

Who Will You See?

My arms are too short! Actually, that is not true. My arms are the appropriate length in proportion to the rest of my body. The problem is, I have reached the age where my eyes no longer focus on objects nearby.

For a time, I could extend my arms the right distance to hold the things on which I was trying to focus. But eventually, the deterioration of my sight exceeded the length of my arms and now I need the help of glasses to see clearly.

But physical sight is not the only area where I need help to see. And poor vision in any capacity is frustrating, limiting, and can even be dangerous.

Tucked away in the eighth chapter of Mark's gospel is an interesting and unusual encounter in which Jesus addressed the issue of vision problems.

Jesus and the disciples arrived at the little town of Bethsaida on the north side of the sea of Galilee. Some people

brought to Him a blind man and requested that Jesus help him. Jesus took the sightless man by the hand, led him out of town, spit on him, put His hands on him, and then asked if he could see anything.

Here is where the incident becomes curious. When the man looked up, he replied, "I see men as trees, walking." So, Jesus again touched his eyes and made him look up. This time his eyes were perfectly restored and he saw every man clearly.

At the top of my list of the many interesting details about this incident is the fact that this is the only time I recall when the Lord spoke or acted and the thing He said or did was not completed perfectly.

When God said, "Let there be light," there was light.

When the Lord told Moses to strike the rock in the wilderness, water came forth.

When Jesus said to the storm, "Peace, be still," the winds died and the waves calmed.

When Jesus called to Lazarus, "Come forth," Lazarus revived and responded.

But here, when Jesus anointed the blind man's eyes, he received his sight, but not complete

What happened? Was Jesus having a bad day? Was the problem greater than Jesus' power?

Did Jesus underestimate what was required to completely heal?

Obviously, none of these things is true. Jesus has never been less than fully God so He can't have a bad day. He has all

power in Heaven and earth, so it was not a power problem. He is all-knowing, so He never miscalculates.

It must have been intentional. Therefore, the question is, "Why would Jesus choose to do it like this?"

Often God does the unexpected when He wants to get our attention. The truth is the blind man was not the only one present that day who was not seeing correctly. Jesus chose to heal in this manner to teach those in Bethsaida and us something important about vision.

There are at least three lessons we should learn from Jesus' unexpected method of healing.

1. God Cares About Physical Things.

I am thankful He is concerned about every aspect of my life. My frailties, finances, fears, frustrations, and failures are not beyond His attention or action. Much of the work Jesus did during His earthly ministry was caring for hurting people. He used a quote from Isaiah to describe the purpose and practice of His ministry saying, He was sent to minister to the poor, set the prisoners free, heal the sick, free the oppressed.

Jesus has called His followers to continue that work. We rightly distinguish ourselves from those concerned only with the social Gospel, but I fear our reaction to their imbalance has caused us to be imbalanced as well.

If you were to ask your unchurched neighbors what they think the church should be doing, chances are high they would say the church should be addressing practical needs in the community. Being balanced in our ministry is both beneficial and biblical.

2. His Ultimate Desire Is for A Deeper Healing

If all Jesus wanted to do was bring physical healing to the blind man, he would have been perfectly healed with the first anointing. There is no doubt Jesus is interested in the physical, but His compassion and concern do not stop there. His chief concern is for spiritual healing. He desires to bring help, hope, and healing to a heart wrecked by sin, separated from God, and headed for eternal destruction. The physical is only temporary, but the spiritual is eternal. This is the work that is God's priority and it must be our priority as well.

3. The Result of Deeper Healing Is New Vision.

God not only wants to give us sight; He wants us to see clearly. From the events earlier in the chapter, it is obvious that the disciples were seeing and hearing things from Jesus without proper perception or perspective. Jesus miraculously fed four thousand with only seven loaves of bread, afterwards warning the disciples about the leaven of the Pharisees. The disciples thought

He was still talking about physical bread. They were “seeing men as trees.”

Every person we meet is someone God has sent our way.

They needed new vision.

This new, clearer vision has two directions. *It gives us a better understanding of God.* It did this for the two disciples on the road to Emmaus after the resurrection. Jesus walked with them expounding all the Scriptures from Moses to the prophets about all things concerning Himself, yet they did not recognize Him. But when He prayed, “their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him” (Luke 24:31). They got new vision.

