

How to See in the Spirit

Much of the will of God can be learned from His Word. But God wants His children to know His will in all things. He intends for us to have confidence when we pray and know that our prayers have power to produce results.

So how are you to know the nuances of God's will along with those aspects of His will that are clearly written in Scripture?

Something Paul wrote to the Ephesians gives us a clue: "I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe" (Eph. 1:18-19, NIV, emphasis added).

The Greek word translated "know" in this passage literally means to see and understand. It suggests fullness of knowledge, not progressing or growing in knowledge. God's plan is that you will fully understand the hope of your calling, the riches available to you and His incomparably great power for you.

His method for fulfilling this plan is by the power of His Spirit, who resides in us after we are born again. Jesus said to Nicodemus, "'I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again'" (John 3:3). To state it another way, if a person is born again, he can see the kingdom of God.

The person whom the Spirit of God indwells has the spiritual ability to see. And seeing spirit-truth changes one's perception of material facts.

Jesus suggested to Nicodemus that the Spirit is like the wind. You don't know where it comes from or where it's going. You

know wind only because of its effects.

Suppose, then, that a person decides he does not believe in the wind. This person will reach some strange conclusions about what is true. For example, he will conclude that trees lean over all by themselves sometimes; or that leaves lying quietly on the ground sometimes jump up and twirl through the air.

The person will ascribe power where there is no power. He will not understand that the trees and the leaves are responding to the power of the wind that is acting on them.

If a person who does not believe in the wind and a person who believes in and understands the wind look at the same scene, they will see two startlingly different truths. The first will see trees bending over, the second will acknowledge the wind.

Likewise, the person who learns to observe with spirit-eyes will look at earth and see as God sees, not as the world sees.

WHAT ARE YOU SEEING? To see as God sees requires spiritual vision. Spiritual vision occurs when God creates a picture in your mind of spiritual realities. In physical vision, the impetus for sight is light bouncing off physical objects. In spiritual vision, the impetus for sight is light reflected off spiritual realities. The light source for spiritual vision is Jesus.

His light illuminates kingdom realities. They register on our understanding and become part of what we know (see Eph. 1:17).

When you were born into the kingdom of God, the kingdom of God was born into you. Kingdom realities are within you, and Jesus is causing you to see them.

How will you know the hope to which He has called you? How will you know His riches which He has invested in you? How will you know His incomparably great power that is working for

you and in you?

He will give you light. He will enlighten the eyes of your heart. Then you will know—see and fully perceive.

Through the steady discipline of prayer, spiritual vision is sharpened. The more we live in His presence, the more opportunity He has to enhance our ability to see and bring into sharper focus what we already see.

The person with clear spiritual vision will recognize dimensions of reality that are invisible to the physical senses. In the second chapter of Luke we are introduced to two such people—Simeon and Anna (see vv. 25-26,36-38).

Simeon had no distinctive title or position of leadership. He is described merely as a man in Jerusalem. We know that the Holy Spirit was upon him, and that he was especially attuned to the movings of the Spirit.

We know that God had placed into Simeon's life a clear mental picture—vision—of a future event. The Spirit had revealed to Simeon that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah.

Simeon, moving in the flow of the Spirit, went to the temple, where he saw Mary and Joseph bringing the infant Jesus "to do for him what the custom of the Law required" (see v. 27).

Mary and Joseph were doing something that every Jewish family did. Yet when Simeon looked at this ordinary scene, he saw what no one else saw; he saw the Messiah. Others saw a mother, a father and a baby—the appearance. Simeon saw the truth (see vv. 29-32).

Anna, a prophetess, was especially gifted by God to discern His activity in the world. She had spent most of her life worshiping, fasting, and praying and had developed an extreme sensitivity to the moving of the Spirit. Like Simeon, when she looked at the family from Nazareth she recognized the Messiah,

the promise of God (see vv. 36-38).

Nothing in the material realm identified Jesus as God's Promised One. Only those who had spiritual vision recognized Him.

