

## Is Your Eye Single?

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**Given 18-Dec-93; Sermon #106s**

"I'm a big fan." Possibly many of you have heard or seen that commercial on TV. You know, the guy is a little courtly fellow, he sits in front of his TV all Sunday and watches football, and every commercial ends with, "I'm a big fan." Now they brought his wife on board and I guess now they say "We are a big fan."

Anyway, I am a big fan. I like to follow pro football, especially the Pittsburgh Steelers. I was born there and that just seems the team that I should root for. I have all my life and when a game is on, I do not like any interruption, except during the commercials. I might miss something important, I think, maybe the play that makes or breaks the game. So my dutiful wife has learned about this particular aspect of my personality and generally avoids me during game time (and I have yet to teach Courtney and Johnny to follow their mother's example).

But that is something all of us have in common. That is, most of the time when we are doing something that we enjoy or something that we feel is vitally important to us, that we do not like to be distracted. We do not like our concentration broken. We want to devote all our attention to the job that is at hand.

So my question today is, "Are we focused or are we letting distractions interrupt our concentration? Are we devoted or are we double-minded?"

Let us turn first to Matthew 6. We will go through a section here of the Sermon on the Mount where Christ addresses these questions.

**Matthew 6:22-24** "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness! No

one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

It is amazing when you are looking at this particular question or these particular questions, how much Christ stresses our being focused on the Kingdom of God. That is our goal and He made lots and lots of references to doing just that, to be focused or to concentrate or to be devoted. In parables, sermons, illustrations, and in His own life, He made it clear what a Christian's attention should be devoted to, or maybe rephrase that, what his first priority is.

This section (and it runs from verse 16 all the way through verse 33), concentrates on priorities. But verses 22 and 23, I think, need a little bit of explanation. You see, the ancients believed that the eye was the window of the body or the window of the soul. What came into the eye was either good or bad for you. Light was good and healthy, darkness was evil and destructive. Christ took this idea and used it but He put a bit of a twist on it. And the twist is in the word "good" in verse 22, "If therefore your eye is good." It is not the word that means the opposite of evil. It is a different word, *haplous*. And this word means single. It literally means single, or whole, or clear, as it has been translated in the margin there.

If your eye or your aim or your goal is single or focused or devoted to light, which we can interpret as the truth, then your whole being, your whole body, everything about you will benefit.

The one commentator whose name was Floyd V. A. Filson, writing a commentary on the book of Matthew, wrote, "A man who divides his interest and tries to focus on both God and possession, has no clear vision and will live without clear orientation or direction. If your goal is wrong, your whole being will be off somehow." And that is why Jesus immediately followed this illustration of the eye or the lamp of the body with this thing about no one can serve two masters. He was clarifying what He meant in there. That if you are single-minded about your goal, then you are going to be serving the one master. And it is just a very analogous way of explaining it.

Now, this is one of the chief principles He brings out throughout His whole ministry and that is, loyalty or devotion to God. We cannot truthfully say that we are devoted to God when we are keeping one eye on our investments, one eye on world events, one eye on our hobbies, one eye on our jobs, one eye on sports, one eye on entertainment. We do not have enough eyes! Have you ever noticed that though? We have two eyes. We can only focus on one thing at a time, that our eyes work together. We cannot make one eye go this way and one eye that way—at least most people cannot—so that we could focus on two things at once. They cannot work separately. So Jesus says make sure they are focused predominantly on the right thing, God. Then He says only good can come from it.

Let us go to Matthew 12. We are going to stay in Matthew most of the time here.

**Matthew 12:24-25** But when the Pharisees heard it [meaning heard that some people were saying that He was the Messiah] they said, "This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons." But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand."

Here, He takes this principle and He hits it from a slightly different angle. We have to make sure that the things we focus on are not working at cross purposes to our main goal. We can have more than one thing to concentrate on. He allows that, He knows that we have different things that take up our time. We have our families, we have our job, we have hobbies and things like that, but we can never allow ourselves to divide our loyalties between them.

In a sense, what we have to do is think that everything that we focus on must have the Kingdom of God as the ultimate goal, as the thing that you are looking toward while you do these other things. If we have a hobby, let us make sure it fits in with qualifying for the Kingdom of God, that it does something for our character or teaches us something that would be instrumental or helpful for other people.

Make sure that you do your job as if God were your boss. Some people can get so wrapped up in their job that they leave God totally out of it. But if they are thinking about whether they are ultimately working for God, then the right things come out of it. Make sure even doing things like watching world events does not take over the more important job of building a relationship with God. We have to make sure we prioritize these things rightly and look beyond it and ask ourselves the question, why are we doing this? And if the answer is not in order to become qualified for the Kingdom of God, then maybe we should rethink it. But we just have to make sure that nothing in our lives are working contrary to our position as sons of God.

