

CHRISTIAN EYES — WEEK 2

USE THEM WELL



F. Michael Slay
A DEEP Study

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The cover image is **The Healing of a Blind Man by Duccio di Buoninsegna**

This section expands the details of using Christian eyes and we see many of the Christian eyes concepts converge. Don't get distracted, especially by exciting things or ideas.

Be honest with yourself about how little you know. Double check everything.

Seek the Lord's will in all things (pray without ceasing).

Your ego is dangerous.

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T. M. Moore, Principal
tmmoore@ailbe.org

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1 Matthew 7:7–11

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!”

Picture this. You see someone dropping off a load of sand at a job site. You ask him what he’s doing. He says, “I’m delivering sand.”

The next day, you see someone else doing the same thing and ask the same question. This guy says, “I’m delivering mortar ingredients for the bricklayers.”

On the third day, another new delivery guy, same question. “I’m helping build a church.”

The difference is whether they know and/or care about the context of their actions.

Christian eyes are all about context and nothing provides more context than prayer. I’m in a group of men that pray nightly. Lately, we’ve seen a plethora of answered prayers, some of them spectacular.

And we haven’t been praying for things like “traveling mercies” either (not that there’s anything wrong with that). We’ve been granted some heavy lifts. It’s impossible to overstate how encouraging this is.

But, at the risk of being obvious, you have to pray a lot to see a lot of answered prayer. That’s the Lord’s point in today’s passage. Don’t be afraid to ask. Here’s the classic example of that.

So Gideon said to God, “If You will save Israel by my hand as You have said—look, I shall put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said.” And it was so. When he rose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece together, he wrung the dew out of the fleece, a bowlful of water. Then Gideon said to God, “Do not be angry with me, but let me speak just once more: Let me test, I pray, just once more with the fleece; let it now be dry only on the fleece, but on all the ground let there be dew.” And God did so that night. It was dry on the fleece only, but there was dew on all the ground. — Judges 6:36–40

Gideon’s prayer is essential to interpreting what’s going on with the dew. But he’s afraid to ask it. His prayer is so bold he’s worried that God will be offended.

He’s not.

There’s almost no wrong way to pray (just don’t do it on the street-corner for everyone to see).

pray without ceasing, — 1 Thessalonians 5:17

2 Matthew 7:3–5

“And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”

Part of Christian eyes—maybe the most important part—is being honest with ourselves about the quality of our vision. We understand that we know very little this side of eternity. Regular eyes can see everything that’s near them (given enough light) and assume that’s all there is.

The difference with Christian eyes isn’t that we see better; it’s that we have a Christian perspective. The facts are the same; it’s their meaning that’s different. Christian eyes see everything in terms of the kingdom, and it’s king Jesus Christ. They’re what’s important.

The king has plans and purposes for His kingdom and those plans and purposes are what creation is all about. Without that, the whole universe is meaningless.

“Meaningless! Meaningless!”

says the Teacher.

“Utterly meaningless!”

Everything is meaningless.” — Ecclesiastes 1:2 (NIV)

But those heavenly plans and purposes are beyond our vision. Christian eyes are honest enough to know their limitations.

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. — 1 Corinthians 13:12 (KJV)

So, understand where this leads. Christian eyes are frustrating, even as they’re comforting. They’re comforting because we have learned that the universe is not out of control, and the Lord of it all is a loving Lord.

But they’re frustrating because we aren’t privy to much of the information that we know is there. People with only regular eyes don’t know what they’re missing.

In that sense, ignorance **is** bliss.

Part of learning to live with Christian eyes is learning to be patient—patient with ourselves as well as patient with others. This gets back to the direct meaning of today’s passage.

Yes, there is a speck in your brother’s eye. Yes, it needs to come out.

No, you’re not qualified to remove it.

3 Acts 16:26–27

Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself.

Think of this from the jail-keeper's point of view. He's been ruined by a supernatural event (or so he thinks).

One of the most important, and most difficult, applications of Christian eyes is with respect to negative (or apparently negative) events. I have a personal term for some of these — “negative miracles.”

I know that's a misnomer. The apparently negative events aren't really negative (as per Romans 8:28). It's just hard to see their good purpose. (In the jail-keeper's case, this clears up quick.)

But misnomers can be a good way to communicate something. Yogi Berra is famous for his brilliant, wrong sayings. One of my favorites is, “If you don't go to other people's funerals, they won't go to yours.” The contradiction is what makes this quip work. You know what he meant, and the wrong way he said it makes it unforgettable.

