

2 - Open Eyes
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We're in a sermon series called Open. Last week I taught how to open doors in life using the keys of the kingdom.

Today I'm speaking on Open Eyes. My emphasis is on having spiritual vision that overcomes spiritual blindness. Psalm 146:8 says:

The Lord opens the eyes of the blind.

There are different types of blindness mentioned in the Bible.

- Physical blindness –
Jesus restored the sight to many who were physically blind
- Spiritual blindness –
Before we come to faith in Jesus Christ, we are spiritually blind. 2 Corinthians 4:4 says:

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

But Jesus came to give sight to people who are spiritually blind. In Luke 4:18-19 Jesus said-

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

In the Bible, blindness speaks of darkness, deception and denial. Vision speaks of light, truth, openness and honesty.

All of us have blind spots in our lives. You know what a blind spot is. If you're driving in a car and are relying on your rear-view mirrors to check the lanes, there are some spots that you still won't be able to see. Those are called blind spots. Oh, you can turn your head and see those spots so that you will know what is there, but for the moment that you check your blind spots, you are unaware of what is happening in front of the car.

Blind spots are created because we don't have eyes in the back of our heads, and that it is physically impossible to see everything at once. It's the same way in life.

All of us have blind spots in our lives.

There are areas of weakness, deception, attitude or sin that we don't even see. That's the problem with blind spots: we don't see them.

In fact, as I preach about them, you're thinking it's for someone else because you can see their blind spots, but not your own. If you saw them, they wouldn't be blind spots!

1- Opening your eyes requires seeing that you're blind

In John 9 – Jesus healed a man who was born blind. This upset the religious leaders because Jesus healed on the Sabbath. They questioned the formerly blind man who boiled it all down to this. The man said in John 9:25-

One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!

Jesus then confronted the leaders because of their spiritual blindness. They said to Him in verse 40 –

"Are we blind also?" Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, 'We see.' Therefore your sin remains.

In other words, you don't get forgiven until you confess your sin.
You don't get healed until you admit your sickness.
You don't get strong until you admit your weakness.
You won't see until you admit you are blind!

That's why I never want to get to the place where I think I know it all. I'll always have something to learn! Pride and sinful rebellion result in spiritual blindness. Ezekiel 12:2 says:

The word of the Lord came to me: Son of man, you are living among a rebellious people. They have eyes to see but do not see and ears to hear but do not hear, for they are a rebellious people.

So, whenever we walk in sin, rebellion, or hatred, we can become spiritually blind. And it's a very big deal because Proverbs 29:18 says:

Where there is no vision, the people perish.

We perish without vision because we don't even see God and what He's doing. That happened in this story. The pride of the Pharisees led to spiritual blindness and they could not even see the power of God when it was demonstrated right in front of them!

And when we have spiritual blind spots, we can't see what is right in front of our eyes. We can't see truth in the Bible or in a sermon. We don't sense the presence of God or see the power of God.

God can be doing supernatural things all around us and we can't even see it! If we do see anything – we will just chalk it up to coincidence or luck or being in the right place at the right time – rather than giving God glory.

Not only will blind spots keep you from seeing what God is doing, but they will keep you from seeing what you are doing. The Pharisees in this story were hurting the man that Jesus just healed!

And many times, our blind spots hurt other people. I know because I've been hurt by other people's blind spots and my blind spots have caused me to hurt people. I would never ever intentionally hurt anyone – But I have hurt them unintentionally. Even my own family.

I was raised in a pastor's home and my parents were good, godly people. But I was instilled with some ministry blind spots that hindered ministry and hurt my family. And those blind spots started to affect Deb and me.

We had started this church and were doing everything for everybody all the time. On top of that, we both had full-time jobs. So, we were working day and night, never taking a day off or a vacation. Deb would lovingly try to point it out to me, but it was a blind spot, so I would just say, "I don't see it."