One chapter over, chapter 13 of Matthew. This is the Parable of the Sower. We will just skip through here and read six verses.

**Matthew 13:3** Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, "Behold, a sower went out to sow."

We just want to look at one particular aspect of this.

**Matthew 13:7-9** "And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has to hear, let him hear!"

Let us go down to verse 22 where He explains verses 7 and 8.

**Matthew 13:22-23** "Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he who receives seed on the good ground is he who hears the word, and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

This is another illustration of a similar principle. The thorns represent hindrances to growth, anything that might come up that would keep us from growing. He says, no fruit can be produced when the plant is constantly fighting for room to grow. His energies are distracted, if you will, from

doing what he should be doing, which is producing fruit. But all he is trying to do is get enough room, sunlight, whatever it happens to be, so it can just grow up without producing any fruit.

Now, the cares of this world may be nothing more than our daily activities, but maybe those daily activities we are allowing to crowd out our first priority. We get so busy doing our daily mundane chores or keeping up our house or whatever that it crowds out things like prayer and study and helping others and things of that nature. And again, if that is the case, we need to refocus ourselves and reorder our priorities.

Back to James, chapter 1. And this is interesting because I have read a couple of commentaries on James and the ones that I read made the comment that James seems to be an expansion or an exposition on the Sermon on the Mount. That he considered the Sermon on the Mount the focal point of Christ's ministry and that all the things that we really need to know are bound up in that, that there is in it like the kernel of everything we need to know for the Kingdom of God, what God expects of us. It is the expansion of the law. But there are a lot of references in James to principles that Jesus preached. And this principle was one that he touched on.

**James 1:8** He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

I like it better in the King James version. "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." Just a flat-out statement without connecting it with what had gone before. Although it does connect with what went on before. It is just a statement of principle. It stands alone.

A double-minded man cannot be trusted because you do not know which way he is going to turn. He thinks one way and he thinks the other way, and who knows which way he is going to decide. He is a fence sitter, his loyalties are divided. He may do the right thing and he may not; just happens to be maybe what he is thinking about at the time. If he is double-minded, he cannot really be trusted.

So what does James say? He does not say it right here. He waits until a little bit later in the book in chapter 4, verse 8. He is talking about what a godly man needs to do: submitting to God and drawing near to God. Let us just read the last half of that verse.

**James 4:8** Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

It we do have split priorities or split loyalties, if our devotion—you can hardly call it devotion if you are devoted to two things at once. That is oxymoronic. You cannot be devoted to two things at once because your concentration or your focus is split. So James says, "Purify your hearts." Look inside and see where you need to improve, where you need to get more in line with what God has revealed to us.

We do not want to leave it there. Flip back just a few pages to Hebrews 12. And this is very interesting. Chapters 12 and 13 really give a lot of instruction and encouragement about what to do in times like these. But we really need to buckle down and focus ourselves on God because the time is short.

**Hebrews 12:1** Therefore [this is after he has talked about all these heroes of faith] we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

What we need to do in this time is lay aside those weights, to get rid of all those encumbrances, all those other distractions that are pulling us back and keeping us from moving forward. Now, let us read verse 12.

**Hebrews 12:12-15** Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet [along a road that leads to the goal], so that what is lame may not

be dislocated, but rather be healed. Pursue peace with all men, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking diligently lest anyone fall short of the grace of God.

All through here, verse 1 of chapter 12 all the way through the end of chapter 13, there are little hints about what we need to be doing as we come upon the end of an age. Because that is who Hebrews was written to. It was written to a people who were coming to an end of an age. The end of their age was the destruction of the Temple and all that they had known as far as the worship of God in a physical sense as Hebrews, was coming to an end and they were going to have to change the way they did things. They were going to have to refocus themselves on what was truly necessary and what was truly right for them to do as they went through this very upsetting troublesome time.

There are just kernels of good principles and information all through here. And even in the beginning of chapter 13, he goes through about seven steps, seven different things that he wants them to focus on. Let brotherly love continue. Do not forget to help people who are strangers. Make sure your marriages are right. Let your conduct be without covetousness—things like this. He was trying to get them looking in the right direction and pointed securely on that one goal and get their aim focused.

And I have to do this too. I know I have lots of distractions, NFL football being one of them. But we need to remember too that as we do this, that we consider what Jesus did as He finished that section in Matthew 6, from verse 16 to verse 33. Remember what verse 33 said where He sums it all up, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."