



"He who cherishes a beautiful vision, a lofty ideal in his heart, will one day realize it."

—James Allen

11-Oct-13

Are You Blind? (Part Two)

In last week's essay, we considered that most of us know less than we think we know, that we carry around a lot of misconceptions, and that we have little idea about what it is like to be blind. While the majority of us can see physically, we are beset by other kinds of blindness, and too many of us are ignorant of them. We are often blinded by prejudices, past experiences, and inabilities in seeing what is really going on with a person or situation. Because of these kinds of blindness, we tend to make poor judgments.

Being unable to see many aspects of both the broad and the detailed views of circumstances, our perception is based mostly upon what we imagine things to be. We make guesses and assumptions—many more of them than we think we do. As limited human beings, we have little more than that to work with. In many cases, we cannot know what happened before, nor can we see but a sliver of what is actually happening in the present.

So, we find ourselves thinking less of one person and more of another than we should. We consider Mary sincere and "deeply converted," while we

think that Bob is "about as converted as a pencil." Having come to this conclusion—based on almost no real evidence—we may question Bob's motives and even go so far as to speak badly about him to others.

According to our Savior [Jesus Christ](#), this should not be. He makes this very clear in the [Sermon on the Mount](#):

And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, "Brother, let me remove the speck that is in your eye," when you yourself do not see the plank that is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck that is in your brother's eye. ([Luke 6:41-42](#))

While we may not be blind, we have our own "planks" that distort our discernment of the truth about others. Criticizing others for their faults makes us hypocrites, and certainly, if we try to lead them out of their faults before working to remove our own glaring sins, we will be much like the blind leading the blind into the ditch, which Jesus describes in [Luke 6:39](#). While we are all sinful creatures, we need to make sure that we cast our most discerning gazes on ourselves and, in all humility, refrain from "fixing" others, especially when we have similar problems!

What kind of adjustments can we make to compensate for our innate blindness to see what is really going on in another's life? The physically vision-impaired person may wear glasses or contact lenses or undergo eye surgery to improve his sight problems. But no eyeglasses in [the world](#) can help us to see another person's heart. Laser surgery is worthless against our ignorance of another's background or circumstances. Is there anything we can do?

Years ago, a friend of mine in Tucson came to church services one [Sabbath](#) with a patch over his eye. Concluding that he had injured it, I did not think much more about it until he showed up a few weeks later with the patch over the other eye. He explained that he was exercising his eyes to improve his vision.

There is our answer! We must exercise ourselves in the skill of discernment. We must train ourselves in how to "look" at other people. If nothing else, we can "squint," trying to see beyond what we normally and habitually imagine of others. Paul writes in [Acts 24:16](#) (*The Amplified Bible*, AMP): "Therefore I always exercise and discipline myself [mortifying my body, deadening my carnal affections, bodily appetites, and worldly desires, endeavoring in all respects] to have a clear (unshaken, blameless) conscience, void of [offense](#) toward [God](#) and toward men."

The apostle Peter provides us some ground rules for our training in [1 Peter 3: 8-12](#):

Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; [love](#) as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. For

"He who would love life and see good days,
Let him refrain his tongue from evil,
And his lips from speaking deceit.
Let him turn away from evil and do good;
Let him seek [peace](#) and pursue it.
For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous,
And His ears are open to their prayers;
But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil."

To begin recovering from our blindness, then, we must begin with true, godly love for our brethren. We have to add sympathy and courtesy and a good measure of helpfulness. We must make sure we bite our tongues, bury our hatchets, and swallow our pride. Most of all, we need to remember that God the Judge is watching and that He rewards those who do good and punishes those who cause harm.

In summary, unlike God, we cannot know or understand everything that comes within our view; it is far beyond our capabilities. We have great difficulty seeing beyond our prejudices and opinions. So, we need to be careful about what we say and how we react to what we think we have seen.

Only God sees all and knows all, and He is our righteous judge. We need to get out of His way and out of His business!

We need to take pains to improve our judgment and sincerely try to act and react to others in love. We will not do it well every time; it will take consistent effort and commitment. But if we keep at it, our experiences will begin to develop in us a keener "eye" for what others are really like and what they are actually going through.

It sounds like a lot of work, a lot to bear in mind. But what is it worth to see the truth?

- Dan Elmore

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Self-Government: Overcoming](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Many of us have been guilty of making an idol of the church, letting it stand between God and ourselves. Our obligation is to follow the life-saving message (a message given to Herbert W. Armstrong during his tenure as God's apostle), regardless of the corporate body into which parts of it may be entrusted. Church government, though God-ordained and authorized as civil government is God-ordained (Romans 13:1), is not equivalent to God's government. God's government is God Himself governing. When we yield to God, submitting to God directly, we voluntarily, using free moral agency, totally and unconditionally come under God's government or God's governance. We dare not allow anybody to interpose himself between God's direct governance and ourselves. Even God's government will not work unless we voluntarily govern ourselves.

From the Archives: Featured Article

Godly Tact and Diplomacy

by David F. Maas

Humans, by nature, are very adept at causing offense. As Christians, we must be learning the fine art of tact and diplomacy that works toward reconciliation and unity among the brethren. David Maas gives key points on how to take on these godly traits.

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