

“Having Eyes of Faith”

Pastor Dale Campfield – Eastgate Community Church

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Intro:

Matt 28:19 “Go and make disciples of all nations...”

ECC Process of Discipleship: Making an IMPACT...To Love...To Grow...To Serve

We have 3 priorities – To love... which is expressed in our Sunday morning celebration and connection groups. To grow... which is expressed in our Path to Discipleship. To serve... which is expressed in our daily lives in the places we live, work and play; as well as through the local church. The vision of E.C.C. is to gather together weekly for corporate worship, loving God and each other; then to come together in small Connection Groups for discipleship and fellowship, and are regularly involved in reaching out to others with the love, acceptance, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ through community outreach. To Love...To Grow...To Serve!

Today, we are in between series. The title of this sermon is:

“Having Eyes of Faith”

I don't know what you're going through today. I don't know your trials or temptations. I don't know the struggles and battles that you have. But, I'm pretty sure that you have them. We all do. The bible says...

John 16:33

“In this world, you will have trouble.”

Not you might have trouble, but you WILL have trouble.

So, how do we deal with those days of trouble? How do we keep moving forward when our lives are falling apart? How do we make an IMPACT in life when we can't even get out of bed? When we see the world and we see the circumstances of our lives, how can we keep moving forward?

When you look around, there is nothing but BAD NEWS out there. The word **NEWS stands for North, East, West and South**. It's information that is coming from the four corners of the planet – and most of it seems to be Bad! Do you ever watch the NEWS on TV; it's all bad – except at the end they sometimes try to end with a happy story. But the earlier 95% is all bad!

We can either have Eyes of Faith.... or Eyes of Fear... it's your choice!

How do we move forward knowing this is the case? I propose to you this morning, that instead of seeing the world, seeing our lives, seeing our family etc. through our natural eyes, that we begin to see them through “Eyes of Faith”.

That's what this sermon is going to be about.

The greatest human factor that influences your life is the way you see things, the way you see yourself, the way you see your husband/wife, your job, your problems, your past, the future, other people, everything in life. Your perspective makes the difference.

I want us to concentrate on seeing with the eyes of faith because your perspective makes all the difference in the world whether you're going to be a success or failure, victorious or defeated, happy or unhappy. What makes the difference in your life is your perspective.

People say there's more than one way of looking at things. That is also true. Nothing explains that better than in Numbers 13 where we have the example of two different types of seeing. God shows us by example that there are two ways to look at everything. One, with eyes of faith; or two, with eyes of fear. Everything you look at in life you're going to look at with eyes of faith or eyes of fear. This is a specific illustration.

The background: Moses had led the children of Israel out of Egypt, gone through the Red Sea, come up on the other side. They had been in the desert two years and they were on the edge of the Promised Land. They're at a place called Kadesh. God says, "You're going to go in. You're going to send twelve spies to go in and see the land. Seeing is believing." They selected twelve spies. When they came back, they returned with two different reports. Ten of them had a negative report, two of them had a positive report. Ten of them saw with eyes of fear, two of them saw with eyes of faith. Ten of them said, "We saw obstacles." Two of them said, "We see opportunities." The problem with this passage is they missed a tremendous opportunity because they did not have the right perspective. They did not see it from God's point of view. Ten people caused an entire nation to die in the desert because they did not have faith. They did not see with eyes of faith. They saw with eyes of fear. Their decision affected an entire generation.

Numbers 13:1, *"The Lord said to Moses, 'Send some men to explore the land of Canaan which I'm giving the Israelites. Let each tribe send one of its leaders [twelve tribes - twelve leaders] v. 18 "... See what the land is like and whether the people who live there are strong or weak, few or many. What kind of land do they live in? Is it good or bad? What kind of towns? What's the soil like? Are there walled or unwalled cities? Is the land fertile or poor? So they went up and explored the land." v. 25 "At the end of forty days they returned from exploring the land. They came back to Moses at Kadesh in the desert of Peran and they reported to them and the entire assembly and showed them the fruit of the land. They gave Moses this account, 'We went into the land which you sent us. And it does flow with milk and honey. Here is its fruit, but..." And one word kept them in the desert -- but. That's seeing with the eyes of fear. It's a great place... but. "But the people who live there are powerful, the cities are fortified." That's seeing with eyes of fear. v. 30 "Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, 'We should go up and take possession of the land for we certainly can do it. But the men who had gone up with him said, 'We can't!'..." Notice one said "we can't", another said, "we can". They're both right. Because your attitude makes the difference. "...And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they explored. They said, 'The land we explored devours the living. All the people there are of a great size. There are giants in the land and we seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes and we looked the same to them.'" They saw with the eyes of fear.*

Notice four things about seeing with the eyes of fear:

1) They misunderstood and underestimated what God could do. v. 29 -- They're powerful, the cities are powerful, they're like giants, we can't do it, they're stronger. How quickly we forget! They said, "This is a strong nation. We can't overcome them." They've just been set free from the strongest nation in the world -- Pharaoh's Egyptian Empire. They've just been set free from the greatest nation and now they're worried about some local tribe.

