

Trusting God: Don't Trust Your Eyes

1. Video – review what trust has meant over the past few weeks.
2. Don't Trust Your eyes. Joke:
 - a. A woman walks in a store to return a pair of eyeglasses that she had purchased for her husband a week before. "What seems to be the problem, madam?" "I'm returning these glasses I bought for my husband. He's still not seeing things my way."
 - b. Never lie to an x-ray technician. They can see right through you
3. Last week, when I talked about not “trusting reason” or “understanding” I mentioned that the weakness of reason lies with the problem that it does not always have all of the facts.
 - a. Reason is limited by perspective or by the amount of information available to it.
 - b. It is the same with our eyes.
 - i. No one prior to the invention of the electron microscope could SEE things that existed at the atomic or subatomic level.
 1. Just because we couldn't see them, did that mean that they didn't exist?
 2. No, it simply means that our eyes have limitations in regards to seeing small objects.
 - ii. Prior to the Hubble telescope, most people had never seen a photograph of a nebula, because they are too far away to be seen by the naked eye.
 1. Did that mean they didn't exist?
 2. No, it simply means that our eyes have limitations when it comes to the distance an object is from them.
 - iii. Before World War II, no one could ever imagine being able to see in the dark. Scientists since then have learned to energize photons so that through specialized equipment, you can see objects at night. Some of you have video cameras that have night-vision. You can actually see in the dark.
 1. Before you had this technology, your eyes were limited by the amount of light that they had.
 - iv. Your eyes have another limitation, that is they cannot see into the spiritual realm.
 1. It is not discernable to the human eye.
 2. Does that mean it not exist just because you cannot see it or we haven't invented something that can peer into it and take a photo of it? Of course not!
4. My major premise this morning is that “**You can't trust your eyes because they can't see what is unseen**”
 - a. On the contrary, we must learn to look to and to trust God, who is unseen:
 - b. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 *Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed; day by day. 17 For our light and momentary troubles are*

achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 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."

- i. This is a very odd statement because we are told to fix our EYES on what is unseen – even though they cannot see the unseen.
 1. Fix our eyes: (Skopeo): observe, contemplate, to fix one's eyes upon, direct one's attention to.
 2. Seen: (blepo – 4x in this verse) - to see with the mind's eye, to have the power of understanding, to discern mentally, perceive, understand.
- ii. What is it that we are told to fix our attention on, to perceive and understand?
- iii. These instructions seem to contradict everything our world seems to tell us:
- iv. Every day our attention is grabbed by things that are visual.
 1. We live in and communicate in an increasingly visual society –
 - a. Television, camera phones, video telephones, and You-Tube almost seem to run our lives.
 2. How do we stop focusing on the things that are visible and temporary and look to the unseen, permanent things?
 3. I believe that we will focus on the unseen and eternal when we realize that the unseen spiritual world is significantly greater, more powerful, and incredible than anything we have ever known.
- v. I think about the prophets who had visions of heaven, of angels and of heavenly beings, of Daniel, Ezekiel and Isaiah. I think about John who found it difficult to put into human words. And then I think about a man named Elisha.
 1. *2 Ki 6:8-17 Now the king of Aram was warring against Israel; and he counseled with his servants saying, "In such and such a place shall be my camp." 9 The man of God sent word to the king of Israel saying, "Beware that you do not pass this place, for the Arameans are coming down there." 10 The king of Israel sent to the place about which the man of God had told him; thus he warned him, so that he guarded himself there, more than once or twice.*
 2. *11 Now the heart of the king of Aram was enraged over this thing; and he called his servants and said to them, "Will you tell me which of us is for the king of Israel?" 12 One of his servants said, "No, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom." 13 So he said, "Go and see where he is, that I may send and take him." And it was told him, saying, "Behold, he is in Dothan." 14 He sent horses and chariots and a great army there, and they came by night and surrounded the city.*
 3. *15 Now when the attendant of the man of God had risen early and gone out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was circling the city. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" 16 So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." 17 Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." And*

the LORD opened the servant's eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

