

What You See Is What You Get

By Jim and Carolyn Murphy

November 1993

No one questions the blessings of excellent eyesight. Even the little, simple things in life become harder when our vision is impaired. And certainly life is much more difficult for those with no sight at all.

Shifting from physical sight to spiritual "sight" or our spiritual perception, the old saying "what you see is what you get" is also quite true. The pessimist grumbles that the glass is half empty while the optimist cheerfully sees the same glass as half full. The whole of life is colored by our perceptions: gloom, despair and trouble to the one...delight, humor and brightness to the other.

If these observations are true in the *natural*, how much more so in the *spiritual*? Let's look at a vivid example from Scripture:

"Now the king of Aram was at war with Israel. After conferring with his officers, he said, 'I will set up my camp in such and such a place.' The man of God sent word to the king of Israel: 'Beware of passing that place, because the Arameans are going down there.' So the king of Israel checked on the place indicated by the man of God. Time and again Elisha warned the king, so that he was on his guard in such places. This enraged the king of Aram. He summoned his officers and demanded of them, 'Will you not tell me which of us is on the side of the king of Israel?' 'None of us, my lord the king,' said one of his officers, 'but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom.' 'Go, find out where he is,' the king ordered, 'so I can send men and capture him.' The report came back: 'He is in Dothan.' Then he sent horses and chariots and a strong force there. They went by night and surrounded the city. When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. 'Oh, my lord, what shall we do?' the servant asked. 'Don't be afraid,' the prophet answered. 'Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.' And Elisha prayed, 'O Lord, open his eyes so he may see.' Then the lord opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. (II Kings 6:8-17 NIV).

We observe that the servant saw only the *problem*, Elisha saw beyond the problem to the *solution*. We observe that the servant saw only the hand of the *enemy*, Elisha saw the hand of God and His victorious army.

Why did one see only the Aramean soldiers while the other saw the angelic host of chariots of fire? The answer is simple. The servant saw only that which is in the *natural*, Elisha saw beyond the natural realm into the *spiritual* realm. And how different were their reactions to what they saw! The one was fearfully driven to near panic

crying out, "Oh, what shall we do?" The other, seeing the might of the Lord God in the hills poised for battle, joyfully anticipated the sweet savor of certain victory! The obvious, overriding point here is that which we perceive to be true becomes what guides our decisions and actions. This is true in both the natural realm and the spiritual realm.

This is not a new problem for the church of Jesus Christ. Jesus' observation of the religious leaders of His day was that they had eyes that did not see. On one occasion He told the Pharisees "...when evening comes, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,' and in the morning, 'Today will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times." (Matt 16:2-3 NIV). Jesus' point is quite clear: they could see the *natural* world very well but were oblivious to the *spiritual* reality in front of them.

The Scripture says, "...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." (II Cor 4:18 NIV). This Scripture makes abundantly clear there are two spheres of existence -- the natural and the spiritual. Moreover, we note that the natural is passing or temporary while the spiritual is permanent or eternal. As born again believers our citizenship is in the eternal or spiritual realm, not in the natural realm!

When we are driving on the freeway and we see several cars slowing and stopping ahead we also begin to slow. We take precautionary action based on what we see in front of us. Yet how many Christians are blindly plunging down the spiritual freeway of life glibly chatting with one another as if the responsibility for seeing ahead spiritually did not exist?

Yes, we do live in the natural. Our family and friends, our house, our car, our job...and certainly our bills are here in the natural world. But our *home* is in the spiritual world where Elisha's angelic host resides, where the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is, where the supernatural power of God is, where the Eternal I AM sits enthroned forever, and where Jesus continually makes intercession on our behalf. That is our *home*! That's the place where our citizenship is eternally located!

Since our home is in this spiritual realm, it is therefore most desirable and even necessary that we have 20/20 spiritual vision -- not only for our good, but to please our Father. It is absolutely vital that we *see daily* what is happening in this spiritual world. We must see the spiritually significant events and players that affect our Christian walk in life. In other words, like Elisha, we must

see God's hand.

Now that the necessity for seeing into the reality of the spiritual realm is established, let's ask the key question:

How Do We Get Spiritual Vision?

The answer lies in the Gospel of John, chapter nine. Here is the story of Jesus restoring eyesight to one who had been born blind. It would be well if you read the story now, but in order to save time and space I will give an overview of that wonderful chapter.

One Sabbath day while walking through Jerusalem, Jesus and the disciples came upon a man who was blind. Jesus anointed the man's eyes with mud and instructed him to go to a distant pool of water and wash his eyes. The man did so and his eyesight was immediately restored. This man was well known in the city and his healing caused no small commotion. Very shortly he was ushered into the presence of the Jewish Council where he was critically questioned regarding the who and how of his miraculous healing. Even the man's parents were summoned for confirmation of his identity and previously blind condition.