Those who knew the Scriptures and the law best, the religious leaders of the day, did not recognize the Truth when He stood in front of them. Their spiritual eyes were darkened, and their understanding was limited to things they could perceive with their physical senses.

HOW SPIRITUAL VISION WORKS In Simeon, we can clearly see spiritual vision working in two ways:

1. God gave Simeon a specific promise upon which to base his prayers. God showed Simeon by His Spirit that he would see the Messiah before he died. The Word implies that the promise did not come in a sudden, one-time encounter with God but as he lived in the anointing of the Spirit, the idea grew and took on substance until he knew it with certainty. He saw it. It became part of what he knew.

2. Simeon had the ability to see the Spirit in an ordinary event. When he looked at earth, he saw spirit-truth; in other words—referring back to our former analogy—he saw the wind. Spiritual vision gives the ability to discern between appearance and truth.

Over and over again we see in the Scriptures that God works by implanting and nurturing vision, then causing it to become a reality on the earth. The lives of Abraham, Noah, Moses, Gideon, Paul, Jesus and others attest to this fact.

Only God can put truth in you and make it vision. Like a baby grows inside a woman's body until the time comes for it to be born, vision grows in the spirit of a believer until the time comes for it to be made reality on the earth.

Vision does not come into your life full-grown. God initiates the vision, but you will need to provide the proper conditions for maturing. Here are some of them:

The vision needs a spirit-womb. Your innermost being is the place where the vision grows. Your Spirit-filled life is the environment in which it develops.

The vision needs nourishment. As you fill your life with God's Word, the vision God has entrusted to you will mature. It will take on clearer focus and become more substantive.

The vision has developmental stages. Be patient. The vision will progressively unfold as you walk in obedience.

Consider the life of Abraham (see Gen. 12:1-9). First God implanted the vision. Abraham was told to go to a land that God would show him. He had no clear picture of the mature plan, just an embryonic vision. But he obeyed God and left his homeland.

As Abraham gave the vision time and nourishment, God gave him progressive revelation and clarity. Each step of obedience opened up new dimensions, new understandings (see Gen. 13:14-17).

Step by step, Abraham followed God's voice until finally, the only thing left was for spiritual truth to be manifested in the material realm. The vision was full-term and ready to be born on the earth.

The vision has a due date—an appointed time. God implanted it in your life at exactly the right time, and He will bring it about at exactly the right time.

My tendency is to try to induce labor as soon as the vision enters my life. God is teaching me to wait for the due date. When the vision has reached the right developmental stage, nothing can hold it back. Until that time, nothing can bring

it forth.

The vision is God's, not yours. He has placed His vision into your imagination, creativity, understanding and desires. That, and only that, is what He will bring about.

THE PURPOSE OF SPIRITUAL VISION Why do we need spiritual vision? So that, when we look at situations on earth, we can see them as they will be when brought into contact with God's power. Earth-perspective gives only a vague outline. But when we are using our spiritual vision, God will show us the finished work. It is already finished in His mind, and He causes our spirit-eyes to see it before our natural eyes do.

Seeing it will prompt us to pray. That's the idea! God announces His intentions into our desires or understanding (see Is. 42:9). Then He brings His intentions into being in response to our prayers.

He engages us before the fact so that we will recognize His work and not attribute His power to anyone or anything else (see Rom. 4:21; Is. 48:11). Why? Because He gives impossible vision! He will implant a vision in you that only He can bring into being.

And He will not bring about a diluted form of His vision. You may bring about a diluted form of it; but He will not.

If what you are envisioning about a situation negates or underestimates the power of God, you are not praying the vision, not claiming the promise. You are limiting God by expecting of Him only what you can imagine.

What impossible situation confronts you at this moment? You do not have to deny the negative in order to pray with power. You simply have to view the situation in the light of kingdom realities.

Look fearlessly and realistically at your situation. Don't let

the circumstances intimidate you out of trusting God to fulfill the vision.

Abraham believed God and so became the father of many nations. Place your circumstances against the backdrop of God's promises. Let God re-create your perspective.

Now, what do you see?

Read a companion devotional.

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