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## Asking God For Vision

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TEXT: Ephesians 1:16-18 (NIV)

I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people,

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I want to talk to you today about asking God for vision. You know, there's a lot in the Bible that speaks to what you and I can see in this life and about what you and I cannot see in this life. You see the reality of a scene and an unseen world time and time again in the Scriptures. A unique story highlights this in 2 Kings 6, starting with verse eight, where it says "The king of Aram, who was an enemy of the people of Israel, was at war with the Israelite people." These are God's people. After conferring with his officers, this King said, "I'll set up my camp at [such and such a place]." The Man of God, Elisha, now one who was in touch with God, sent word to the King of Israel: "Beware of passing that place because the Aramians are going down there." So the king of Israel checked on the place indicated by the man of God. And time and again, Elisha warned the King of Israel so that he was on guard in such places where his enemy was present. This enraged the king of Aram. He summoned his officers and demanded of them: "Tell me which of us is on the side of the King of Israel?" He couldn't figure out how Israel always knew where he was. "None of us, my lord, the king said one of his officers. But Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, he tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom." This prophet Elisha was walking close with God and the God who knows everything was revealing to him what the enemy king was even speaking in his bedroom. And so the scripture says the king of Aram said, "Go find out where this Elisha is so I can send men and capture him." The report came back. "He's in Dauphin." Then he sent horses and chariots

and a strong force there. They went by night and surrounded the city. When the servant, (sort of the coworker with Elisha,) the servant of Elisha, his partner got up and went out early. The next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh, no, my Lord. What should we do?" The servant asked. "Don't be afraid," the prophet answered, "those who are with us are more than those who are with them." And then Elisha prayed. "Open his eyes, Lord, so that he may see." Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. These were the spiritual army sent by God to protect Elisha. As the enemy came down toward him, Elisha prayed to the Lord "Strike this army with blindness." So, He struck them with blindness, as Elisha had asked. And these enemies of God's people came into captivity by Elisha. He brought them back to the Israelite king, and the king wondered what to do with them. And Elisha simply said, "Feed them and send them back home." And then they knew peace with their enemies from that time forward. I read you that story today because it highlights that there are some people who see things that other people cannot see in the world.

This idea of asking God for vision – ability to see – is really asking him: vision is really a state of being able to see or having sight, but it can be more than that. It can be understood to be a picture in a person's mind or in their heart about a desired future state that's being worked toward like a dream or like a long term goal. There's the ability to see what's in the physical world, and then there's the ability to see what's in the spirit world. And then there's ability to see a future, a vision of the future that you would be encouraged to help work and bring about work toward and bring about. The famous Helen Keller, who became blind and deaf from an illness at 19 months of age, is quoted as saying, "The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but having no vision," – no goal, no dream, no plan to be worked toward. King Solomon would echo these sentiments in what he said in Proverbs 20:19, where he penned these words: "Where there is no vision, no revelation, no meaningful direction given to people, these people then cast off restraint. They live undisciplined lives," and some versions even say they move towards perishing. They're slowly wasting away in their lack of direction, and their careless living.

You know, according to the wisdom of the Bible, the best vision for our lives, an idea of direction and a goal to move towards – the best vision for our lives should be based primarily not on what we see in the material world, but on that which you and I cannot see. This is sometimes hard for us to get our minds and hearts around. It's easier to be involved with things we can see. But the Bible tells us again and again when we're asking God for vision, we're asking Him to see into the unseen realm. And that's where the meaning and the purpose

and the passion for life can come. In 2 Corinthians 4:18 we see that we're to fix our eyes, not on what is seen, for what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. When Elisha was looking around with his partner, his servant, Elisha could see two realms. He could see the temporary realm of the city he was in and the buildings and all the soldiers that were surrounding him. But he could also see into the unseen realm where there were eternal, angelic beings. Chariots of fire there also. The servant couldn't see these things.

How do we see into the unseen? The Scripture makes it clear that you and I don't naturally do this very well. When speaking about the unseen, the unseen kingdom of God and how it operates, and in the principles of the unseen kingdom Jesus said in Matthew 13:13 "There are many people, though seeing, they do not see, though hearing they do not understand." The Scripture also tells us in 2 Corinthians, that many minds and hearts are blinded or covered by a veil that hinders people's ability to see and understand what's going on in the spirit realm. 2 Corinthians 4:4 also tells us that the god of this age, the evil one, has blinded the minds of unbelievers so they can't even see the light of the good news of Jesus that displays the glory of Christ who is the image of God. In order to see the unseen, we need to ask God to open up our hearts to see in the unseen spiritual world. In asking God for vision, we're asking Him to help us see beyond what we see in the physical and then into the spiritual realm.

How does this happen? It happens only with eyes of faith. With eyes of faith. So the scripture tells us that without faith, we can't please God. Faith is this assurance of things hoped for. And here it is, the conviction of things we cannot see. We can see them and become convinced of them and the eyes of our heart, through our faith, to see what God wants us to see in the unseen realm. When we ask God for vision, we're asking Him to open up the eyes of our heart to see what he wants us to see there. Paul prayed it like this: "May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ give us the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of our hearts enlightened so that we might know the hope to which he has called us." God wants to do this for us, friends. He wants to open up the eyes of our heart to see into the unseen what he's revealed to us there, the wisdom he's given us in the spirit realm, through his spirit, in the revelation of his word. And we need to ask him to open the eyes of our heart to see it, because there's a blindness in the world. And the more we can see, the better off we'll be in this life, the more we can see into the spirit realm.