The man who had been blind testified that it was the man Jesus who had healed him and he called Jesus a prophet. The Jews were quite unhappy with the healing since it was on the Sabbath and therefore against their religious rules. A theological debate arose among the Jews as to whether Jesus was of God or not since, in their opinion, He had broken the Sabbath by healing the man's blindness on that day.

Apparently the man who had been healed became incensed at their debate and boldly began to correct their faulty theology! This bold defense of Jesus is what got him thrown out!

"The blind man answered, 'Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.'

To this they replied, 'You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!' And they threw him out.

Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' 'Who is he, sir?' The man asked. 'Tell me so that I may believe in him.'

Jesus said, 'You have now seen him; in fact he is the one speaking with you.'

Then the man said, 'Lord, I believe,' and he worshipped him.

Jesus said, 'For judgement I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind. (Jn 9:30-39 NIV).

In verse 39 we read Jesus' spiritual reason for healing this man: "...so that the [spiritually] blind will see and those who [think they] see will become [spiritually] blind.

How was it that having never seen Jesus the man born blind could clearly see who Jesus was while the Jews who had observed Him daily could not discern His true identity? Isn't it most remarkable that the man who never before saw Jesus *physically* could see very clearly *spiritually* while those who had excellent *physical eyesight* were *spiritually* blind?

How did the physically blind man gain such powerful spiritual insight? It was because of what he *did*. In other words, his own actions caused his spiritual eyes to be opened. What did he do? He did two "simple" things that radically transformed his life.

ONE: To Receive Spiritual Eyesight We Must BELIEVE God's Word:

The blind man *believed* the word of the Lord.

Jesus gave him simple instructions to follow. It was some distance to the pool in which Jesus instructed him to wash. It would have been so easy to allow unbelief to join him enroute and convince him that he was a fool and/or the object of a cruel joke. "This is nonsense." unbelief would say, "Find some water and get that mud out of your eyes!"

Unbelief is so logical, so reasonable, so convincing, isn't it? But our man wasn't persuaded by unbelief's argument. He *believed* the word of Jesus.

How Does God Speak To Us?

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we lived in the time of Jesus or that He was alive on earth as a physical man today? Then we could simply listen to His human voice and do what He said. But we don't have the advantage that the blind man did. So we must ask, how does Jesus speak to us today? For us Jesus' Word comes in two forms, the written and the spoken. His written Word is the Bible. We must believe the Bible. We must believe that the Bible **is** the Word of God...inerrant in its original form. Such theological debates as, "How did Jesus feed the five thousand?...Did He really plan to die on the cross?...Did Moses write the first five books of the Bible?"...etc. are not for those who *believe*. These debates are for today's Pharisees! These debates are for the spiritually blind. For those of us who believe, we know that the written Word of God is absolutely true in its original text.

1. He Speaks to Us from Scripture

In addition to God speaking to us generally through all of Scripture, He also occasionally speaks to us very personally through His Word. This usually happens when we least expect it. As we are reading the Bible suddenly a

verse or phrase seems to come alive! You read it again and again. New meaning and insight begins to flood your soul. God has just spoken to you through His Word. When I receive these kinds of spoken Words from Scripture I write them down or note them in my Bible to prevent me from forgetting them. I cherish them and I take them very seriously.

This "speaking" seldom occurs through what I call "crisis reading" of the Bible. That's the practice of only reading the Bible when there is a crisis. It occurs most often to those who are in the habit of Bible reading -- usually daily Bible reading.

2. He Speaks to Us by the Holy Spirit.

Occasionally He speaks to us Spirit to spirit -- again, when we least expect it. Suddenly a thought, or a sentence fills your consciousness. It is as if someone has just spoken and you are considering what was said -- only the speaking was not audible. (Though some have heard God speak audibly.) This is God speaking by His Spirit.

Jesus said, "My sheep listen to my voice..." (Jn 10:27) Jesus meant that as a Christian begins to mature it is to be expected that God will begin to speak to him or her. By "speak" I don't necessarily mean an audible voice. I mean the gentle impression of Divine ideas and thoughts communicated into one's spirit, particularly in response to prayer. It is a "knowing-that-you-know" God has spoken to you. Again, this most commonly happens among those who regularly communicate with God through prayer.

3. He Speaks to Us Through Others.

Sometimes God speaks to us through other people. Perhaps through a preacher or teacher, through a husband, wife or child. He may even speak to us through unbelievers...such as a teacher, co-worker, neighbor, supervisor, or even a policeman!

When He does speak in this manner, there is the same consciousness mentioned above -- once you hear the words there is an awareness that something significant was just spoken. As you consider what was said the Holy Spirit bears witness that they are His words.