The same thing happened for the disciples in our story. Imme-

diately after this two-fold healing of the blind man, Jesus asked the disciples the most important question, “But whom say ye that I am?” Peter responds with his great declaration, “Thou art the Christ.” Apparently, he had benefitted from the deeper healing.

This deeper healing also gives a clearer vision of others. When Jesus first asked, the man if he could see, his response was interesting, “I see men as trees, walking” (Mark 8:24). We, too, can see people in different ways.

Sometimes we see them as **objects**, as the blind man did, like trees.

We may often consider others to only be part of the scenery. We can become so consumed by our own lives that we don’t really notice people.

Jesus was not this way. John 8 concludes with Jesus escaping for His life because the Jews were ready to stone him. John 9:1 says that as He was fleeing, He saw a man who was blind from birth. The Lord’s circumstances did not blind Him to others. Jesus always noticed people whom others overlooked.

Application: During each day several people pass through our field of vision, but how many of them do we see? Do we recognize them as individuals or are they just part of the scenery? We may need that deeper healing.

Sometimes we see people as **obstacles**. People are the cause of our problems and frustrations. This happens when my wants and needs become my priority and others are in my way. (Have you ever been stuck behind a slow driver?) Jesus never saw people as obstacles.

After learning of the death of John the Baptist, Jesus wanted to take the disciples to a desert place where they could grieve and rest. But the multitudes, ignorant or insensitive to their needs, would not allow them to enjoy solitude. The crowd followed them and expected their time and attention. “And Jesus, when He came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd” (Mark 6:34).

How quickly do we become

irritated or aggravated when others disrupt our schedules or impede our progress? Jesus said that He came not to be served but to serve. Is that our attitude?

Sometimes we see people as **opponents**. We view them as our adversaries. Everyone should want to be and do our best, but that can lead to a desire to win. We become competitive. If our goal is to win, someone has to lose.

Paul reminded us in Ephesians 6:12, “Our struggle is not against flesh and blood.” (NIV) People are not the enemy, although sometimes people posture themselves as our adversaries. When that happens, we have ‘weapons’ to use. We are to love our enemies, pray for those who want to hurt us, and forgive those who do us wrong.

Application: *Do I desire the downfall of others so that I am promoted? How do I respond to those who consider me an opponent?*

Jesus calls us to see people as **opportunities**. They give us the chance to demonstrate the love of God in our hearts. Every person we meet is someone God has sent our way. Each has value because they carry the image of our God. They need and deserve to know and feel the love of God. They are worthy of our attention and affection. This is how the Lord wants us to see people. It is the clearest evidence of the deeper healing.

God does not want us to have perfect sight only in our direct field of vision. Jesus commanded us to, "Lift up your eyes and look on the fields" (John 4:35). This means we must be intentional in our vision. The fields include those who are marginalized around us, hidden in plain sight. It includes those living in faraway places with strange cultures and misguided worldviews.

Having our sight restored is not always a comfortable process. For the man in our text,


it involved Jesus spitting in his eyes. That sounds neither pleasant nor appealing. But if your vision is impaired and you are desperate to have it restored, you must be humble enough to submit to the ways of the Healer.

Restoration requires time and effort. It requires relinquishing rights, preferences, comfort, and stepping outside our comfort zone and away from our agenda. It means offering grace to those who offend and love those who are unlovely. It demands our having concern and compassion toward those who are radically different. We must surrender our presuppositions and prejudices. It means developing a global perspective on our responsibility to love and serve. Practicing all these things means we will begin to see like the Lord wants us to see.

The familiar chorus, "Open my eyes, Lord, I want to see Jesus," could be our prayer for clearer vision because, with

restored sight, we gain a better understanding of the Lord. We all would benefit from a fresh view of God. But perhaps He would also have us sing, "Open my eyes, Lord, I want to see *like* Jesus."

I do not need longer arms. I need clearer vision.

Will you see anyone today? 

About the Writer: Danny Gasperson is the Director of Mobilization for [IM,INC.](#) and the Administrative Director of The Hanna Project. Prior to joining the IM,INC. team, he served 19 years as pastor of Zephyr Hills Free Will Baptist Church in Asheville, North Carolina. He and his wife, Jackie, are blessed with a son, daughter, son-in-law, and two wonderful grandsons.