Have you noticed the longer you look at a problem, the bigger it gets? You keep looking at it with eyes of fear. It's interesting that thirty eight years later when God did finally let them go into the Promised Land, Rahab said, "You know the people here who are living here, we've been frightened for forty years. We heard of the miracles of Israel. We've been living in panic for forty years." They were afraid of the Israelites. They could have taken it with no problem.

2) They underestimated what they could do. v. 33 "... *we saw ourselves as grasshoppers...*" Talk about a poor self image! "We're little insects ready to be eaten up! We could never do this! It's too big of a project." After 400 years of conditioning and slavery, they still saw themselves as slaves. They not only underestimated what God could do, they underestimated what they could do. They said we're like grasshoppers. Those guys are like giants! It's interesting that forty years later when Caleb did go in, he asked for the area that had the giants in it, the tall people, and when he got there he found that the tall giants weren't even warriors. There was nothing to be afraid of.

3) Problems never defeat you, your perspective does. What problem are you facing right now? Regardless of the problem you're facing right now, your problem is not your problem. Your problem is the way you see your problem. Your problem is your perspective. Do you see it with eyes of fear or do you see it with eyes of faith? These people were defeated because of their own negative attitude. The Bible says, "*Greater is He that is in you than He that is in the world.*" ... "*With God all things are possible.*" The word "impossible" is not in God's vocabulary. But they missed it.

The results: There are three results of seeing with eyes of fear:

1) Discouragement. 14:1 "*That night all the people of the community raised their voices and wept aloud.*" The result of seeing your problem with eyes of fear is discouragement. They had a pity party and that's a natural consequence when you think, "I'm not sufficient for this task."

2) Discontent. 14:2 "*And all Israel grumbled against Aaron and Moses, the leaders. And the whole assembly said to them, 'If only we had died in Egypt or in this desert.'*" They were grumbling. First they mourned, then they murmured (complained). People who feel like failures are the greatest critics. If they don't feel good about themselves, they don't want anybody else to achieve in life. When these guys had the opportunity and didn't take it, they immediately started blaming everybody else -- Aaron, Moses, the leadership, anybody.

3) Defeat. 14:3 *"Why is the Lord bringing us to this land, only to let us fall by the sword. Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?"* Let's go back to Egypt! We had so much fun there! Isn't that typical? The good old days in Egypt where they had been slaves for 400 years. They preferred slavery to safety. Many people would rather live in slavery emotionally or relationally or spiritually than risk freedom. They'd rather go back and be slaves than take a risk. The tragic thing is these people lost their momentum and they died in the desert when all they needed to have done was have a different perspective. Instead of seeing with eyes of fear, they could have seen with eyes of faith.

v. 30 Caleb and Joshua were the only two in the whole nation that saw with the eyes of faith. *"Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, 'We should go up and take possession of the land for we can certainly do it.'"*

What does it mean to see with eyes of faith? Ephesians 1:18 Paul prays, *"I pray that the eyes of your heart will be open."* What does he mean? I don't have eyes in my heart. Literally, "the eyes of your heart" means "the eyes of your understanding". He said, "I want you to learn to see with spiritual eyes."

When you were born you were given a set of five senses -- hearing, taste, touch, smell, sight. Everything you experience in life comes from those five senses. When you were born physically, you got physical senses. When you were born again, when you were born spiritually, you got a set of spiritual senses. Spiritual eyes, spiritual ears. Have you ever been reading a Bible verse you've read a hundred times and all of a sudden it just pops out at you and you say, "I've never seen that before!" God opened your spiritual eyes. Have you ever been listening to a sermon and all of a sudden it just hits you, "I've never heard that before!" God opened your spiritual ears.

Question: How Do We Develop Eyes of Faith?

I believe you need to do at least two things...

1. Turn Your Eyes From the Flesh and the World

Prov 27:20

"Death and Destruction are never satisfied, and neither are the eyes of man."

