

## Having Eyes Wide Open

A couple of weeks ago, as I was preaching on the spiritual armor of God, I spoke about the need of being alert for Satan is lurking like a lion, looking for who he can devour. Here you see a picture of a leopard who is the predator and of a gazelle who is the prey.

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I want you to notice the difference of their eyes and how the lion's eyes were created to look straight forward so it could focus upon their prey while the gazelle's eyes are large and set up on the side of their head so they can take in everything that is happening all around them.

They can take in the movements to keep them safe but I also got to thinking because of their eyes being so big they also can take in a lot more of the beauty of the earth and their surroundings. I thought of this in light of our series of our relationship with God.

Part of the teaching this past week at youth camp is the fact that it is good to give God praise. We can do this as our eyes are open to the fact that God is the giver of all things to us. All that we have, all that we are is because God. In His great grace, mercy and love for us, He wants to pour out His shower of blessings on us.

I wanted us to spend some time this morning re-examining these truths from another angle.

Let's begin by looking at Paul's prayer for the saints who were in Ephesus. **Ephesians 3:14-19, <sup>14</sup>For this reason I kneel before the Father, <sup>15</sup>from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. <sup>16</sup>I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup>so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.**

**And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,<sup>18</sup> may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp (have your eyes wide open to) how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,<sup>19</sup> and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”**

Loving God and giving Him praise begins with having eyes that are wide open, taking in the love He has for us doesn't it? As I thought about this I thought also about ingratitude. How easily we can become ungrateful, unappreciative of the great things God has done for, is doing for us and will do for us. We can actually become like the predator whose eyes narrowed, focused on what it wants but yet missing all the beauty of its surroundings.

Now, I don't think we mean to become narrow eyed and ungrateful towards God but it is something that can just happen in life. Kind of like your marriage or with your relationships with your family and friends. What is the saying...familiarity breeds contempt?

What does that mean, familiarity breeds contempt? It means that if we are not careful the more familiar we become with a person the more we can take them and the love they have for us for granted.

This is what happens so easily in marriages isn't it? You live with a person and if you are not intentional about opening your eyes and spending good quality time appreciating who they are then you can see them as a means to an end. You get caught up in the ins and outs of life, kids, work and all the other things life can pull at you or throw at you and in midst of the melee you forget that the one you are with is there, loving you and serving you at many levels.

In order for you to keep your marriage and your relationships in good working order you have to be very intentional about giving your marriage or relationship good, uncluttered thoughts and time. You have to keep your eyes wide open to the love they are pouring out on you in many ways.

How does this apply to our relationship with God? Well, I am sure you would agree that as the busyness of life commands our attention it is very easy for our relationship with God to become dull and uninteresting.

In all of our teaching on spiritual warfare the teaching centered on the importance of us being alert. Alert to the adversary who is out there looking for who he can devour. But there is another advantage to being alert. Like the gazelle with big eyes, if we stay alert, live life with eyes wide open, we can see God and how He is blessing us in all that we are, all that we do and all that He wants to do in and through us.

Earlier in the letter to the Ephesians Paul lifted up a prayer asking that the saints eyes would be enlightened or opened up to the reality of who God is and how He is blessing us and desires to bless us more. It is a great prayer that we can be lifting up for ourselves and for others.

Beyond praying for open eyes I wanted to give you some actions steps this morning that you can use to help open your eyes to God and to see the love He has for you.

## **1. God is present everywhere, omnipresent all the time**

First we must realize and keep at the forefront of our minds is that God is everywhere at the same time. He is omnipresent. However, His presence is not the same in every place nor is it revealed to every man in every place. God observes and knows everything and we are told in Colossians 1:17 that He is sustaining every molecule in the universe.

Secondly when you read of God working in scripture it speaks of Him blessing or wanting to bless His people.

## **2. God's presence is to favorably bless His people**

God is working and wants to reveal Himself to you so you can receive the blessings He wants to pour out in your life.

**2 Chronicles 16:9, “For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose hearts are blameless toward Him.”**

Whose hearts are blameless towards Him? The saints, those who have received the work of Jesus on the cross. Our hearts are blameless through the great work of Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. God is out there, in here and in your heart, looking to see who is seeking Him so that He can pour out His blessing upon them.

