

Blended Vision

I scratched my glasses.

I'm not talking about a little scratch. I'm talking about rubbing against the can of spray-on sunscreen in my backpack while I walked for an hour on the beach carving a really big gash right in the middle of the (formerly) no-line bifocal.

At first, I tried to clean that annoying spot—I even took soap and water and tried to wash it away. No luck. When I realized it was indeed a bad scratch and my glasses were not wearable (unless I kept one eye closed), I was in a fix.

We went straight to Dollar Tree and bought three pairs of reading glasses (one for the computer, one for books, and one spare). Then I spent the next six weeks pulling them on and off, trying to adjust, trying to keep up with the ones I needed, trying to focus on the person in my office then back to the computer screen or page we were discussing.

After I finally saw the eye doctor for a new prescription and waited for the lens replacement in my frames, I was so thankful when my new glasses were back, and I could see again. Yes, those Verilux progressive lens no-line bifocals cost an arm and a leg, but I believe they are worth it. Vision is so important to us! If you don't (yet) depend on a pair of bifocals like I do, you should thank the Lord for good eyes! We are blessed to live in the twenty-first century when modern healthcare enables us

to read or
drive or see
the screen
even when our
natural eyes are less than
perfect. Some people have the "far
and near" contact lenses—where one eye ad-
justs for distance vision and the other for close-
up views. Friends say it takes time to master, but



soon they see clearly.

We expect to do it automatically—to see without effort or concentration. We expect to see near and far—all at once.

In our lives as believers, that is God's expectation for us, too—to see the needs of others, near and far away, all at once.

FOCUS

God wants our focus to be first on Him.

- Even when we are overwhelmed and do not know what to do, we can be centered in God's presence and assured of His help. What declaration in 2 Chronicles 20:12 is a beginning point for our spiritual vision?
- In the race of life, where are we looking, according to Hebrews 12:1-2? If our eyes are "on the prize," we have direction and motivation for the race (Philippians 3:14).
- What should we follow, and where should our thoughts and affections be focused, according to Colossians 3:1-2? Let's set our sights on those things!

FIRST STEP

When Jesus is in His appropriate place, we then must turn to the work He has given us to do. We are attentive to His direction and the clear plan He has for sharing the gospel. Acts 1:8 records some of Christ's last instructions to His disciples before He ascended into Heaven. Turn there to review some of the elements of His plan

The first and essential step of His plan was the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. What disaster we have without tapping into this resource! The third Person of the Trinity is the electricity in the wire, the turbo in the charger, the juice in the battery! Without His intervention, strength, and help, our efforts are for nothing.

God's Word describes the ministry of the Holy Spirit, both in who He is and in what He does.

- He is a _____ of the Father (Luke 11:13 and Acts 5:32).
- He is our _____ and our _____ (John 14:26).

- He is _____ (1 John 5:6).
- He is _____ (2 Corinthians 3:17).
- He is _____ (Romans 8:10).
- He _____ of Jesus (John 15:26).
- He will _____ us in _____ (John 16:13).
- He _____ for us (Romans 8:26).

*What are other roles of the Holy Spirit meaningful for you?
What does the Holy Spirit do in your own life?*

Acts 4:31 reminds us that when the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, they spoke the good news of salvation with boldness. In our lives, too, we must rely on the Spirit's power to boldly share the gospel—nearby and far away.

JERUSALEM

Start at home.

That was the instruction of Jesus Christ when He commissioned the disciples in Acts 1:8. There in Jerusalem, their own city and community, they would begin to share the message. This strategy accomplishes several things.

First, every believer is involved. Location does not limit anyone! Also, this base of believers encourages teamwork, idea generation, and financial resources permitting the gospel to go beyond our local area. The supply line of funding and volunteers enables a believer, a family, a church, or a group of churches to reach further than they could alone.

As part of our everyday lifestyle, we are witnesses of the gospel. It's not about going to church. Yes, we regularly gather together to worship and learn. But sharing the good news with our local community isn't about what happens in our church building.

Buying groceries or gas, clocking in at work, attending the PTA meeting, or working out at the gym—those are opportunities to shine like lights in a dark world. How does that look?

- It looks like courtesy and patience.
- It looks like joy and peace.
- It looks like endurance in hard times.
- It looks like thoughtfulness and kindness.
- It looks like unselfishness.
- It looks like dependability.

Admit it. Those characteristics will make you stand out from the crowd! You give witness to the gospel by the relationships you build and your daily conduct in the workplace and marketplace of daily living. Your community should recognize that you belong to Christ.

