



THROUGH GOD'S EYES

The question of the morning is “How do you view life, your life in particular.” Whether you know it or not you have a view of life that influences how you live.

For instance, you may believe life is like games of cards—you have to play with the hand you are dealt. Maybe to you life is a minefield—you have to constantly watch where you step.

Maybe it's a journey to be enjoyed (or endured), a dance, a puzzle, a roller coaster with its ups and downs.

You may never think about life in any of these ways, but believe me you hold in your mind, either consciously or unconsciously, an idea of how life works and what you expect from it.

You can even see this in the clothes people wear, their jewelry, hairstyles, cars, tattoos, and so on. How you view life determines your expectations, your values, your relationships, your goals and priorities.

In his book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, Rick Warren says that if you think life is a party, your primary value in life will be having fun. If you see life as a race, you will probably always be in a hurry.

If you see life as a battle or a game, winning will be very important to you. If it's a marathon, you have to hang in there to the end.

Today we begin our 40-day journey to the Generous Life. The challenge for each of us will be to replace how we see life with seeing life through God's eyes by understanding the scriptures.

Paul writes in Romans 12:2(NIV) Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

This was written for Christians. Christian, “Don’t let the world squeeze you into its mold, but let God remold your mind from within.”

Our church in El Paso was a favorite site for skate boarders. For liability purposes we installed “No skateboarding” signs in strategic places. I was concerned the kids would just unscrew the signs. The installer handed me a screwdriver to try to remove one. No matter how hard I turned the screwdriver, I couldn’t budge the screw. Then he told me the secret, “This is a left-handed thread. It’s a reverse screw. You have to tighten or loosen it going in the opposite direction.”

I had never heard of such a thing. It took me fifty years to find out how screws work, and now they change the rules. There’s a sense in which all the Bible is kind of a reverse screw. Everything in the culture that seems right, in the Bible is wrong. The way up is the way down.

The way to spiritual wealth is to acknowledge your spiritual poverty. The way to live is to die. The way to rule is to serve. It just seems counter-intuitive. Well, this is how God sees things.

The more you try to get it right using the values of the culture, the tighter the screw gets and the less you accomplish. It seems crazy until you begin to see through His eyes.

It seems to be in our natures to copy something, or model ourselves after something or someone. But ultimately there are only two things that we copy—this world or God’s will.

From the world (culture) there is continuing pressure to adopt the customs and mindsets of the community or society and country where we live.

When we Christians allow God to work within us—that’s the be transformed by the renewing of your mind that Paul talks about—then we begin see the world through His eyes.

Then we realize that the two value systems—this world’s or God’s—are incompatible. In fact they are in direct opposition with one another.

Whether we are thinking about the meaning and purpose of life; or how to respond to evil; or about ambition, sex, honesty, money, community, the church or religion in general—the two sets of standards are so completely different that there is no possibility of compromise.

So, as Christians who should be developing the ability to see through God’s eyes, as we read the Bible we see that...

1. Life is a test.

In stories throughout the Bible God continually tests people's character, faith, obedience, love, integrity and loyalty. There are many examples in the Bible of people who passed a great test.

Think of Joseph, Ruth, Esther and Daniel and how they pleased God; or how God tested Abraham by asking him to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice. God would not have let that happen. But it was a test of Abraham's faith.

Jacob was tested when he had to work extra years to earn Rachel as his wife. Adam and Eve failed their test in the Garden. David failed tests from God on several occasions, but he also passed many other tests of faith and loyalty.

The point is that our character is both developed and revealed by how we respond to the circumstances of life. These circumstances are tests. You are always being tested. I believe God watches everything we do.

He sees how we respond to others, how we handle our failures and successes, how we deal with problems and conflicts, and our faith when we are sick or disappointed.

He watches how we drive, notes whether we are courteous or rude to clerks, waiters and waitresses. God knows how we respond to our husband or wife behind closed doors.

When there is a major change in your life, that's a test. When someone doesn't keep their promises or you are faced with impossible problems, those are tests.

When you receive criticism, that's a test. How you handle abundance or little is a test. What you do with your stuff, your possessions and how you feel about them is a test.

I don't know and can't imagine all the tests you have already experienced or tests still to come. What I do know is that how we see life dictates how we respond when we are tested.

And when you realize that life is a test, then all of a sudden, nothing is insignificant in your life. Even the smallest incident has significance for your character development.

Every day becomes important. Every second is an opportunity to deepen your character, to demonstrate care and love, to depend on God. Sometimes the tests seem overwhelming; others you don't even notice. But all have eternal significance.

God wants His children to pass the tests of life. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 10:13(NIV) No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

2. Life is temporary.

I know that we sometimes think, especially when we're young, that we are going to live forever. But the Bible is very honest.

David said in Psalms 39:4(NIV), "Show me, O LORD, my life's end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting is my life."

Paul wrote in Philippians 3:19(NIV), "But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ."

Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:11(NIV), "Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul."

He also said in 1 Peter 1:17(NIV), "Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear."

We know this—life is temporary. Compared with eternity, life is less than a blink, a snap of the fingers. That's the whole point—we're not here for long.

Don't get too attached to the stuff and things of this world. The Bible is very clear about the danger of living for the here and now, and adopting the lifestyles values, and priorities of the world around us.

Compared with much of the world, life in the U.S. has never been easier. We are constantly entertained, amused and catered to. There is a constant bombardment of commercials to the good life.

It's easy to forget that the pursuit of happiness is not what life is about. So we must remind ourselves of 2 Corinthians 4:18(NIV) So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Jesus said in John 10:10(NIV) that "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (KJV, "more abundantly").

Jesus didn't mean that God's great goal for our lives is material prosperity or success as the world defines it. C.S. Lewis said, "All that is not eternal is eternally useless."

When you realize that life on earth is just a temporary, it should radically alter your values. Eternal values, not temporal ones, should become the deciding factors in your decision making.

In God's eyes, the greatest are not those who achieve prosperity, success and power in this life. The greatest are those who see the temporariness of this life and serve Him faithfully, expecting their promised reward in eternity.

3. Life is a trust.

If life is a test, and it is temporary, then our time, intelligence, energy, opportunities, relationships and resources are all gifts from God. He has entrusted them to our care and management.

The Psalmist wrote, Psalms 24:1(NIV) The earth is the LORD'S, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.

Look at this verse closely and think about this: if everything in this world is the Lord's, including you and me, then we never really own anything during our brief time on earth.

God just loans the earth to us while we are here. It was God's property before we arrived and God will loan it to someone else after we die. We just get to manage and enjoy it for awhile.

Do you remember the story about the talents told by Jesus? A business man entrusts his wealth to the care of his servants while he's away. When he returns he evaluates each servant's responsibility and rewards them accordingly.

One He told, Matthew 25:21(NIV) "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!"

This is a reminder to each of us that at the end of our lives on this earth we will be evaluated and rewarded according to how well we handled what God has entrusted to us.

Everything you do, even your daily chores, has eternal implications. Many of us fail to realize that everything we have, our stuff and our money is both a test and a trust from God.

Application:

Life is on loan to us from God. The way we manage what God has entrusted to us shows our commitment to Him and His will for our lives. The more God gives us, the more responsible He expects us to be. Luke 12:48b(NIV) From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.