

Pray

J. Oswald Sanders wrote one of the most important book I have ever read, Spiritual Leadership

In it is this sentence, "Eyes that look are common, eyes that see are rare."

In Mark 8 Jesus rebukes His disciples for not having "eyes that see."

Often Jesus tells the Pharisees that, though they have eyes, they are blind.

Do you have eyes that only look? Or do you have eyes that look and see?

God teaches us how to look and see.

We find the story of Abram who becomes Abraham beginning in Gen. 11:26 and continuing until his death in Gen. 25. From beginning to end it is a story of a man chosen by God to walk with God.

And, along the way he learns... He learns about God... He learns about what it means to trust God.

Life with God is all about learning. It still is. You and I are learning about God and we are learning to trust Him.

We begin to read about Abram's lessons in chapter 12.

The God who created the universe picks out Abram and makes him a promise.

Abram obeys God and travels from his family to the land that God has promised him. **Gen. 12:6-8**

But, Abram doesn't stay there. He travels to Egypt, though God did not tell him to go there.

And yet, God is faithful to Abram and protects him and brings him back to the land of Canaan, the promised land.

And, God has blessed Abram in spite of himself. He is becoming a wealthy man.

God does this using, of all things, the command of Pharaoh. **Gen. 12:20**

I. Returning to Worship God.**Gen. 13:1-4**

Abram has come back to the very place where he had last worshipped God in the land that God promised to give him.

He has retraced his steps. And, there, he worships the Lord once again. Abram is back where God wants him.

And, Abram is right to worship the God who brought him back.

Have you ever gone on a digression in life? Maybe you are on one now.

You know, where you were on track with God and growing, learning to obey, worshipping God.

And, then things change... you might not move to another place and give your wife to another man... that would be a digression.

Maybe it is money, business, or a career that distracts you from God's plan.

You take a job, or your job grows... but then you realize, "This is not good for me and my family."

Maybe it is anger or resentment, unforgiveness that pulls you away from God's path.

You can spend years hating someone until you finally realize what has happened to you.

Maybe it is a relationship. You meet someone. All seems good at first, you begin to date...

Then one day you realize that you don't read your Bible much or pray anymore.

You can wander away from God looking for security, riches, popularity, even just by wasting time.

If you are really His, God is committed to bringing you back. He will, doing whatever it takes.

So, you might as well just be done with the digression and come back. It's less painful that way.

In the land of Ur people worshipped the gods they knew there. In Egypt they worshipped the gods of Egypt.

But, wherever Abram goes, the Lord God is there with him. And, God brings Abram back to the place God wants him.

The Lord God who made the universe is powerful, fearsome, faithful... He keeps His promises, even when we get a little lost.

Abram is learning to worship the one true God.

II. Looking on the Surface.**Gen. 13:5-13**

There is much to be said for Abram in this part of the story.

Abram is interested in keeping peace with his nephew Lot. That is good.

Abram appears to be generous and willing to let Lot choose the better part of the land.

One does wonder, again, why Abram is letting Lot follow him around when he was supposed to leave his father's family behind him.

But, in any case, we see that Abram is a good guy... but this part of the story is really not about Abram.

It is about Lot and Lot's choice.

vs. 10 "Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the valley of the Jordan..."

And, so, that lush valley was what he chose... and we read that there is where he settled.

Did Lot make the wrong choice? No... and yes.

The fact is that as far as Lot knew he made the better choice.

Lot, made use of all the information that he knew and made the choice that made the most sense.

It was what he did not know that made his choice so bad. (vs. 13 carries an ominous tone.)

There were these people in these cities there who "were exceedingly wicked and sinners against the Lord."

If Lot had known this, maybe he would not have chosen to live there. Maybe Lot didn't want to know about these people.

25 years later this choice will wreck his family and his livelihood.

But, knowing nothing of all this Lot chooses... He makes the wrong choice.

What is the lesson?

Sometimes what looks good is not good.

Arlyn Abrams, "Seemingly good economic choices have moral implications." (and, I would add, not just economic choices)

It is not that the choice you make is, in and of itself wrong, but that it sets you on a path that will make it harder to walk with God.