- vi. Summarize the story of Elisha (the disciple of Elijah, who got a double portion of the spirit) – The King of Israel is at war with Aram, and Elisha keeps giving insider information to the King of Israel so he can avoid ambushes and traps that the King of Aram is setting for him. The king of Aram is outraged because he thinks that there is a spy in his camp, but one of his smarter counselors tells him about Elisha, the prophet who tells the king of Israel the most intimate speech that the King of Aram has uttered. So the King of Aram sends an army to capture Elisha who is in the town of Dothan. Elisha has a new servant who works for him (he had to fire his last one because of embezzlement) and his servant gets up to make Elisha's coffee in the morning. (sounds good anyway). He looks out his window and he sees a huge army and he panics and warns Elisha. Elisha does something remarkable. He doesn't stop with telling his servant it will be okay. He prays that God will reveal to his servant and allow him to see what Elisha can already see...a mountain full of spiritual beings, angelic hosts with chariots of fire.
- c. Do you understand what this implies?
 - i. This and many other passages of scripture attest to the same thing.
 - ii. There is a lasting and powerful spiritual dimension that far exceeds this physical one that our limited eyes take in.
 1. There are forces at work in our universe that if we could see them, we would quake in our boots.
 2. Folks, I am not talking about ghosts of disembodied and departed souls like the horror flicks depict, but about spiritual beings that the bible describes such as seraphim, cherubim, awesome and fearful creatures, and demons and angels that have assignments, tasks and responsibilities that are taking place all around us every day, unseen to our physical eyes.
 3. These remain unseen, but once in awhile, God will give someone a glimpse of the unseen realm:
 - iii. I can imagine how surprised that Balaam was that his donkey spoke, but do we realize that the unseen spiritual reality of a destroying angel was made visible to both donkey and master? This should be more amazing!
 1. Numbers 22:31-33 *Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand; and he bowed all the way to the ground. 32 The angel of the LORD said to him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out as an adversary, because your way was contrary to me. 33 "But the donkey saw me and turned aside from me these three times. If she had not turned aside from me, I would surely have killed you just now, and let her live."*
 2. I don't know whether the donkey could normally see into the spiritual or not, but unless God had opened Balaam's eyes, he would not have seen into it.

- d. Here is my point – we cannot trust our eyes because they cannot possibly see all that there is to see, either in the physical realm and most certainly in the physical realm. Yet, we are called to peer into the spiritual realm, to fix our attention there even though we cannot see it.
 - i. We are not to trust our physical eyes but rather to trust God who is unseen.
- e. 1 Corinthians 13:12 *Now we see things imperfectly as in a poor mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God knows me now.*”
 - i. We all have some degree of peripheral vision which allows you to see but not as clearly as you do when you are looking straight ahead at something. In fact, I had a pastor once who had macular degeneration, and his ONLY vision was his peripheral. He would drive like this....(it was scary).
 - ii. Well, to see in the spiritual realm, all we can get glimpses of are in the peripheral vision of our minds. So we must train ourselves to see in the peripheral realm of the Spirit. We can see spiritual things dimly.
 - 1. Black Holes cannot be seen. They are stars which have collapsed and so do not emit light but nevertheless are a powerful force although not visible. How do we know they are there? By the force that they emit to surrounding stars.
 - 2. Scientists likened it to a dance floor, with the ladies in white dresses and the men all in black. If the lights are turned down all that can be seen is the white of the ladies and yet we know the men are there because of the pattern of the ladies’ movements - there are unseen partners leading them.
 - iii. What do we see when we look for the unseen hand of God? We see the actions and the work of God and sometimes even the plans of God exhibited in the things that are influenced by the power of God.
 - iv. Tonight at 6pm, we will hear testimonies from some of these students who will be in our community watching for the hand of God. We will get a GLIMPSE of the spiritual realm tonight as a part of a celebration service. You will want to be here!

5. **You can’t always trust your eyes because what you think you know will affect what you see:**

- a. Most people assume that what you see is pretty much what your eye sees and reports to your brain. In fact, your brain adds to the report it gets from your eye, so that a lot of what you see is actually "made up" by the brain. Perhaps even more interestingly, the eye actually throws away much of the information it gets, leaving it to the rest of the brain to fill in additional information in its own ways. This process is called “lateral inhibition” and it is why we are tricked by optical illusions. <http://serendip.brynmawr.edu/bb/latinhib.html>
 - i. **Show slide**, stare at the dot in the middle. After staring at it, do the following, rock forward in your chair staring at the dot, you will see the outer bands rotate.
 - ii. Our minds can trick our eyes, and our eyes can trick our minds!
- b. **ILLUSTRATION:** For centuries people believed that Aristotle was right when he said that the heavier an object, the faster it would fall to earth. Aristotle was regarded as the greatest thinker

of all time, and surely he would not be wrong. Anyone, of course, could have taken two objects, one heavy and one light, and dropped them from a great height to see whether or not the heavier object landed first. But no one did until nearly 2,000 years after Aristotle's death. In 1589 Galileo summoned learned professors to the base of the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Then he went to the top and pushed off a ten- pound and a one-pound weight. Both landed at the same instant. The power of belief was so strong, however, that the professors denied their eyesight. They continued to say Aristotle was right. (Bits & Pieces, January 9, 1992, pp. 22-23)

