



## Exploring the Kingdom of God in Matthew: What Are You Looking At?

Feb 18, 2018

### Text: Matthew 6:22-24

#### MATTHEW 6:22

1. I submit our LORD includes these verses in Matthew's Gospel in this context to teach us about the power of **focus**.
2. Think about the intricacy of and power of the eye!
3. Since our eyes are amazingly designed channels of information concerning God's creation and revealed will, where we look greatly impacts what we **long** for, what we **love**, and what we **desire**.
4. The word in our text for *eye* comes from a word that can mean the literal eye, but can also be a metaphor for "the eyes of the mind, the faculty of knowing." (Thayer)
5. This is the way the Holy Spirit inspired John to use the word "eyes" in his holy warning to believers against worldliness (1 Jn 2:15-17).
6. The word for *single* (KJV) in Greek means, "clear, whole, or fulfilling its purpose," hence, its translation to *healthy* in ESV and NLT.
7. In a figurative sense, the eye can be defined as "the organ of spiritual perception, which may be enlightened or opened by the law of God or by the spirit of God, or it may be "**darkened**." (ISBE)
8. Essentially, our LORD is teaching that when our eyes (our physical eyes, but also the "eyes" of the desires of our hearts) are healthy, then the rest of life lines up well after that. This fits the context of not desiring riches or trusting in material things quite well.
9. Again, recall our LORD's words concerning the heart:

*Mar 7:20-23 And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. 21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22 Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: 23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.*

#### MATTHEW 6:23

1. So if we can see the "eye" teaching as where we place our **attention**, then what Jesus says makes total sense.
2. Why? Because what we desire is a VERY powerful thing.
3. When we desire to see and focus on "light" (such things as love, holiness, purity, worship, saved souls, peace, etc.), then the "whole body," meaning our lives, will be filled with those things.
4. The opposite is also true! If focusing on evil is our thing, evil we shall get!
5. Perhaps this is why Paul, via the Holy Spirit, gives such wonderful encouragement to the church at Philippi:

*Php 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*

6. Overall, this “eye principle” sounds familiar to another principle we live by:

*Galatians 6:7-8 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. 8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.*

MATTHEW 6:24

1. Again, if our eyes are on mammon (money), that is where the focus and desires of our hearts will be.
2. As we'll see below, it is clear throughout Scripture that God reserves that territory for Himself!
3. Understand that there is no **neutrality**; there is NO WAY to serve two masters! (Josh 24:15; 1 Sam 7:3; 1 Kings 18:21; Rom 6:16-22; Jam 4:4)

SO WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT?

The Pulpit Commentary states:

*The thought of the power which treasure has of attracting the heart forms the transition to the need of a pure and steady "eye" heavenwards. The bodily eye is taken as the symbol of the outlooking power of the soul, not the soul—the inner man—itsself, but its outlooking power. As the body is illuminated by the eye, i.e. as by the eye the bodily constitution learns its environment, and naturally, almost automatically, tends to accommodate itself to it, so is it with the gaze of the soul. If this be upon the things of this world, the soul perceives, and tends to accommodate itself to the things of this world; if upon things in heaven, it perceives, and tends to accommodate itself to, the things in heaven.*

So often our focus is on fleshly wants/weakness and carnal pursuits:

- Wanting more money
- Wanting more comfort
- Who wronged us
- Self-promotion
- Physical pleasures (food, sex)
- How we are seen
- Worry about tomorrow

Instead of focusing so much on worldly things, which so often is **unprofitable**, may I encourage you to focus on more heavenly things? Please read at home Ps 119:6; Col 3:1-4; Titus 2:11-14; Heb 12:1-2; Deut 10:12; Matt 22:37-38.

## APPLICATIONS FOR EDIFICATION (BUILDING UP) AND ENCOURAGEMENT

(ROM 14:19; EPH 4:9; 1 THES 5:11; JUDE 1:20)

1. Be honest. Where are you looking? Where does your mind go? To God's throne or to earthly pursuits? To Christ's triumph or to tribulations?
2. Scripture promises perfect peace to those whose minds are stayed on God (Isa 26:3). Would you like more peace? :) How might you and your family apply this verse more fully?
3. We've often taught on the power of focus...where we look. We've said in the past that focus is akin to having a vision and has many benefits including better motivation, better prioritization of life and the ability to say *yes* to better things and *no* to things not needful.
4. How might you become a more focused person on Christ and the things of God in 2018?