What do I mean? Well, let us consider some examples. And, life is full of these choices.

All of these examples are from real situations, though I do not have particular people in mind.

1. You would like to buy a particular car, but you cannot pay cash for it. So, you take out a loan.
Then you begin to discover that your life is increasingly consumed with worry and thoughts of how to get more money.
2. You want to start a business with a friend, but he doesn't fear the Lord. You convince yourself that it will be fine.
Then you discover that your partner is making ungodly decisions with your money.
3. You are offered a new job with a bigger salary, but you don't know that there is a good church in the community
and you are not interested in planting one.
Soon you discover that your family and children are not going to church at all... or hearing lies.
4. You meet a nice guy who likes you too. He says he's a Christian, but you suspect that the Lord is not a very high priority.
But, you want a boyfriend. You want to date him. You tell yourself he's a believer.
Guess what, people usually marry someone they date... and when you do you have a husband who won't go to church.
5. You're married. You are friendly with a pretty lady at work. Maybe you like her. It is convenient to do lunch.
Lunch is legal... but it becomes the beginning of a disaster that wrecks your marriage and family.

Sometimes what looks good is not good.

How do you know when it's not good? Look ahead. Look around. Investigate before you make the decision.

If Lot had taken a tour of the Jordan river valley he might have discovered the danger.

Don't let yourself fool yourself. Think. Get godly counsel. Heed the warnings in the Bible.

Another helpful piece of advice... When you find a Sodom in your nice green valley, it is time to leave!

This is much harder than not getting there in the first place. We easily keep deceiving ourselves.

But, when you realize that you made a bad decision, even if you thought it was good, it's time to get out. Lot never does that.

He's like the proverbial frog in the kettle... though I've never tried cooking frogs...

III. Looking with Eyes of Faith.

Gen. 13:14-18

In vs. 12 we learned that Abram settled in Canaan. Beginning in vs. 14 we learn what God said to him there.

Vss. 14-16 is essentially an expansion of the promise of 12:7.

In fact, if we page ahead in our Bibles we will find that in every chapter for the next 5 chapters God reminds Abram of the promise.

7 chapters in a row serve to remind us of the promise of God to Abram and expand on what the promise entails.

It is a promise of land... as far as Abram can see in all directions... this includes Lot's new valley.

It is a promise to Abram's descendants... which he has none of yet. And, remember, he's older than 75.

So God then promises to give Abram descendants outnumbering the dust!

Thus, God shows Abram a land that he does not possess that God will give to descendants that he does not have.

Then (vs. 17) he tells Abram to tour this land and look at it. Why?

In fact, never in Abram's lifetime will he actually possess the land. What is God thinking?

Is God trying to make Abram feel bad? "Here's what I'm going to do, but you won't get to see it." What is God up to?

He's teaching Abram to look and see, not like Lot did. He saw the nice green grass and water and no further.

God is teaching Abraham to look and see with eyes of faith. **Heb. 11:1**

This is why 2 Cor. 5:7 says "We walk by faith and not by sight."

So, just what does it mean to live this way? **Heb. 11:13-16**

How do you live?

Most people on earth live this way: You go to school so that you can get a job.

You get a job so that you can make money and pay for your kids to go to school and for you to retire.

Your retire and hope you have enough to get you to the day you die in comfort. Then you're dead.

But, it turns out that it never goes just that way anyhow... so things can get pretty depressing.

But walking by faith looks different: It begins and ends with this, "I'm on my way to another country."

I've got a purpose. I've got a mission... things to do, people to talk to, a kingdom to build (not mine).

But, not for one minute do I think that this is my eternal home. I'm just passing through.

I'm on my way to that heavenly country, to the city of God.

It changes everything... how I see my money, that's not really mine and I cannot keep it.

My house... it's a tent. My car, transportation. My things, temporary. People, really important.

Problems, just part of the journey. God is teaching me faith. And, every day I'm just one day closer to my heavenly home.

And, when things look impossible, I hang on to the promise. God says He'll get me there... so He has to.

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