So we're encouraging you today to ask God to help you see into the unseen spirit world and then continue by asking Him to help us see you and I to see more what he's doing in the world, to understand his divine purposes. See again, what is seen as temporary, but what is

unseen is eternal. And when we get caught up in the in the unseen game, the eternal game, we're starting to involve our lives in the stuff that really matters – that really matters for all eternity. And so we ask God to show us: what is his purpose in the world? Why did He create the world? What is he doing in the world? And we know if our minds and hearts are open, we're asking God to help us see what He's revealed to us in the Scripture, we know that God was saddened when He made the world because it turned away from Him and he was grieved. So grieved that when he saw that a man's inclination of his heart was only evil all the time, he decided to send a flood and start over. Seeing all this is revelation of the Scripture. God's heart is broken by the pain and the suffering in this world, and the hurt and the heartache here. And so in great love, God sent his son into the world. The eyes of our heart – we've never seen Jesus physically. We weren't there at Calvary, but we're called to see in the eyes of our heart, to believe why he came through the revelation of the Scripture. Jesus said of himself Luke 19:10, "The Son of man," speaking of himself, "came to seek and save the lost."

See, the Bible tells us God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ. When Christ went to the cross, he paid this penalty for our sin, and God was bridging the gap between us and Him, putting the punishment for our sin, the justice for our sin on Christ. He was not counting people's sins against them as he poured them out in Christ. And then when you and I come to Christ we're a new creation we're adopted into God's eternal family, we become a part of His people here on the Earth. And that same passage then says, "Now he's committed to us the message of reconciliation," that you and I are the messengers of God as God is calling a broken and lost people to himself in reconciliation with himself, redemption to himself, restoration with himself. God is being patient with the world, not wanting any to perish, but others to come to eternal life. And you and I now get to be a part of this work with this ministry of reconciliation, we're his hands and his feet in the world. We're asking God to open up our eyes to what he's doing in the world, asking him to give us vision into the unseen, to understand in the spirit realm where we stand before God, to understand in the spirit realm what He's doing in the world. And His Scripture reveals to us as the spirit opens our minds and our hearts to the Scripture reveals to us, God is being patient, not wanting any to perish, and through us, His people, He's holding out the word of life to those around us. He's sending his redeemed people to the ends of the earth to be as witnesses to those who yet don't know him.

Jesus told his followers, "You'll receive power when the Spirit comes upon you, and you'll be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in your city, in Judea, the larger state in Samaria and beyond, to the ends of the Earth." God is still reaching out to the world in kindness and patience and

mercy, wanting to draw the world to himself. And oh, Lord, how we need this – more and more people coming to a knowledge of the Savior.

We ask Him to help us see what He wants us to see in the unseen realm, to help us understand what his divine purpose are, how he's working in the world. So we can then ask him specifically, "Lord, what is our part? What's my part? What's your part in this plan that you're working?" What is what is your calling? Paul's prayer was the eyes of our heart would be open to spirit of wisdom and revelation and understanding, so that we might know the hope of our calling. Do you know God has a specific calling for you, a specific plan for you in His eternal kingdom? We are God's workmanship, created in Christ and we're brought into Him. When we come to faith to do specific things, He's prepared in advance for us to do. And the prayer here is, "Lord, give us the vision of what you created, each of us, for. What is the glorious hope of our calling? Help us discern it in our hearts."

You know, Helen Keller, we quoted her earlier, she was blind at 19 months. She's also quoted as saying this: "The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart." Where is God working in people's lives? Primarily in their hearts by the work of his spirit, knocking on the door there, correcting them there, instructing them there. And then even envisioning them there, giving them direction and nudges. Is your heart open to the work of the spirit in your life? Opening the eyes of your heart to see and become convinced of what the Bible tells us about the unseen realm, to see and become convinced about the work of Christ on the cross and the ministry, the work of reconciliation. This is the greatest work going on in the planet. And then is your heart open enough to say, "God, I see and I understand. What do you want from me for the rest of the time that I have here on the earth? What's your specific purpose and plan for me?"

You know, the Apostle Paul did this, had a very fulfilling and meaningful life, many challenges and trials the Lord carried him through. And He wrote to young Timothy later in his life. It's recorded for 2 Timothy 4:6-8: "Time for my departure is near," and we all have an ending time. And he said, "I've fought the good fight. I finished the race. I've kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness with the Lord, the righteous judge, will award me on that day. And not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing." Because in the eyes of their heart, they've come to see the revelation of scriptures as true. And they're looking forward to the glorious hope that lies ahead.

Friend, I encourage you again today. Keep your heart open to what God might be saying to you. Ask Him if you haven't in a while or even never asked him – ask him to help you see into the unseen, to understand what he's doing in the world and see what your part is to play. In the end, that's all that will matter. Let's pray together. Father, I thank you for your word, which teaches us what to believe and how to live. We need your help in living in your eternal kingdom. It's a spiritual work that can only be accomplished by the work of your spirit in us. So forgive us when we've grieved your spirit, saddened your spirit, quenched your spirit resisted your spirit. We need your spirit's help to open up the eyes of our heart so that we might see the glory of what you revealed to us there through your son, Jesus. And the hope, the specific hope, of our calling, help us each discern this for ourselves. In Jesus name, we pray. Amen.