



WHEN OUR VISION IS BLURRED

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I was 25 miles from home, driving in a rainstorm, when my windshield wipers stopped working. The midmorning traffic was lighter than usual, but that didn't calm my racing heart. My windshield was a kaleidoscope of moving cars and water. With my blurred vision I feared for my safety.

When I looked to the left, right and behind, hardly a drop of water obscured my vision. But when I looked ahead, I was blinded. I strained to see and pressed on.

By the grace of God I made it home safely. Was driving in the storm an act of utter foolishness or an act of faith?

Just a week before this incident, my wife, Ruth, and I had decided to leave our ministerial post in the church that we had served for 11 years. I was about to begin a leadership assignment with the Evangelistic Association of New England. My vision of the past and present were clear—like the view through the side and the back windows of my car during that rainstorm. But my vision of the future was blurred.

How can I be certain of that which I cannot see? Scripture says, "Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."¹ It is faith that helps me to rest in God. Faith is indispensable in my daily pursuit of God.

Able to Know God

When I was a high school student, I prayed the sinner's prayer as my first step to understanding the significance of faith. In my childhood I had learned about God, but as a new Christian I received the assurance of a personal relationship with God.

This was a big step for me as a teenager. I felt shallow, but little did I know how dramatically different my life would be as a Christian.

One of my first decisions as a Christian was choosing not to steal from my employer. Knowing God had made a tangible difference in me as an impressionable teenager.

By receiving the gift of faith in Jesus,² I knew that I was ushered out of darkness into his marvelous light.³

I discovered God's love for me. Jesus, "the author and perfecter of our faith,"⁴ is the Source of my faith and the Sustainer of that gift of faith in me. This discovery was the first step in developing a life that honors and pleases God.

Experience the Joy of Salvation

The psalmist wrote, "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me... Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you."⁵

One of my friends, businessman Bob Jacks, says that in a mixed crowd of unbelievers and believers he can spot new Christians. Their newfound faith and joy spill over into their relationships. New Christians are unashamed of their joy in Jesus, and they let their light shine.

The Evidence of Faith

Throughout the Scriptures we see how faith-filled people made choices to follow God. In the "hall of fame" of the faithful in Hebrews 11, we are reminded of acts performed "by faith": Abel's better sacrifice, Noah's holy fear, Abraham's journey to the Promised Land, Moses' perseverance, Rahab's boldness. These people did not know the impact that their lives would have on their own generations and on generations to follow.

To "fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith,"⁴ requires not only a heart of worship but a life of service. The Apostle James reminded us of the importance of faith and deeds being synchronized with one another: "Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."⁶

Consider for a moment the torment that Noah must have endured as a result of his faith. Imagine the ridicule that he received from others when for more than 100 years he worked on the Ark. He acted by faith in God who instructed him to work on the Ark.

Noah, finding favor in the eyes of the Lord,⁷ was asked to do a mammoth assignment for God, and he did everything just as God commanded him. Noah's righteousness became apparent with the first piece of cypress wood that he cut and continued with every cubit of the construction thereafter.

Are we exhibiting faith in our daily walk of service? Is our inner life of obedience evidenced in our mannerisms, in our words of affirmation and in our acts of kindness? Do our actions reflect our faith?

The Apostle Peter wrote about the refining of our faith.⁸ Our faith will prove genuine and will result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed to us. We need to stand firm in our

faith and remain patient. Instead of looking over our shoulders at what could have been or what might have been, we are to follow the leading of the Savior.

Faith in the Lord Jesus coupled with love for others were held in high esteem by the Apostle Paul: "If I have faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing."⁹ Trusting in the Almighty and loving others in his name are hallmarks of our faith.

Throughout the pages of the Bible faith and love are interwoven, laced together in the lives of believers.

Faith Sets Life's Priorities

Our nine-year-old son, Nathan, has had several surgeries on his right leg to correct a congenital defect. He wears a brace full-time to provide strength and protection. As much as we have prayed, healing has been a long process with setbacks along the way.

When it was time for Nathan's first surgery, Ruth and I found it difficult to turn him over to the surgeon. Did we want to relinquish control to a physician? Did our struggle say something to us about our trust in the Great Physician?

We held back our tears as we handed Nathan to the doctor. Once Nathan had been wheeled away, we wept uncontrollably. His second surgery was equally wrenching for us, but now our trust in the Lord was deeper than the first time.

Nathan's need for surgery has been faith-stretching for all of us. We have discovered that God cares about Nathan. Through the circumstances that God allows, our faith is developed.

In the Gospel accounts we read that Jesus healed numerous men and women, young and old. Scripture records that faith played a major role in their healing.¹⁰

We do not know if or when or how God will heal our son's leg, but we do pray that our faith will continue to deepen and that God's priorities will be fulfilled in all of our lives.

Growing in faith requires that our earthly priorities be superseded by God's long-term, big picture priorities. We need to relinquish all controls and submit to his eternal, matchless love for us.

A Life of Service

For more than 25 years Doug and Judy Hall have ministered in Boston, Massachusetts. They have hosted more than 900 people in their home, from overnight lodging to stays of up to 12 months. Not only have Doug and Judy provided for the physical needs of others, but based on their personal relationship with Jesus Christ, they have offered the message of faith.

The expression of our faith is lived out in serving others in both word and deed. Love is our focus, the highest goal of a life of faith.¹¹ We are called to offer the gift of faith to all who are in our sphere of influence.¹² As we do, other people have the opportunity to accept this gift for themselves.

By faith we use the gifts that have been given to us by the Holy Spirit.¹³ We need to use our gifts every day to further God's purposes in our world. As stewards of these gifts, we need to give generously to those around us.

For Doug and Judy, and for all of us who claim the name of Jesus Christ, it is a joy to participate in God's work of grace in the lives of others. As we recognize our giftedness and model the gifts of God's Spirit, we witness to Christ with confidence. It is a privilege to be used of God to introduce others to the life-changing message of Jesus Christ.

An Awesome Resource

Faith permeates the core of our being and radiates outward in our lives together as a community. Despite the condition of the road or of the vehicle that's taking us to our destination, we can be assured that God has a clear view of what lies ahead.

After I drove through that rainstorm and reached home, the rain stopped. My windshield wipers are now fixed, and I have learned a new lesson. My heart is set on telling others of God's gift of faith, "the evidence of things not seen."¹⁴

(1) Hebrews 11:1, NIV. (2) Ephesians 2:8. (3) 1 Peter 2:9. (4) Hebrews 12:2, NIV. (5) Psalm 51:10-13, NIV. (6) James 2:17, NIV. (7) Genesis 6:8. (8) 1 Peter 1:7. (9) 1 Corinthians 13:2, NIV. Consider also Ephesians 1:15; Colossians 1:4; 1 Thessalonians 3:6; Philemon 1:5. (10) Matthew 9:2; 9:22; 9:29; 15:28; Mark 10:52; Luke 8:48; 18:42. (11) 1 Corinthians 13:13. (12) Romans 1:5. (13) Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4. (14) Hebrews 11:1, KJV. Bible verses marked NIV are taken by permission from The Holy Bible, New International Version, copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society, Colorado Springs, Colorado

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