

Day 5

Word for the day...

EYES

So Jesus had compassion on them and touched their **EYES**: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him. ~ Matt. 20:34

In Gordon S. Jackson's book, "Be Thou My Vision," he states, "The *New International Version* has 263 references to "light," 115 to "sight," and 767 to "see." That is to say nothing of other light or visually related words." David Hicks notes, "The Bible is designed to appeal to the eye."¹

Based on my readings about eyes and vision, I believe that all eye care professionals work hand and hand with God. Let me explain. In order to have vision you must have two basic elements: sight and light. Ophthalmic professionals only get to work on one half of this equation. God controls the light, and should He decide to turn it off, all eye care workers are out of a job. There is no need for sight in the absence of light.

In Psalm 119, a portion of one verse states, "... *having my eyes fixed on all your commandments.*"² Having ones eyes fixed not only gives them the ability to see but the ability to focus and give attention to certain things. We are not only giving people the opportunity to see, but the opportunity to redirect their attention. What we do may become a turning point in a person's life.

Because my eyesight is fairly good, I can continue in life without ever pondering where I place my attention. Do the things I focus on in life really matter? Do I see things from my perspective, another's perspective, or God's perspective?

My prayer is that the eyes of my head and the eyes of my heart are clear and focused in the same direction. What gets your focus in life? Should your attention be there or somewhere else?

¹ David Hicks, personal communication to Gordan Jackson, August 2012

² Psalm 119:6

Day 6

Word for the day...

IMMEDIATELY

So Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes: and **IMMEDIATELY** their eyes received sight, and they followed him. ~ Matt. 20:34

In Dietrich Bonhoeffer's book titled, "The Cost of Discipleship", he made a very thought provoking statement, "*Every immediacy is hatred toward Christ.*" When I first heard that it caught my attention, and I was not positive that I agreed with the statement. Before continuing, reread that statement several times and try and ponder it's meaning. PAUSE!

Immediacy means the very next thing. It's THE THING or PERSON that demands your focus at that moment. It comes from the word mediator which means to stand in between you and other people or things. The Bible says that Jesus is the mediator between God and us.³

To be honest, Jesus stands between us and every other person or thing. He is closer to us than our very breath. In Him, we live, and move, and have our being. For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.⁴

Busyness fights against our recognizing God in all things. It causes us to put our loved ones, our work, our pleasure, or any number of other things in front of God. This arrangement will never fully satisfy. We are commanded to seek Him first.⁵

So... How are we doing? Is God in our every thought throughout the day? Do we attempt to bring Him into our conversations? Does His spirit move us to action?

³ 1 Timothy 2:5, Hebrews 9:12, 2 Corinthians 5:21

⁴ Acts 17:28, Rom. 11:36

⁵ Matt. 6:33

Day 7

Word for the day...

RECEIVED

So Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes **RECEIVED** sight, and they followed him. ~ Matt. 20:34

Have you ever noticed how hard it is for some people to RECEIVE advice or help from another individual? “I can do it myself,” is a response I hear from time to time. Why is that?

I believe it is because of our pride and independent spirit. We don't want to be seen as weak or needy. We like to be in control. There are hundreds of SELF-HELP books written on how to be a better this, or a better that. The other extreme is also dangerous: always expecting something from someone else, without attempting to do things ourselves.

In Genesis, God says that it is NOT good that man should be alone, because we were made to fellowship with God and others. God sent Jesus to earth to help solve our problem of being alone and gave him the name, “Emmanuel”, which means “God with us.” To as many as receive him, to them gave he the power to become the sons of God.⁶

One of the most astounding things I have ever heard is that Jesus could do NOTHING! He said that about himself. He could only accomplish the things that he RECEIVED from His father. What makes me think I can do more than Christ?⁷

Do you find it hard to receive instruction or correction? Are you able to graciously receive gifts from others without feeling you have to reciprocate? Truth be known, we all stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us. Let's learn how to receive well and sincerely give thanks to God for those gifts.

⁶ Matt. 1:23, John 1:12,

⁷ John 5:30

Day 4

Word for the day...

TOUCHED

So Jesus had compassion on them and **TOUCHED** their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him. ~ Matt. 20:34

A number of years ago I was at a Hospice home sitting beside my father's bed as he was slipping into eternity. He was semi-comatose, had not eaten in 5 days, and was close to death. He had not spoken or moved much in quite some time.

As I sat there singing hymns or reading scripture, I was holding his hand. I know he was still conscience because of the strength I felt in his grip. Realize that my Dad was never the touchy-feely type so this physical connection was a bit weird for me.

After maintaining this position for several hours, I began to realize my fatigue and needed to go to the bathroom. How was I going to escape this grip without disturbing my Dad? Realizing that he might need something in his hand during my absence, I reached over and secured a clean pair of athletic socks from the nightstand. I slowly removed my hand and replaced it with the socks.

As I began to stand, I noticed my Dad was beginning to move. He slowly brought his hand, now gripping the socks, toward his face and barely opened his eyes to survey the situation. He then looked at me with a gleam in his eye, turned his hand around, and threw the socks at me. I laughed and asked, “Did you just throw those socks at me?” Though he couldn't speak, his eyes were smiling from ear to ear.

I tell you this to remind you, there is POWER in **TOUCH**. Don't be afraid to hold a hand, pat a back, give a hug, or be close to a patient. You may be the greatest encouragement in their life at that time. Do for them, as you would desire a friend to do for you!⁸

⁸ Luke 6:31

Day 3

Word for the day...

THEM

So Jesus had compassion on **THEM** and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him. ~ Matt. 20:34

Most of us have heard the Golden Rule that states, “*Do to others what you would have them do to you.*”⁹ However, many of us prefer to interpret this verse as “*Do to others as THEY HAVE DONE to us,*” OR “*Do to others BEFORE THEY DO to us.*”

It is hard for us to focus on others when we are so focused on ourselves. We may be able to accomplish this once the stars align and every circumstance is in order, but the likelihood is slim. Why does this happen? I believe it is mainly because of pain and frustration.

Did you know that pain causes us to become SELF-ABSORBED? Someone taught me the word HALT. When you are Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired, you need to HALT and think about your next move or the words that you are about to say. Self-absorbed people tend to make self-absorbed decisions, and self-absorbed decisions tend to fight against team unity.

Mission trips tend to put us in uncomfortable circumstances. The food is different. The travel is hard. The culture is overwhelming. We feel vulnerable! All of this leads to discomfort and pain. The thing we need to remember is, “*It’s not about me, it is what I am about.*”

Giving something to another means denying something yourself. What are the needs of those around you? How can you step up and serve? What will it cost you to give of your time, touch, talent, or treasure? *It truly is better to give than to receive.* Take time to serve **THEM** well.

⁹ Luke 6:31

Day 8

Word for the day...

SIGHT

So Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received **SIGHT**, and they followed him. ~ Matt. 20:34

Vision Outreach International is all about giving SIGHT and changing lives in the name of Christ. As you can already tell from prior readings, there is more to truly seeing than meets the eye.

The eyes are only one aspect of sight. To truly see one must have illumination. We observe many things, but what do they mean? How do we interpret the stimulus that continually comes before us? It’s not what we see that impacts us, but how we interpret it.¹⁰

During a church play, that was presented multiple times, my wife and I were a bit concerned with one actor who needed to be more animated. During the play, we had a box that she was to open, supposedly containing pies. She was not very excited about opening the box until she peeked in and noticed the FAKE SNAKE that we had slipped into the container. WOW, did she come alive and animated!

The truth is, it was a harmless fake snake. The interpretation was much different. Stephen Covey in his book, “*7 Habits of Highly Effective People*”, says, “We don’t see things as THEY are, we see things as WE are.”

There are many things that we experience in life that shape our perspective. What has shaped you over the years? Why are you the way you are? How have these things impacted your life and the lives of others? Do we often see things from God’s perspective, from the perspective of others, or just from our own perspective? How can you look at things differently?

¹⁰ Matt 6:22-23, John 12:40, Acts 26:18, Eph. 1:18

Day 9

Word for the day...

FOLLOWED

So Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they **FOLLOWED** him. ~ Matt. 20:34

The last two words are our objective at VOI... that somehow, some way, we encourage every person to take one more step toward FOLLOWING Jesus. What would that look like if this became a reality?

Most all of us know the game FOLLOW the LEADER. One person leads in a series of movements that others imitate. You walk behind the leader. You wave your hands like the leader. You jump, hop, or spin around like the leader. However, there is a deeper level of following that is not addressed in this childhood game. God calls it righteousness.¹¹

Righteousness not only includes walking and acting like Christ, but thinking, talking, and feeling like Christ. This does not come naturally. Our general tendency is to be conformed to the world and act like everyone around us. In order to be righteous, we must be transformed by renewing our minds, by changing our thinking, by denying our self, and by doing things like Christ would do them.¹²

Following Christ includes doing good to those who hurt us, praying for those who abuse us, going the second mile, and not grumbling or complaining when things don't go our way. It also includes putting other's interests ahead of our own, refraining from bias and judgment.¹³

How have you seen others follow Christ? Write down one thing you will do to take another step toward following Christ.

¹¹ 1 Tim. 6:11

¹² Romans 12:2, Matt 16:24,

¹³ Matt 5:38-48, Phil 2:14, Phil 2:3-11, Luke 6:37, Rom. 2:1

Day 2

Word for the day...

COMPASSION

So Jesus had **COMPASSION** on them and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him. ~ Matt. 20:34

Jesus had compassion and took action to bring relief to people who were suffering. The definition of the word compassion in this passage is "to be moved as to one's bowels". The bowels were thought to be the seat of one's love and pity.

When I think of this compassion, I imagine good parents who have compassion for their children. When a need arises, that parent will go to extreme measures to rescue their child from danger, protect their child from evil, or be with their child in pain. They have a compassion that moves them to action.

This same type of compassion must be present for us to sacrifice our comfort, time, and resources to bring global healing to the blind in under-served areas of the world. It's not a passion for the things we want, but a compassion for the people in need.

There are several qualities I see in this compassion. First, it is a quality that focuses on the needs of others greater than it focuses on the needs of self. Second, it is not passive, but active. Third, it does something tangible and practical to meet the need. Fourth, it goes the extra mile disregarding any inconvenience.¹⁴

Do we consistently have the same intensity of compassion for all people? Do we treat all individuals with the same level of compassion we have for those closest to us?

With great compassion comes great sacrifice. What are some practical things you can do to be more compassionate to all people?

¹⁴ Phil. 2:3-4, 1 John 3:18, Matt 5:39-43

Day 1

Word for the day...

JESUS

So **JESUS** had compassion on them and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him. ~ Matt. 20:34

The life of JESUS changed the course of human history. Our goal is to become transformed into the likeness of His image. This means that we learn how to talk, act, think, and feel like Christ. In order for this to happen we must continually grow in our knowledge of who Christ is.¹⁵

His ways are so contrary to ours. He says to bless and pray for those who are unkind to us, to love our enemies as much as we love our friends, to do more than is expected, and to be a servant to all. He encourages us to focus on others more than we focus on ourselves, and to put their interest ahead of our own.¹⁶

What do you know about the life of Jesus? There are all kinds of opinions about who he is, such as “a Liar, a Lunatic, or Lord!” Many never take time to investigate the life of Jesus on their own. They just adopt someone else’s opinion.

If Jesus is our standard of measurement, then we must compare our life to his to see where we are falling short. What does Jesus think about you and me? How does he interact with others? How does Jesus handle conflict? How does he handle stress? What is his ultimate goal for the human race?¹⁷

As you progress through this day, think about the adjustments you might need to make to begin talking, acting, thinking, and feeling like Jesus. Be specific, and may the grace of God help you in your quest.

¹⁵ Romans 8:29, John 17:3, Phil. 3:8-10

¹⁶ Isa. 55:8-9 Luke 6:28, Luke 6:32-35, Matt. 5:40-41, Mark 9:35, Phil. 2:3-4

¹⁷ John 3:16, John 10:10

Day 10

Word for the day...

Him

So Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed **HIM**. ~ Matt. 20:34

We’ve come full circle. We started with Jesus and we end with Him. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Our ultimate VISION in OUTREACH is to be in all things... like Jesus.¹⁸

The Bible makes some remarkable statements when it comes to Christ. It says that we can do NOTHING apart from Him. It says we live and move and have our being in Him. It says from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. It says that all thing hold together in Him.¹⁹

The Bible continues by saying there is no condemnation in Him. We are accepted in Him, blessed in Him, and raised up in Him; and the list goes on and on.²⁰

Imagine being in a boat in the middle of the Pacific Ocean with a Coke can in your hand. You lean over the side of the boat and fill the can with water. That is like Christ, in you!

For the sake of illustration only, (we do not promote or condone littering) you take that same Coke can and toss it back into the ocean. That is like You, in Christ. *Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man what God has prepared for those who love Him.*²¹ Dwight L Moody said, “The world has yet to see what God can do with one man (person) fully consecrated to him.” Can God count on you to be that person? If so, what has to change? I challenge you to take a step in that direction.

¹⁸ Rom. 8:28-29

¹⁹ John 15:5, Acts 17:28, Rom. 11:36, Col. 1:17

²⁰ Rom. 8:1, Eph. 1:6, Eph. 2:5-6,

²¹ 1 Cor. 2:9

THE VISION N OF OUTREACH

Matthew 20:34 is Vision Outreach International's KEY VERSE and undergirds all they do. These thoughts are a small attempt to give deeper understanding and challenge the reader to take the next step toward Christ-likeness. May God add His blessings to the reading of these words!

So Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.
~ Matt. 20:34