I believe this is happening. People are noticing what is taking place here at the Community Church, they are talking about it.

One of the last thoughts Paul shares in his letter to the Ephesians is an encouragement to pray. I think we should also take this to heart. Yes, there is good things happening here but as you think about how Satan is out to kill, steal and destroy, know also that Satan is out to kill, steal and destroy anything good that is happening here at the Community Church and the impact we are having on this community.

Look with me at the last few lines of the letter to the church in Ephesus.

**Ephesians 6:18, “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.”**

Pray in the Spirit on all occasions says Paul. Pray for yourself, pray for this church that we may together see and celebrate God’s goodness.

Remember what David wrote in **Psalm 31:10, “How great is Your goodness, which You have stored up for those who fear You, which You bestow in the sight of men on those who take refuge in You.”**

Yes God blesses those who show reverent fear for Him but He wants to do it in such a way that brings more attention and glory to Him which in turn brings more people into a saving relationship with Him.

Okay, so we are walking in God's will and we are seeking Him. We are seeking to sense Him and to see Him at work in our life. How can we know He is near and leading us? The scripture describes the presence of God in practical terms. The feelings that can result from experiencing God's presence are not just a physical sensation, but also an emotion sensation.

### **3. The chief feeling from the presence of God is one of joy.**

Look with me at a couple of scriptures. **Psalm 16:11**, "You reveal the path of life to me; in Your presence is abundant joy; in Your right hand are perpetual pleasures."

**Psalm 21:6**, "Surely You have granted him eternal blessings and made him glad with the joy of Your presence."

Again, the chief feeling we experience from the presence of God is one of deep inner joy.

Another feeling that can result from being in the presence of God is inner peace and calmness. **Zephaniah 3:17**, "The Lord your God is with you...He will quiet you with His love."

There are other feelings that can come from the experiencing the nearness of God. Feelings like pleasure, refreshment and satisfaction of the soul. You can see some of those scripture references listed in your outline. **Psalm 16:11; Hosea 6:1-3; Psalm 63:5.**

If God's presence in our lives produces peace and joy what does the lack of God's presence produce?

### **4. God's lack of presence produces anxiety, sorrow, wasting away, dismay and internal anguish. Psalm 32:1-3; Psalm 88:14-15; Isaiah 64:7.**

When we turn away from God or from some reason God removes His hand from you the results are anxiety, sorrow, wasting away, dismay and internal anguish. You can see some of the passages that speak of this in your outline.

So here is a great truth that we can grab a hold of.

**5. God's presence or lack of presence produces, creates an emotional response in us.**

Think about the various emotions you have already experienced this morning. Comfort in the house of God; Rest as you pray to Him, as you sing to Him, as you faithfully give of your tithes and offerings. Peace, joy, hope; the range of emotions have been brought on by God's presence here this morning.

I was told by one of the children at VBS they wished they could do VBS all the time. This child didn't want to go home because she felt something here that she didn't feel at home. She felt God's presence. Think what it might mean to her if she learned how to feel God's presence at home and throughout all her days and nights.

Think what it would be like if you could experience all these emotions brought on by God throughout your everyday life, not just when you are sitting in church, sitting in prayer or reading your Bible but all throughout your normal days activities. It would be life changing wouldn't it? To know, not just mentally as a truth, but to feel God's presence around you all the time.

In order for this to occur one must first be aware of His presence and then secondly believe that all good things are due to His presence or lack of His presence.

Think about your favorite activity. When your favorite activity brings you joy it is because God granted you an illustration of what His nearness is like through that activity. If all things come from God and He gives you joy in certain activities then you can use this emotion as a cue to remind you of His presence and the blessing He brings with Him.

On the other hand, when you experience frustration, anxiety, anger, irritation or any other negative emotions then this can be used as a reminder that your soul is thirsty for God, in need of God's presence and all the blessings He brings with Him.

**6. Let your emotions be the barometer of the presence of God.**

While this might seem elementary, and it is, you can use it as a prompt to push into you God's presence.

God truly is out to pour His blessings upon you. He is seeking a relationship with you so He can fill you full of joy, peace and happiness. Not that you won't experience pain and suffering and difficult times, but in the midst of these things you will know and feel His presence.

Amen.

Let's pray