She was doing a lot of administrative jobs, which was outside of her gifting and calling. She was getting burned out, but I would tell her, "You can do all things through Christ, so just suck it up and keep going."

After a couple of years we finally took a vacation – I justified it by combining it with a pastor's conference. I'll never forget the day when we were eating lunch at Steak N Shake in Orlando, Florida. Right in the middle of our meal - in front of a restaurant full of people – Deb began to cry. I don't mean a few tears in her eyes – I mean crying uncontrollably.

Nothing I said helped and she eventually just ran out of the restaurant and collapsed in the parking lot sobbing. Needless to say, that day my eyes were opened. My blind spots were revealed. My blind spots were hurting my wife and if I didn't change, it would hurt the ministry also. I had been putting ministry before my marriage and if I continued to do that I would have no marriage and no ministry.

I repented to God and to my wife that day. I committed to start taking a day off every week. We learned the hard way from our mistake, but we learned! And to this day our day off is sacred. We don't let anything interfere with it unless it's an emergency.

Blind spots can cause people to perish.
Blind spots can cause marriages to perish.
Blind spots can cause churches to perish.

Fortunately, God restored us and our marriage. But it started with Jesus restoring my vision.

He came to recover sight to the blind. The word "recover" means "to retake, regain or rebuild"; for instance, "to regain health and become well." It means you had something, you lost it, and you got it back.

My wife and I had lost our joy and were on the verge of losing our relationship, but we got it back! And God wants to bring restoration to your family, but it usually starts with a revelation that brings vision back to your blind spots.

There are several different causes of blind spots, but the main two are deception from the enemy and self-deception, called denial.

2- Opening your eyes requires dealing with deception

To experience restoration – you must first admit you are blind! Second of all, you must want your vision restored.

Deception from the enemy goes back to the very beginning. In fact, the first place that “open eyes” is mentioned in the Bible is in Genesis 3:5-7. When Satan tempted Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, he said:

"For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Their rebellion caused their eyes to open in a way that caused spiritual blindness! Their sin resulted in deception that caused them to hide from God. So, we must stay on guard against the deceptions of the enemy.

The enemy wants to deceive us, but many times we blame the devil for things that are our own fault. Self-deception is a major cause of spiritual blindness.

Deception is caused by not knowing God's Word.

Self-deception is caused by not doing the word.

James 1:22-24 says:

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.

We deceive ourselves anytime we know what the Bible says – but we excuse ourselves from obeying it.

We say things like:

Yes, I know the Bible says we should not have sex outside of marriage, but God knows I have needs.

Yes, I know the Bible says we should tithe, but God knows I have bills.

Yes, I know the Bible says we should use our gifts and talents in church, but God knows I'm busy.

Yes, I know I should submit to authority, but God knows my authorities don't deserve my submission.

And the list goes on and on! And I want to say, "Really? You really think God is going to give you a pass on obedience?" If you think so, you are deceiving yourself!

Believe it or not, some people want to stay blind – it's called denial. I know people who don't go to the doctor to get their blood pressure or cholesterol checked because it may be high. They say, "I don't want to know." Think about it – when people say, "I don't want to know" – they are saying, "I want to intentionally deceive myself into thinking everything's okay." Ignorance may be bliss, but denial is a form of self-deception that can blind you and eventually kill you, physically or spiritually.

There are many ways we can deceive ourselves and walk in spiritual blindness. But God wants us to walk in the light of His truth so we can have fellowship with Him and be restored by Him.

So, what do we do about our blind spots?

If the cause is sin, the cure is repentance.

If the cause is rebellion, the cure is submission to God's will.

If the cause is hatred, the cure is love.

If the cause is not paying attention to God, the cure is to focus on Him.

If the cause is spiritual immaturity, the cure is to grow up.

Christ came to restore our vision – but we must be willing to walk in the light – willing to walk with God in total openness, truthfulness, not hiding or covering up.

