

Be Thou My Vision

Thank you so much for all the gift cards you have blessed me with recently. With traveling so much to visit churches and individuals, they are a tremendous help with meals on the road without having to spend personal or account money.

Thank you also for the provision closet. Now that I am stateside for a time and in need of so many things, it was an overwhelming blessing to have so much provided. I wish I could personally thank every person who has given toward that, but I hope they all know what a blessing it is.

I so appreciate all the prayers that have been prayed for the samburu people and myself these last years. What a comfort to know so many were lifting me up and fighting for and with me. Our God is so faithful. Looking forward to meeting with more of you this next year.

Thanks again,
Victoria Little



What a blessing you all are! We recently got to pick up items for our house from the provision closet, and in one trip we were able to stock our kitchen with all the necessities. Thank you to each of you who give to this ministry. I can't explain it, but when I use the items from the closet, I can't help but think about /be grateful for the ladies who make this possible.

Thank you!
Doug & Miriam Bishop



The year 2020 isn't turning out to look like any of us envisioned it. But then, what year ever is? The truth is, our vision for our lives is not enough.

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth" (Psalm 121:1, KJV), emphasis added.

"Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, **looking unto Jesus** the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:1c-2a, KJV), emphasis added.

"Set your minds on things that are **above**" (Colossians 3:2-3, ESV), emphasis added.

Again, and again, Scripture reminds us, in both Old Testament and New, to set our sights above. We know the world we are living in now is temporary, and only a shadow of things to come. When things get to be too much for us to bear—whether in our personal lives or the state of the world around us—we can take comfort fixing our eyes above.

Take a moment to physically raise your head—literally lift your eyes from the phone screen or printed page from which you are reading this study. Your view should be quite a bit different! Rather than a tight focus on what is immediate, your vision is immediately

broadened to include your forgotten cup of coffee beside you, a pile of laundry you still need to fold, or a mess made by a little one in your household.

Your vision may also now include a glimpse of sunshine hitting your backyard just right, a favorite photo or trinket in your home that makes you smile, or a neighbor waving hello as they pass your front porch. We all have everyday details that need our attention, making close, intense vision quite necessary and useful. But big picture vision is equally necessary, and sometimes we simply need to lift our eyes to get a shift in perspective (Psalm 121).

When anxieties creep into

focus and fill your vision, lift your eyes. See the bigger picture: The Lord made everything around you, and He is in control of all of it.

Application: *What areas of your life cause you anxiety, fear, or simply off-center focus? Do you ever catch yourself focusing so much on the little things that you neglect to "lift your eyes unto the hills"?*

When we lift our eyes, not only do we gain a broader perspective, but we are also reminded that we are not alone (Hebrews 12:1-2). When we set our eyes above, Scripture tells us we are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses. When we look to Jesus, we can't help but see the generations of saints who have come before us! We are not alone.

Centuries of women and men

have walked with Jesus, studied the Word, taught, written, sung, painted, and preached. Some of those women and men walked with Jesus quite literally, and we are left with their stories in the gospels. Other women and men throughout history have left us hymns and meditations. And still, other women and men in our own lives may have proved to be witnesses, even in the most unlikely circumstances.

Application: *What women in your life have challenged or encouraged you in your faith, whether intentionally or not? How has God used individuals in your life to give you a shift in perspective or to communicate His vision?*

Life is not always easy, and these are particularly trying times. Yet Paul tells us to lay aside every weight. Our focus is not on the details that can so easily weigh us down, but instead, our eyes are fixed on Jesus.

Now, let's take this concept of vision a step further and consider

Completely replace my vision with Yours.

together what it would be like to not only look to God but to allow ourselves to look as God looks. To look as God looks means to ask, "How does God see?"

The old hymn puts it so powerfully: *Be thou my vision, oh Lord of my heart*. When we sing this hymn as a prayer, we ask God to not only share His vision but to *be* our vision. Naught be all else! Blot everything else completely out!

I love that this hymn leaves us no wiggle room—this is not merely placing a filter over the lens of our worldview. This is even more radical. BE my vision, Lord. Completely replace my vision with Yours. In other words, our vision is dead.

Look at Colossians 3:2-3, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For

ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Immediately after we are exhorted to set our minds on things above, rather than things that are on earth, we are also reminded that "[we] have died, and our life is hidden with Christ in God" (ESV). When we set our sights on Christ,

when we die to ourselves to take up His cross and follow Him, vision is part and parcel.

Often, when we think about the idea of praying for God's vision, we are asking God to direct our lives, or perhaps asking God to direct a ministry or mission. Of course, that is something we should seek! But I want us to think about vision from a different perspective.

Asking for God's vision for our lives can still be a self-oriented prayer. The act of asking for God's vision to replace our own places God at the center of that prayer, decentering ourselves. When we fix our eyes on Jesus, He becomes the center and He replaces our vision with His own.

When we ask for God's vision, we can't help but see those in need around us, those whom God sees with tenderness and compassion. When we turn our gaze upward, He turns our gaze outward (Isaiah 1:17).

Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Isaiah 58:6 (NKJV)

This is what the Lord Almighty said: Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Zechariah 7:9-10 (NIV)

For I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in. Matthew 25:35 (NKJV)

Show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering. Hebrews 13:2-3 (NIV)

When He is your vision, what does that enable you to see around you? Consider what *be thou my vision* could mean practically. Can you see individuals or families in your community who are oppressed, burdened, and hungry? Can you see the effects of racism and other prejudices, whether intentional or not, tearing apart neighborhoods and schools? Can you see your own biases that have crept in and clouded your vision?

Application: *What do you allow to cloud God's vision in your life?*

God created his daughters to be kingdom builders—to pay attention to what is happening around us, to take action and contribute.

Carolyn Custis James

Our vision doesn't only affect those immediately in our day-to-day lives. Choices in local elections can affect, positively and negatively, members of your community you've never even met. Choosing where to shop for clothing and groceries have a ripple effect across the globe, from farmers in far-off regions to child laborers in southeast Asian countries. Choices in household

budgets can make a major impact on missionaries' funding.

How does God's vision shape our thoughts on poverty, homelessness, and justice? Are we focused on the minutiae of a few dollars, or looking at the big picture of root causes? God's vision centers Himself, allowing us to see Him more clearly, and in turn, allowing us to see the world around us through His eyes.

Application: *How could allowing your vision to be replaced by God's vision shape the way you interact with others? On a small scale? What about on a larger scale?*

What are practical ways to "see" the world around you with God's vision? Start close to home and expand outward to your community, your region, and the world.


How would you see your kids or your spouse differently with God's vision?

How would you interact with your neighborhood, city, and state?

How would you engage with communities you aren't a member of?

God's vision is a call to move forward into the future in the full operation of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control, with a fearlessness that could only come from him.

Sarah Bessey

Asking *be thou my vision* is not a small request. It's big. It's radical. And it can be overwhelming. Dying to self and replacing our vision with His vision is a daily prayer and action, not a one-time magical wish. But there is grace. God does not expect you to do it alone or without His help. Lift your eyes unto the hills. Be encouraged by the cloud of witnesses. Lay aside every weight as you fix your eyes on Him. 

About the Writer: Emily Faison works as an editor in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where she also serves at Bethany Church.