted.

The man's name was Clarence Evinrude. He decided there was a better way to cross the lake, so he invented the outboard motor. He was looking through glasses that saw beyond the obstacle to the opportunity. By the way, Clarence later married the girl he carried on the picnic!

Obstacles or opportunities? Sampson's mother didn't realize the Lord was at work in this, creating an opportunity to work against the Philistines who ruled over Israel at that time. (Judges 14:4) James said, "Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way consider it an opportunity for great joy." (James 1:2) Jeremiah exclaimed, "Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, is a loudmouth who missed his opportunity!" (Jeremiah 46:17)

What do you see – obstacles or opportunities? The things we get distracted by are never as important as the thing we get distracted from. We are bombarded by distractions all the time. Netflix. Social Media. Whatever it is, its 24/7.

However, I think the greater distraction that we need to be aware of are hurts, disappointments and real life "stuff" that happens to us all. Jesus said in this life you will have trouble but it is how we allow that trouble to affect us will lead to how these events can derail and distract us. We get thrown off course by unexpected life circumstances and our goals are de-railed. We focus on our weaknesses or disappointment or challenges and we miss God's power at work in our lives.

We never intend to get derailed, but it can happen when we take our eyes off Jesus. The enemy will do his best to drain our passion and wear us down until we drop out of the race. Here are some ways that the enemy works to draw our focus and slay our passion:

- Negative circumstances
- Fear
- Failure
- Unmet Expectations
- Relationship Breakdowns
- Weariness
- Hopelessness

If you wear glasses, you know that a change in lenses radically alters the way things look. The same is true for our spiritual glasses. When we look at our life through the lens of the hope offered by Jesus—instead of filtering things through shame, hurt, or insecurities—we will begin to see possibility and purpose.

God has called us to be conquerors. He wants us to let go of the past—of the tough times, the disillusionment, the emotional pain. He wants us to let Him use what we went through and redeem it. He wants to make us stronger and give others hope.

It's not enough for us to simply survive our past. As Romans 8:37 says, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." we have been equipped to conquer our past and live victoriously in the present!

- There's no problem He can't solve
- There's no question He can't answer.
- There's no enemy He can't defeat.
- There's no difficulty He can't overcome.

We need to choose to view ourself and our life through this new lens. When we do, God will give us the strength to move past your past, to move past the discouragement, to move past the fear—and live a transformed life.

With God, we can learn to be content in the midst of our trials. We can learn to be content and confident in God as he equips us to do his work in us and through us—and then our passion for God and his work will continue to grow. When you're **LOOKING AT LIFE THROUGH GOD'S GLASSES**: – are you seeing **OBSTACLES OR OPPORTUNITIES**? To God be the glory. Amen.