What does Acts 4:13 say about what others noticed about Peter and John?

There's a place, though, that should see your testimony of the gospel even before the community sees it. (Watch your toes!) That's your home.

Often it is easier to bear witness to Christ on the job or out in public than with our own families. The people who know us best sometimes see us at our worst—our most crabby, selfish, moody, inconsistent selves. And it ain't pretty.

In fact, our families may be turned off to the gospel when we act one way in public and another way at home. They tune in to the hypocrisy and false front. We not only fail to share the good news, but we build barriers to it by our actions at home.

What do Deuteronomy 6:5-7 and the echo of that passage in Deuteronomy 11:18-21 instruct parents to do?

Read about the covenant between God and His people that focused on families staying true to the Lord in Deuteronomy

29:10-19. Can you echo the prayer for your family in verse 18?

What was Noah's purpose for building the ark, according to Hebrews 11:7?

When the Philippian jailer came to Christ in Acts 16, who came with him (according to verses 31 and 34)? Is this true for your household, too?

As you follow Christ's command to start at Jerusalem, draw your circle very small and begin by sharing the gospel in your own home. Use every opportunity to authentically show the difference knowing Jesus makes, even in your own family.

JUDEA

Reach beyond your community. We are often nearsighted, seeing the needs in our neighborhood or church but forgetting those that extend beyond our comfort zone. Our Lazy Boy recliners are rubbing off on us.

We need to ask the Lord to help us see others as He sees them, to be sensitive to their needs, to reach out to rescue them in their distress.

What did Jesus teach about reaching out to the imprisoned, hungry, needy, and sick in Matthew 25:31-46?

We have examples in Acts of disciples who stepped out of their comfort zones to minister to others.

In Acts 8, Philip was commanded to go away from the powerful revival in Jerusalem to the desert in Gaza. There he met a man unlike himself—a different background, probably a different skin color, and other notable differences. What do we know about their interaction? One thing we know for sure is that God set up the

meeting, prepared the Ethiopian's seeking heart, and enabled Philip to introduce him to Jesus. It made all the difference for the Ethiopian, and undoubtedly for his community, as the gospel continued to spread.

In Acts 17, Paul was the one given unusual opportunities when he visited Athens. He stood up with philosophers and testified of "the unknown God," the creator and judge of the world.

What were the responses of the philosophers in Athens? (See verses 32-34.)

Could Philip and Paul have backed away from these 'uncomfortable' opportunities to share the gospel outside their communities? What would the results have been? What opportunities is God setting up for you?

THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

Think of God's plan as a target or series of concentric circles. As the message continues to expand, ring after ring, the gospel travels further. The ultimate goal is for every people group to hear the good news of Jesus Christ and find forgiveness of sin. There is no other plan.


You've worked a crossword or jigsaw puzzle before when you've gotten stumped in a section of the puzzle. Nothing seems to be working—so you start another section of the puzzle and kind of work backward to fill in some of those missing letters or pieces. The gospel has traveled in the same way. When some believers fail to continue to the next circle with the message of redemption, God starts another path, a new route. He is intentional about every tribe and every nation. We need to share His heart and get busy doing our part.

How is the end of the age dependent on reaching the ends of the earth? Read Jesus' own words in Matthew 24:14 and explain.

When the end has come, and we are all gathered to worship the Lamb, how will we know that God's plan worked, according to Revelation 5:9?

PROGRESSIVE LENSES

We are talking about progressive lenses here—not having to put on and pull off two or three pairs of glasses to see clearly. That means you wear them all at once—seeing up close and far away through the same pair of glasses or contacts with automatic adjustments.

Let's apply that to God's Acts 1:8 plan. Don't see these circles of outreach as sequential. Instead, see them as simultaneous, concurrent—both near and far, both close and distant. And the wonderful thing is they inform and extend one another. Our families are stronger when we help them see the needs of others around the world. Our churches are stronger when we unite to reach the community or support the work of cross-cultural ministry. Our impact on the world is better when we provide models of strong homes and healthy churches. Each circle feeds the others as we follow God's plan to share the gospel with all people. Ask Him today to give you a vision of your next step. 

Bottom line: I believe the Lord would have me respond today to His commission in Acts 1:8 by:

About the Writer: Carol Reid is the senior editor for *FUSION Family* and *FUSION Next* devotional magazines at Randall House Publications. She and her husband Garnett worship at The Donelson Fellowship (Nashville) and have two great sons, two wonderful daughters-in-law, and four marvellous grandchildren.