

11 - Restoring Your Vision
Pastor Joe Oakley - GFC - 7/7/24

We're in a sermon series entitled: Greater Freedom. We've been talking about how we must deal with root causes of our problems. If we don't – if all we deal with are symptoms – no matter how hard we try - the problems keep coming back.

We found a key in Matthew 3:10 when John the Baptist said:

The ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

So here's the principle – when you're not bearing good fruit, lay the ax to the root! When you're bearing bad fruit – lay the ax to the root. We find those roots by understanding what Jesus came to earth to accomplish on our behalf. Those ministries are listed in Luke 4:18-19 when 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.

So far, we talked about how Jesus came to preach good news. The first way we lay the ax to the root is by repenting of sin and placing our faith in Jesus Christ. We lay the ax to generational iniquity with the blood of Christ. We lay the ax to deception through the Word of God.

Then secondly, Jesus came to heal the brokenhearted. We lay the ax to that root by grieving our losses and putting on a garment of praise. We lay the ax to offense, anger and bitterness through forgiveness.

Thirdly, Jesus came to set captives free. Jesus obtained our freedom by dying for us – we maintain our freedom by dying to self. We lay the ax to the occult by shutting out all demonic influences. We lay the ax to dishonor by honoring those in authority.

Last week Pastor Whitney taught us to wage spiritual warfare using our spiritual armor.

The fourth thing Jesus came to do was to bring recovery of sight to the blind. So, today I'm preaching on Restoring Your Vision.

There are many types of blindness mentioned in the Bible.

- Physical blindness –
 Jesus restored the sight to many who were physically blind

- Spiritual blindness –

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.

Jesus came to give sight to unbelievers who are spiritually blind – this is spiritual healing.

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

What I feel led to speak on today is spiritual blindness in individual believers. 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 it is physically impossible to see everything at once. It's the same way in life. There are areas of weakness, deception, attitude or sin that we don't even see. All of us have blind spots in our lives. The problem with blind spots is that 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. Restoring your vision 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 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 the story of the blind man being healed. The pride of the Pharisees led to spiritual blindness and they could not even see the power of God when it was displayed 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 unaware. Even my own family.

I was raised in a pastor's home and my father still pastors. My dad is a godly man and I love and honor him with all my heart. But I was instilled with some ministry blind spots that hindered ministry and hurt my family.

For example – I grew up in small churches where my father did all the ministry. So, when I got into ministry, I thought we had to do everything. We were at every meeting from set up to clean up.

I also thought I had to minister to everyone personally. But that was a blind spot that came from a small-church mentality. On top of that – I was raised with a martyr mentality. That’s a mindset that says “It’s all about everyone else, never about us. We always sacrifice for everyone else.” Now there’s a place for sacrifice. But way too many have sacrificed their families on the altar of ministry.

So I had these major blind spots that started to affect Pastor Deb and me. We had started GFC 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. Pastor 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.”

Pastor Deb 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. I went out after her and, 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 so 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. When we returned from the conference we made ourselves accountable to another pastor and he called us weekly to be sure we were following through.

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 recovery and restoration to your family. But it usually starts with some 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- Recovering your vision requires laying the ax to deception

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

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. Self-deception is caused by not doing the word. James 1:22-25 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. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it - he will be blessed in what he does.

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. Many Christians never get restored because they live in denial. What's denial? I'll give you three true examples of denial-

A school teacher lost her life savings in a business scheme that had been elaborately explained by a swindler. When her investment disappeared and her dream was shattered, she went to the Better Business Bureau and they asked her, “Why on earth didn’t you come to us first?” “Didn’t you know about the Better Business Bureau?”

“Oh, yes,” said the lady sadly. “I’ve always known about you. But I didn’t come because I was afraid you’d tell me not to do it.”

The folly of human nature is that even though we know where the answers lie—God’s Word—we don’t turn there for fear of what it will say.

The captain of the Titanic refused to believe the ship was in trouble till water was ankle deep in the mail room. Only then was it apparent that the unsinkable ship was going to sink. Ships that could have arrived before the great ocean liner went down weren't summoned until it was too late.

Sometimes we walk in denial by ignoring symptoms until they are so big we are sinking – marriages, businesses, spiritual lives.

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. God wants us to walk in the light of His truth so we can have fellowship with Him and be restored by Him.

A major root that we need to deal with is misbeliefs, wrong thinking. Why is what we believe so important? Because Proverbs 23:7 says that *as a man thinks in his heart, so is he*.

If you think you’re an addict, you’ll live like an addict.
 But if you think you’re an overcomer, you’ll live like an overcomer.
 If you think you’re a victim, you’ll live like a victim.
 But if you think you’re a victor, you’ll live like a victor.

You’ll never live above what you believe!
 You’ll never change until you see the need for change!
 You’ll never get free until you believe Jesus can set you free!
 That’s why truth is so important.

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. To lay the ax to the root of deception we must renew our minds with the truth of God's Word. Romans 12:2 says:

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

The key to transformation and freedom is renewing your mind. How do you do that? By abiding in the Word of God. Jesus said in John 8:31-32

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 lay the ax to deception, you must replace lies with the truth of God's Word. That's how vision is restored.

Not only must we abide in God's word, but also in God's presence. 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.

time in God's presence changes us into His likeness! That is true restoration. Using His truth and His power, God can bring us out of denial and deception into truth, out of bondage into freedom, out of darkness into light.

God wants to restore your vision today!

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 you have no vision for your future, God wants to give you an eternal perspective on life.

If everything looks dark to you, God can restore your night vision. And even if you can't see your hand in front of your face – keep walking because Psalm 139:12 says that:

You the night shines as bright as day. Darkness and light are the same to You.

God is leading, you don't have to see at all! Just trust that He sees everything and He will lead you on the right path! Hallelujah! So, choose to walk by faith, not by sight! As you do, God's Word will light your path!

Psalm 36:9 says: In Your light we see light.

Micah 7:8 says: When I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me.

Psalm 27:1 says: The Lord is my light and my salvation — whom shall I fear?

So, walk in the light that you have and you will receive more light!

That means you will have greater vision in Jesus' name!