And remember, even the thought of God speaking presupposes some degree of spiritual maturity. Jesus didn't say my *lambs* listen to my voice. He said, "My *sheep* listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me." (Jn 10:27 NIV, emphasis added.) Most importantly, when God does speak, regardless of the manner, we must not fail to listen. We must remember and obey the word diligently just as the blind man did. Then, and only then, will we receive spiritual sight which allows us to begin to see into the spirit realm.

But believing alone is not enough. The Scripture says,

"...even the demons believe...and shudder." (Jas 2:19 NIV). One must put his or her belief into *action*!

TWO: To Receive Spiritual Eyesight We Also Must OBEY:

It is absolutely incumbent on the believer to obey God's Word. Not only did the blind man believe Jesus' Word, he *obeyed* His Word. Had he not obeyed Jesus' instructions he would not have received his sight. This often is the hard part -- the mundane part. The blind man could easily have modified Jesus' instructions or obeyed only in part. Or he could have rejected the instructions as being too simple, saying to himself, "I've been blind over forty years, what's this long walk to the pool going to do for me but make me more tired?"

Often obeying the Word of God is painful, unpleasant and even at times seemingly detrimental to one's own well being. The Scripture exhorts us, "We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away." (Heb 2:1 NIV). The way to a fuller life in Christ is contained in God's Words to us. Therefore we must be ever so careful to obey them. We must obey even when obedience seems inane or difficult.

Remember Naaman, the Syrian general who had leprosy? He had been told that a mighty prophet of God in Israel could tell him how he get cured. But when he got to Elisha's house, Elisha didn't even come out to talk to him. Instead he sent his servant with a message, "Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed." (II Kings 5:10 NIV). Naaman became very angry. He said,

"I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than any of the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?" So he turned and went off in a rage. (II Kings 5:11,12 NIV).

But one of his servants wisely encouraged him to obey the word and his obedience brought healing to his leprous body. What was Naaman's problem? It was that the word given to him by Elisha was so simple and foolish that he came close to angrily rejecting it. I wonder how many times we have rejected God's Word to us to our own detriment.

Yes, just as the man in John, chapter nine received his spiritual sight through belief and obedience to God's Word, so do we. But as we look around in the Body of Christ we see many who appear to be blind leaders of the blind.

Why Do Many Not See?

The answer to this question is painfully simple. They

have either not *believed or not obeyed* the Word of God. They have rather believed the word of man, or of philosophy, or of their own imagination, or the doctrine of demons, or of the so-called theologians who themselves do not believe. This is so sad for it has produced an entire segment of the church that does not truly see the things of our Lord. A church that, as the man in John nine, sits and begs for handouts from the world -- not realizing what vision, power and boldness is within their grasp through believing and obeying God's Word.

What Happens When We Receive Spiritual Eyesight?

The answer is a classic "good news -- bad news" paradox:

The bad news is:

1. The "Pharisees" (i.e., those who *claim* to see) aren't going to like it, and,
2. Once we see, we are responsible to God to act according to what we see. Jesus told the Jews, "If you were blind you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains." (Jn 9:40-41 NIV).

Now for the good news:

1. As did Elisha we have the ability to outwit the enemy of our soul. We are able to see the *whole* playing field and *all* its players. Remember what Elisha told his servant? "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." What an advantage!

2. We receive progressive, supernatural insight just as our man in John nine did. When asked who healed him in verse eleven he said, "a man." In verse seventeen he said, "a prophet" and in verse thirty-eight he exclaimed, "Lord!" and worshipped Him!

3. We become *bold*! I love the boldness we see in this man by verse twenty-seven. Here our recipient of sight responds to the Jews' repeated question of how he was healed, "I have told you already and you did not listen, why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciple too?"

What zeal! What boldness! What power! Let us be among those who *believe* and *obey* His Word! Let us see as Elisha did, not only the problems but God's answers and provision! Let each of us be as Elisha so that as we look to the hills, we see God's chariots of fire ready to join with the saints to assure victory at every turn!

HUNDREDFOLD MINISTRIES, INTERNATIONAL

P. O. Box 625
Blue Jay, CA 92317

Telephone 909/336-9701

E-mail: jim.murphy@hundredfold.org Web site: www.hundredfold.org

Rev. Jim Murphy and his wife, Carolyn, of Blue Jay, California, United States, head Hundredfold Ministries, International. They write Christian teaching literature and travel to the Developing Nations of the world teaching Christian leaders. Hundredfold Ministries, Int'l is a cross-denominational Christian ministry dedicated to strengthening the church in the Developing Nations of the world.

Hundredfold Ministries, Int'l provides in-country Bible school courses and leadership training seminars. The classes and seminars are taught by seasoned, anointed teachers. The subject matter is directed towards the development and maturing of Christian leaders. The goal of the Ministry is to produce leaders who will be better equipped to lead and direct national churches.

All of Hundredfold Ministries training material is available from our web site listed above. Pastors in the Developing Nations may receive this material free of charge by going on our web site and requesting it.