

You Must See in the Invisible Realm

These days, I'm trying to raise funds for some overseas mission projects. I need several thousand dollars to finish a women's shelter in Guatemala, about the same amount for a similar effort in Peru and even more for projects in Africa and Asia. My faith rises when I pray, but when I look at my ministry bank account, my heart sinks. The numbers aren't good. The reality of my lack can be discouraging. That's because I'm negatively affected by what I see. Bank ledgers don't lie.

We all deal with this struggle. God's promises look bright, but reality is like ice water poured on our dreams. We can be traumatized by what we see or hear—whether we are dealing with a financial challenge, a health crisis, a wayward child or a struggling church.

The Lord is teaching me this lesson right now, because my tendency is to base my reactions totally on what I see and hear. I've had many freak-out moments recently because I see my situation and doubt God's promise. So the Lord took me to a story from the prophet Elisha's life to teach me that perception isn't reality.

When the king of Aram plotted to capture Elisha, the prophet's servant went out early in the morning to assess the situation. He was terrified when he saw the king's chariots circling the city. His faith shrank when he heard the deafening sound of marching.

But Elisha wasn't even remotely worried. He told his servant: "Do not be afraid, for there are more with us than with them" (2 Kings 6:16). Then the prophet prayed that his servant's eyes would be opened to see behind the curtain of natural

senses. The Lord opened the servant's eyes, and verse 17b says, "he saw that the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire surrounding Elisha."

Elisha had no fear of the king's army because he saw what was happening in the invisible realm. He knew heaven's reality was more real than earthly reality. Heaven's armies were stronger. God was preparing a surprise victory.

What Elisha's disciple learned that day is a lesson for us all. We live in a time when the enemy's hordes are all around us—and in our media-saturated culture, they make a lot of noise. The devil, the master of fake news, traumatizes us with scary sights and sounds. We must respond in three ways:

Develop your spiritual senses. Just as there are five senses in the natural, there are spiritual senses. We can see visions, we can hear God's voice, we can feel the Holy Spirit's quaking, we can smell the fragrance of Christ and we can "taste and see that the Lord is good" (Ps. 34:8a). But the writer of Hebrews tells us that our senses must be trained (Heb. 5:14) if we want to walk in spiritual maturity.

Our God is invisible. His throne, His angels and His glory are hidden from our natural eyes. Yet every spiritual hero in the Bible who left us an example of faith saw beyond what eyes can see. Ask God to open your eyes to the heavenly realm.

Don't focus on the flesh or rely on your mind. Paul said the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile toward God, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God (see Rom. 8:7-8). This is one reason he prayed in the Holy Spirit often. He told the Corinthians: "I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also" (1 Cor. 14:15, ESV). We don't check our brains at the door when we become Christians. God can use our minds. But you will never grasp spiritual reality if you only live in the natural realm. You must be filled with the

Spirit and submit your thoughts to the Spirit. Otherwise, you will rely on human reasoning and human strength instead of God's invisible power.

Discover the reality of Christ's victory. When David was at war with the Philistines, he trusted God to show him how to fight. In one battle, the Lord told David not to strike until he heard the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees (2 Sam. 5:24-25). That makes no sense in the natural! But David knew when he heard the sound that God's unseen angelic armies had arrived.

David wrote of these unseen armies in Psalm 68. He said: "The chariots of God are twice ten thousand, even thousands of thousands" (v. 17a, MEV). You may feel God has left you to fight defenseless. Think again! If you belong to Christ, He has not left you alone in this battle. Open your eyes and ears. Listen for the sound of His angelic warriors as they fight for you.

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