

Simple Focus Matthew 6:22-24

Introduction

- A New Year; 20/20 Vision
 - Organizations and Churches using the slogan of 20/20 Vision
 - Seeking Clarity, Purpose, Direction
 - I don't know about you, but I need vision in order to be motivated
 - Vision helps capture a picture of a preferred future
 - Provides direction
 - Get excited about where we can go; which then produces motivation
 - **Proverbs 29:18**
 - **KJV, "Where there is no vision, the people perish"**
 - **ESV, "Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint"**
 - Hindsight is always 20/20
 - Idea of looking backward provides clarity after the fact
 - Looking back can help us learn how to move forward
 - Things we learned from the past that can be applied to how we live into our future
 - Admitting mistakes; turning over a new leaf; starting over
 - Advent hints at 20/20 Vision
 - Two fold purpose
 - Looking back at Christ's birth
 - Looking forward to Christ's return
 - God is faithful, all-powerful, assurance- What God has done in the past, God will do again!
- 5 years as your pastor
 - We've done a lot together
 - Lay the ground work for renewal¹
 - Investigated potential and opportunities
 - Developed a plan to take advantage of potential and opportunities: included Community Outreach and Intergenerational ministry
 - Introduced new ministries
 - What works
 - What doesn't work
 - What works best
 - My hope for 2020 is to Implement what works best
 - Not just a process for church but for life
 - Investigate
 - Develop

¹ See, *There's Hope For Your Church: First Steps to Restoring Health and Growth*. Gary L. McIntosh. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012. Pg. 164.

- Introduce a path
 - Implement
- Example of “You Had One Job” Segment on ESPN
 - Defensive player intercepts the ball
 - Huge momentum shift in the game, or at least the potential if only the defensive player would run in the right direction!
 - After making the interception, the defensive player begins running toward the wrong end zone!
 - He thinks he’s about to score a touchdown, but he is the only person in the stadium who thinks so!
 - As the play draws out, one of his teammates catches up to him and right about the 10 yard line, the teammate tackles his own player.
 - The guy who intercepted the ball gets up and looks at his teammate, “What are you doing? I was about to score.”
 - The guy who made the tackle asks the same question, “What are you doing? You were running in the wrong direction!”
- As you think about your life in the New Year, what if you were that defensive player who made a great play, but are running in the wrong direction?
 - Pump the brakes
 - Look back: Hindsight can provide 20/20 Vision
 - Investigate
 - Develop
 - Introduce
 - Implement
- As a pastor and leader, this process has to play out in order to lead a church or organization.
 - What we’ve learned
 - Potential of how many of you saw our role as a church to be the center of the community, but it wasn’t really about us being the center. How can we make Christ the Center? Vision statement: Making Christ the Center: Life, Relationships, Service.
 - Investing in the next generation. Realizing the gap in generations, how can we bring all generations together?
 - Developed new ministries, Introduced new opportunities: Community Ministry and Intergenerational Ministry
 - What works best: we are at our best when we are working together for the glory of God within our different generations to worship, fellowship, and serve.
 - My message to us as a church and to each of us personally
 - 2020 Vision- clarity for the new year by:
 - Keep It Simple

- John Wesley quote, “Simplicity and purity,’ says a devout man, ‘are the two wings that lift the soul up to heaven: Simplicity, which is in the intention, and purity, which is in the affections.”²

The Eye is the Lamp of the Whole Body

- John Wesley quote comes from his sermon on Matthew 6:22-24 which he entitled: “On A Single Eye”
- **Matthew 6:22-24**
 - What we focus on is what we end up doing
 - Focus determines function
 - A proper focus on God provides the right approach to
 - Anger
 - Lust
 - Commitments
 - Loving our enemies
 - Generosity
 - Anxiety
 - LIFE!!!!
 - A Healthy Eye
 - A body that is full of light
 - Truth
 - Clear Vision
 - Single focus
 - A Bad Eye
 - A body that is full of darkness
 - Impaired vision
 - Unable to see clearly
 - What we focus on “reveals the quality of a person’s inner life”³
- Example of a Receiver trying to run before catching the ball
 - A receiver is wide open
 - Takes eyes off the ball and begins to look ahead
 - No longer are they focused on catching the ball, but on the move after the catch.
 - HOWEVER, if the ball is not caught the next move won’t matter!
 - Result: The ball gets dropped
- Before we set out to make the ‘BIG PLAYS’ this year, let’s make sure that we have caught the ball first!
 - We might think that we have this Jesus thing down, or church thing, or faith thing
 - BUT have we caught it yet, and are we running with it???