- c. Many people today, perhaps in this room are blinded by "what they KNOW."
 - i. You may be discouraged or feeling as if God isn't using you or that you aren't making a difference. If you focus on what is seen, on the physical, visible realm, I guarantee that you will be discouraged.
 - ii. In the passage from 2 Cor 4:16-19 *Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed; day by day. 17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 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.*"
 - iii. Paul says that the troubles we see around us will discourage us. But we do not lose heart!
 - iv. When you see illness, when you see opposition, when you see trouble, do you get discouraged or give up?
 - 1. Before you give up, think about "what is God doing that I cannot see?"
 - 2. Don't let what you think you know affect your vision.
 - 3. God is much bigger than you and His trustworthiness is derived from His character.
 - 4. Don't let what you think you know keep you from experiencing what He wants to do in your life today!
 - 5. DON'T LOSE HEART! Look to the invisible, trust God not what you see!

6. **What you see is influenced by your perspective.**

- a. There are two kinds of perspective: Your attitude and your altitude.
 - i. **Altitude** – like being in space and seeing the curvature of the earth helps you see the world in its proper perspective among creation. If you are hiking through the woods and are having trouble finding your way, one of the best ways to find your direction is to get above the clutter of the trees and see the overarching picture.
- b. **Attitude** – is similar, and it affects how you respond to the challenges you face.
 - i. A shoe manufacturer who decided to open the African Congo shoemarket sent two salesmen to the undeveloped territory. One salesman cabled back: "Prospect here nil. No one wears shoes." The other salesman reported enthusiastically, "Market potential terrific! Everyone is barefooted."
 - ii. One saw no market for shoes because no one was wearing them. The other saw the potential because no one had shoes.

- c. We encounter a situation and our personal perspective influences how we see it and how we react to it.
 - i. When Goliath came against the Israelites, the soldiers all thought, “He’s so big we can never kill him.” David looked at the same giant and thought, “He’s so big I can’t miss.”
 - d. The Holy Spirit calls us to be willing to take creative risks by faith regardless of the shame, difficulty, or suffering we may have to endure.
 - e. Today, many of you will be going out to do what no one else has considered possible or probable.
 - i. You will go out and knock on doors and ask people to share their deepest needs of their life so that you can pray for them and bring the supernatural power of God into the hardest place of their life.
 - ii. You are going out not to sell something or ask people to give you anything.
 - iii. You are going out, 2 by 2, to proclaim the power and love of God to every home in Madison Ohio, to SHOW that God cares enough about them, that you sacrificed your spring break to touch their lives today.
 - iv. You will go to homes that don’t seem like they want to hear from you, to people who don’t think that they have any needs that God can help them with...and you are going to watch the power of God at work, softening hearts, revealing needs and allowing you to enter into divine appointments with them.
 - 1. **Battery divine appt. testimony.** (several years ago)
 - f. When we look at our community, what do we see?
 - i. We see a populace of over 20,000 people who are lost and unchurched.
 - ii. And how do we see them? Hopelessly lost, not worth our time and trouble...or do we see them as lost and a field white unto harvest?
 - iii. There are a bunch of shoeless people in Madison.
 - iv. You are bringing them what they need today!
7. Heb 11:1 *“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”*
- a. Wayne Gretzke was asked how he scored so many goals...he replied, “I go where the puck is going to be.” He in a sense, sees what will happen before it does.
 - b. People have been praying for this community for a long, long time. We have community wide prayer meetings to pray for revival. God is going before us today.
 - c. "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them."
 - d. Today the doors will open to people’s homes and hearts. Thank you for being here to walk through them.
8. In a moment, we will have a time of ministry at the close of our service. If you have been struggling with allowing what you see or think you know to affect how you live, then you have been trusting something other than God. Your fears, your eyes, have kept you from trusting Him. I would like to pray for you today. I want to call you to step out of your pew or chair, and walk up the aisle of this church and Jennifer and I will pray for you this morning. Don’t leave here the way you came in! The stakes are too high to trust your eyes in a world that is passing away.

Let us pray.

the spiritual or "unseen" world requires an inbuilt set of senses activated only through some sort of spiritual quickening. "No one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above," said Jesus. "The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned," said Paul. Both expressions point to a different level of correspondence available only to a person spiritually alive.