Illus: Song – "Can't Keep My Eyes Off of You"

2. Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus

Hebrews 12:2

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith."

Illus: Songs – "Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus"

"Open my eyes Lord...I want to see Jesus...to reach out and touch Him..."

"Open the eyes of my heart Lord...open the eyes of my heart, I want to see you...to see you high and lifted up..."

FIVE STEPS TO KEEPING YOUR EYES ON JESUS

1. Check my preoccupation

I'll have to guard mind diligently against preoccupation. What is my mind constantly thinking about? This preoccupation can expose itself in numerous ways. Perhaps in a constant concern with what the stock market did in the last hour, or a concern with shopping all of the latest stores at the mall.

It can show up in our conversation – Ask ourselves, “What do I talk about the most?” Is it money, things, e-trading, what we're saving up to buy someday? So we need to examine our conversations.

This preoccupation also exposes itself in our thought lives – We should ask ourselves, “Is money or acquisition of things on my mind when I fall asleep and when I get up?”

Another way of saying this is DAYDREAMING.

The problem with a preoccupation with things is that it will take our focus off of Jesus Christ. We never ever want that to happen. The Bible encourages us with these words...

2 Corinthians 4:18...

So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Hebrews 12:2

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith...

Fix Your Thoughts on Jesus

It starts with your mind; your thought life.

Hebrews 3:1 we're told:

“Fix your thoughts on Jesus!”

Put all other thoughts out of your mind and simply focus on Jesus. As Christians, we need to Focus on Jesus and Jesus only.

Fix your thoughts upon Jesus because unless you FOCUS your attention on Jesus...

... something else will always be more important to you

... something else will draw your attention away

... and you may miss out on what God wants to give you

In Hebrews 3:7ff we're told that if we don't fix their thoughts on Jesus we run the risk of

repeating what the Israelites did in the wilderness. Turn to Hebrews 3:7-14. The writer here has just gone telling us why Jesus deserves to be listened to:

"...as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you hear his voice, (now talking about Jesus) do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert, where your fathers tested and tried me/ and for forty years saw what I did.

That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, 'Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.' So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'"

See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first."

What's he mean by this? He means if we fix our thoughts upon Jesus, if we determine to listen to Him and obey Him in all that we do we're not going to get into trouble. Our hearts won't become hard. We'll avoid developing a sinful, unbelieving heart that will turn away from God. And we'll be assured of entering His rest. If you fix your thoughts upon Jesus, the temptations of this world will lose their attraction.

Did you know that the NBA playoffs are taking place right now? It's the Lakers vs. Celtics. Or, by the time I preach this and you read this, the games have already taken place and the winner is: _____; you fill in the blank.

Illus: World's Best B.Ball Free Throw Shooter

Let me ask you a question.

Do you know who the world's best basketball free throw shooter is? You've probably never heard of this man unless you had read about him in The Guinness World Book of Records. His name was **Tom Amberry!** And back in 1993, this 71 yr. old foot doctor, set world's record by shooting and making with 2,750 freethrows in a row! He'd have gotten more... except they had to close gym for the night

What's his secret? When questioned, he replied "Concentration! The more I read about it and looked into it, the more I realized the only way you do it is practice. You have to perfect all parts of your technique; then it's just focus and concentration. You have to put all other thoughts out of your mind."

He'd bounce the ball three times, focus, shoot ... and swish!

2. Check my attitude

I must guard my heart by guarding my attitude. There are times when our attitudes will be horrible and times they will be positive. As you've heard it said, Attitude determines your Altitude. If you attitude stinks, your altitude in life will stink. If you attitude is positive, our altitude will be positive too.

2 Corinthians 4:18

"So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."

3. Check my gratitude (giving thanks)

Remember the phrase, "An Attitude of Gratitude." That's what we need to have. No one is truly a "self-made man." Everything we have comes from God. So for a proper focus on things, we need to remember that and give credit to where credit is due.

The Bible says in 1 Th. 5:18...No matter what happens, always be thankful, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.

Romans 4:17

"See those things that are not as though they already are."

4. Check my spending

I need to watch what I do with money. Money can be used for many good things, but it can also fund harmful lusts and addictions.

What you see is what you get.

Proverbs 12:15

"The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But a wise man is he who listens to counsel."

Do you purchase things in an attempt to make yourself happy? Are you careless or frivolous in your spending habits? These might be signs of a focus that needs to shift.

Do you gamble? Do you buy lottery tickets or go to the river boat casinos for entertainment? If so, I'd encourage you to think about your focus. When you do this, can you honestly say you are pursuing eyes that are full of light?

What about shopping? Shopping is the great American pastime. Just to go shopping for the sake of shopping instead of going out to compare prices on or purchase an item you need opens up possibilities for frivolous spending.

Here are a few tips...

Don't go shopping just to look around; it could get you into trouble. Pray before going shopping – especially at certain stores (God you already know what things I will see at Banana Republic, Home Depot and Sports Authority – guard my eyes so I will not take my focus off of you and unwisely use the wealth you have entrusted to me.) Resist the temptation to charge. You're familiar with the old saying, "A fool and his money are soon parted." There is a lot of wisdom in that.

There is even more wisdom in what Jesus says in Luke 12:15...
"Beware! Don't be greedy for what you don't have. Real life is not measured by how much we own."

Also... you get what you pay for. If you're paying for garbage, you'll get garbage in your life. If you try to feed the flesh with garbage and pay for it, you'll get it. And, it's always easier to make a mess than to clean up a mess.

5. Check my priorities. I must maintain appropriate priorities

Whatever we focus on, we begin to prioritize.

I need to guard against the tendency to make work and the earning of money more important than my pursuit of God and the study of His Word.

If I'm to be a follower of Jesus, nothing can become more important to me than Him.

How did things go this past week? Did you start off each day in private on your knees before God – asking for His will to be done instead of your own. Did you block out time to go before God in humble submission denying yourself and taking up your cross each day this past week?

If not, I have to wonder if things got in the way. Perhaps the pursuit of things, the maintaining of things, the washing, cleaning, using, enjoying or playing with things.

If you missed a day of laying down your life before God and picking up your cross, what was so powerful important to let that get pushed aside?

Jesus reminds us of priorities when he says...

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:21)

Matthew 6:33

"Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and He will give you everything you need."

Conclusion:

It is very difficult to be a policeman for many reasons but it is really rough at the scene of a crime or an accident when he has to interview witnesses. Sometimes the testimonies are so divergent and contradictory that you would wonder if some of the people were actually there when the event happened. There times when the person is lying. He got there after the fact, but he wants the officer to accept his opinion or assessment so he says he was there to see it. The poor officer needs the wisdom of Solomon to sort all that out.

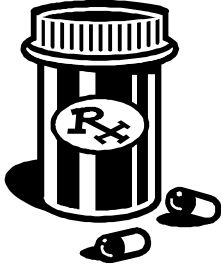
Now, there are times when people at different angles can get the basics of an event to agree but different aspects of the event stood out most to them and they emphasize that item. Another person standing on the other side of the street or to the front or rear of the first person may deny that item was there. They appear to be at odds but they are both right.

Sometimes because of emotion or bias they might actually miss something or deny it. Say a person just saw an accident where someone was killed and one of the drivers was drunk. They had someone in their family killed by a drunk driver. They may enhance the event or refuse to reveal data that might show that alcohol may not have been the cause or even that the sober person may have been at fault. Their eyes will see more or less because of that emotional stress. Whereas they might be normally a truthful person they might lie excessively and convincingly. Their eyesight will be blurred by pain and emotion.

We are often deceived by shadow, sleight of hand, or something else and yet we depend upon our sight to make decisions and even demand to see some things before we believe. We even justify our decisions by saying we had insight to the issue or it seemed right as we see it. God has some things to say about whose eyes see best and which ones we should be concerned about.

Your prescription today is to take on the Eyes of Faith

When you do... watch... you wait... you'll SEE!



When you get a prescription you have 3 choices to make:

Choice #1: Throw it away.

Why?

- a. You don't truly believe the Dr.'s report.
- b. You think you can do it on your own.
- c. You don't really care anyway how you feel.

Choice #2: Leave it lying around for a while, and then fill it.

Why?

- a. You don't have time to get it filled right now.
- b. You're unsure of what it might do to your body. Change.
- c. You're content with the way you are. You've learned to live with it.
- d. Be careful, you'll probably lose it and have to get another one.

Choice #3: You get it filled.

You take it to the prescription Dr. – the Holy Spirit – and ask for Strength to carry it out.

Why?

- a. You're in enough pain now that you want to get it filled as fast as possible. How much pain are you in that people are lost and going to hell?



Ask yourself, “Do I have eyes of Faith?”

This is my prayer for you...

Ephesians 1:18-23

¹⁸I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, ²⁰which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²²And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.