² John Wesley. Sermon 118 "On a Single Eye" in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson via WordsOfWesley.com (Accessed Jan 03,2020).

³ *ESV Study Bible*, Wheaton: Crossway, 2008. Pg. 1833.

- What we are focused on matters, because it will determine our actions and how we function.
 - Proverbs 29:18
 - KJV, “Where there is no vision, the people perish”
 - ESV, “Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint”
 - Catch God’s vision for your life
 - The vision begins with a single focus on God’s Truth
 - The eye is the lamp of the body
 - Healthy eye results in a body full of light
 - Bad eye results in a body full of darkness
 - Focus determines function

Context

- Jesus’ “Sermon on the Mount”
 - Beattitudes- refocus on the Kingdom of Heaven
 - Fulfill the Law by refocusing on what it really says
 - “You have heard it said, but I tell you”
 - “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them”
 - “Do not be like the hypocrites”
 - “Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”
 - The religious leaders had caught the ball (worship God only-exile experience), but they were running in the wrong direction!
 - Their vision was impaired by this idea that if they were good enough, God would save them
 - Their vision was on earthly victory over the oppression of the their enemies
 - Their vision was on a messiah that would win an earthly battle, and they would rein the world
 - The focus was all wrong
 - Their vision had become impaired and therefore it was effecting their spiritual well-being
 - Focus determines function
- Jesus is recasting the vision of the Kingdom of Heaven
 - He is not changing the vision
 - Instead Jesus is providing a clear vision
- Catching a football is a very basic skill, however if you take your eyes off the ball it makes it very difficult to do something that is basic
 - Vision is not always about forward thinking
 - At times it requires us to look back in order to move forward
 - This is the whole concept of repentance and recommitment. It is what results in spiritual growth.

- As we have clearer vision for our life, we can focus on what really matters.

Back to the Basics

- The context of Jesus' words is surrounded by the very basics of life
 - Anger
 - Lust
 - Divorce
 - Oaths or promises, keeping your word
 - Retaliation
 - Loving your enemies
 - Generosity
 - Prayer
 - Fasting
 - Earthly treasures
 - Anxiety
 - Judging others
- What we focus on determines how we function
 - Two responses to the list
 - Take them for granted until we find that we can't even do the basics
 - We try to just do them and then we try harder and harder, but find that we only fail
 - This is the way that the religious leaders responded to God's truth. Their focus became centered in self-righteousness.
 - When Jesus came to challenge the way they lived and offered grace, they couldn't accept what he had to say.
 - Before we head out on some grand vision for our life, we need to ask ourselves a very basic question: What am I focused on?
- Simple Focus
 - Simplicity doesn't necessarily mean that God's vision for your life is small or any less significant
 - Instead Simplicity means that we are focused on what really matters
 - **Matthew 6:33 (ESV), "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."**

Conclusion

- Two questions to ask yourself
 - Have you caught the ball?
 - Are you running in the right direction?
- Seeking the kingdom means that you not only have caught it, but are running toward it
- It's a simple focus for our life
- As we take this approach to our individual lives, we are going to take this same approach to how we function in 2020 as a church

- Specific steps to implement the very best of what we have found works- we are at our best when we are working together for the glory of God within our different generations to worship, fellowship, and serve.
- Advisory Board meeting to map out our approach
- Church should not be a separate category in your life
- Church should be part of the simple focus
 - If we do our part of working together to honor God, it's only going to produce healthier results in your life
 - Focus determines Function
- Keep it Simple!