Two keys to recovering spiritual vision are God's presence and God's Word. We see this clearly in the story of the two disciples on the Emmaus Road. These men were not part of the 12 disciples, but they were part of the larger group that followed Jesus.

After Jesus was crucified, these two disappointed believers threw in the towel and headed for home in Emmaus. They were giving up on their hopes and dreams. They were devoted to Jesus and now He was dead. It was over.

So, they headed home. Back to their old life and old friends. Even though Jesus had told them many times that He would rise from the dead and meet them in Galilee – their eyes were not open to see it.

Spiritual blindness can get you headed in the wrong direction.
 Spiritual blindness can get you on the wrong road.
 Spiritual blindness can get you out of the will of God.
 Spiritual blindness can cause you to move away from the plan of God.
 Spiritual blindness can cause you to miss the blessing of God.
 Luke 24:14-16 says:

They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus Himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing Him.

I'm very encouraged by the fact that even though these disappointed believers were on the wrong road, Jesus came after them! Likewise, when our hopes and dreams are not coming true – when we are disappointed – God can come after us and be right in the middle of what's happening and we can't even see it!

Spiritual blindness causes you to not see God in your situation. We can be like Jacob who said in Genesis 28:16

Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.

God can be right in the middle of our marriage, but we're so disappointed in our spouse that we don't see God.
 God can be right in the middle of our finances, but we're so focused on our bank account that we don't see God.
 God can be right in the middle of our lives, but we're so focused on ourselves that we don't see God.

He's right there all along, but spiritual blindness keeps us from seeing Him.
 Spiritual blindness also causes you to not believe God's Word. Jesus said to the two men in Luke 24:25

How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter His glory?

When we are disappointed, we tend to not believe the word of God. And if we stop believing, we stop receiving. James 1:6-7 says:

But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord.

But with God's help, we can turn spiritual blindness into spiritual vision. How?

Overcoming blindness requires seeing God in our situation. That usually happens through the Word and through worship. That happened to the men on the Emmaus Road. Luke 24:27 says:

Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself.

Spiritual vision is restored through the Word of God. That's why the two men said in Luke 24:32

Were not our hearts burning within us while He talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?

Likewise, you will never understand the Word unless Jesus opens it to you. So, when you open the Word, ask Him to open your eyes to see what He wants you to see. Psalm 119:18 says:

Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in Your law.

To open our eyes we must renew our minds with the truth of God's Word. How do you renew your mind and vision? By abiding in the Word of God. John 8:31-32 says:

If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

To open your eyes, you must replace lies with the truth of God's Word. That's how vision is restored. We open our eyes through the truth of God's word and through worship. Not only must we abide in God's word, but also in God's presence.

The men on the road to Emmaus asked Jesus to eat with them. Luke 24:30-31 says:

When He was at the table with them, He took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him...

In the Emmaus Road story, when were their eyes opened? At the moment of thanksgiving. Likewise, our eyes are opened in the presence of God. 2 Corinthians 3:18 says:

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Spending time in God's presence changes us into His likeness!

As long as our eyes are on ourselves – we will stay blind.

As long as our eyes are on our circumstances – we will stay blind.
As long as our eyes are on what hasn't happened yet – we will stay blind.
To overcome spiritual blindness, we must get our eyes back on God.

Using His truth and His power, God can bring us out of darkness into light, out of denial and deception into truth, out of bondage into freedom.

I want you to know that however badly you've made a mess of your life, God can always put it back together. He is the ultimate Restorer and the opener of blind eyes!

If you have fuzzy vision, God can restore your clarity.

If you have double vision, God can restore your focus.

If you have tunnel vision, God can restore your peripheral vision.

If everything looks dark to you, God can restore your night vision.

Even if you have visions of sugar plums dancing in your head, God can replace that fantasy with a vision for your future that will encourage you, bless you and give you hope.

Even if you can't see your hand in front of your face – choose to walk by faith, not by sight! As you do, God's Word will light your path!