Negative miracles are those events that combine two things. They seem horrible and the way they happened looks virtually impossible.

The important thing to do in response is to remember your Christian eyes. Stop being angry about your “incredible bad luck” and try to figure out what's going on.

Whatever happened, it wasn't just random. The Lord may be trying to get your attention.

In my experience, negative miracles are rare but very important. They're the most attention getting events I know of. A negative miracle is how I became a Christian. Here's the summary — “In response to my befuddled, agnostics prayer for help, an incredible weather-related event forced me to drop out of the electrophysics PhD program at the University of Maryland.” That definitely got my attention.

Now I see things differently. Negative miracles are more than just curious. If I keep my wits about me and don't forget my Christian eyes, I'll say a prayer like, “Seriously? Do we really have to do this now?”

I should also remember to follow that up with, “A-nee av-de-kha,” which is Hebrew for “I'm your servant.” The point of all my whining is to get me in the mood for walking whatever road the Lord is putting me on. I'm reminding myself of my commitment and steeling myself for the next step.

That said, it's perfectly OK to pray for the road to be short, or even for the whole thing to turn out to be a false alarm.

I don't seem to have any trouble remembering to pray for that.

4 Matthew 7:15–20

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.”

Christian eyes have a kind of radar. Part of Christian eyes is being skeptical enough to test things, even when they look good—especially when they look good. That’s what the *sheep’s clothing* bit is all about.

Discernment here is essential but also tricky. Thankfully, the Lord gives us a specific instruction for this—check the bottom line. *You will know them by their fruits.*

Things that look good need to also be good. That is, your Christian eyes, which see all things in terms of the kingdom, should be able to discern some kingdom benefits. That’s the only fruit that matters.

This doesn’t mean we should reject things just because they look good; it’s just that appearances can be deceiving. In fact, appearances are often intended to be deceiving. That’s the lesson of “Beauty and the Beast.”

It’s also part of the lesson of the very next passage in Mathew.

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” — Matthew 7:21–23

They did a bunch of works that look good. But are they good?

Obviously not.

The flip side of this message is watch out that your own works might be ones that just look good. This is where many of the Christian eyes concepts converge.

Don’t get distracted, especially by exciting things or ideas.

Be honest with yourself about how little you know.

Double check everything.

Seek the Lord’s will in all things (pray without ceasing).

Even tomorrow’s lesson fits in—watch out that your ego doesn’t get in the way.

5 Matthew 16:15–18

He said to them, “*But who do you say that I am?*”

Simon Peter answered and said, “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*”

Jesus answered and said to him, “*Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.*”

When the Lord says that Simon can see things that *flesh and blood has not revealed*, He’s declaring that Simon has Christian eyes. This earns Simon a new and glorious name and the title of head of the church.

The key word here is “*revealed.*” This was not some brilliant deduction Simon made. All He did was pick up on the message from *My Father*. Christian eyes are nothing more than truly open eyes.

But we quickly see Peter’s Christian eyes close.

From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.

Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!”

But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.” — Matthew 16:21–23

Now Peter’s eyes are so closed they’re not even open to the words of Jesus Himself. What happened? How can someone so solid in the faith suddenly find himself arguing with his Lord?

Notice Jesus’s use of the word, “*mindful*” here. “*You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.*” Remember, Christian eyes are a function of the mind. Peter’s error here is mostly one of forgetting. He’s a young Christian at this point. He’s not used to the Christian mindset. Being “*mindful of the things of God*” means not slipping back into secular thinking.

You have to remember to use your Christian eyes.

This gets back to the lesson on being honest with ourselves about of the quality of our vision. Peter took Jesus’s complement to heart, and now he thinks he’s an expert. Jesus announced that **one** thing was *revealed* to Simon by *My Father in Heaven*. To Simon’s sinful ego, this means he can see everything clearly. So, of course, he decides to “help” Jesus by transmitting some of this newfound vision.

Jesus comeback line is especially painful — “*Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me,*”

Peter needs to learn a tough lesson. Those words are designed to make sure that this doesn’t happen again.

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. What is a wrong way to pray?
2. What do you wish God would not keep hidden from you?
3. Have you had a “negative miracle” experience?
4. When have you been fooled by appearances?
5. When has your ego caused a misstep?

Items for prayer: