

# Seeing Him more clearly



**Youth & USA Missions Director  
Bishop Bill Woodruff**



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## **This month's article by Bishop Bill Woodruff**

In the small village of Bethsaida, life revolved around fishing. Situated on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, its name means "house of fishing." I had the privilege to visit the ruins of Bethsaida where there is still evidence of a vibrant civilization. There is a home with large ovens thought to be a baker's home and even a house of a mason. One man in Bethsaida made his living not fishing, building or baking, but by begging. He was blind. His story is one of the oddest in scripture.

For years I had wondered why Jesus healed the man partially. I wondered why he could "see men as trees, walking," after Jesus laid hands on him the first time, and then why Jesus immediately heals him completely (Mark 8:22-25). I've heard this used to explain that God sometimes heals progressively. I find it odd that Jesus would heal "progressively" in the same encounter. It seems like progressive healing would be over the course of days and weeks. I won't engage that theology here, but I find the clearest explanation (as usual) is in the context. I think Jesus was using this as a visual aid to rebuke His disciples.

Look at verses 14-21. Jesus warns them of the yeast of the Pharisees (the pervasive creepiness of legalistic teachings?) and of Herod (the insidious infiltration of worldly compromise?). They see only in the natural and think it's because they forgot to bring bread (again). They think Jesus is passive-aggressively deriding them for their negligence. They didn't bring bread. They think he's upset that they forgot to get food again, but they completely miss the point. He asks them if they remember when He fed 5000 and then 4000 people with almost nothing. Had they forgotten His authority over wind and waves on the Sea of Galilee? Had they forgotten that on the other side of that sea, He faced off with a legion of demons in a death-dwelling lunatic? Had they forgotten the demon-pigs running into the sea as He declared authority over both religious rules and the forces of hell? Then He exerted authority over a 12-year-sickness and a 12-year-old dead girl. "You have eyes-can't you see?" (vs 18) "Don't you understand yet?" (vs 21).

Suddenly we find ourselves in Bethsaida. Mark is good at changing the scene to communicate a connection between events. A blind man is brought to Jesus. Jesus spits on his eyes and asks if he can see anything. He sees, but not clearly. I think at this point the disciples understand that Jesus is saying, "This is how you see the kingdom of God." You see miracles, you see healings, you see victories in your natural life, but you can't see that there is a spiritual aspect to the Kingdom that goes beyond your natural every day. Supernatural empowerment is more than help for your natural circumstances. Bread isn't just bread! Then Jesus touches the man and his vision is clear.



If we are going to be “Empowered to Win Many in 2020,” then 2020 must be a year of clear vision. I’m not talking in the natural. I’m not talking about casting vision for your church, I’m talking about receiving vision in your soul. I’m not talking about natural plans and dreams and best practices. I’m talking about seeing Him clearly. There's nothing wrong with remembering to bring bread, to do things excellently in the natural, but that is not our primary calling. Our call is to operate effectively in the spiritual.



The Rock at Cesarea Philippi also known as the Gates of Hell

In the very next passage, they leave Galilee and go up to Cesarea Philippi. In this area is the Rock, an enormous cliffside that housed three pagan temples. One of them is a temple to Hades (often called the gates of hell) out of which flows the Benias Spring. This is the source of the Jordan River. Here Jesus pushes the disciples to see clearly whether He is a man or the Son of God. “Thou art the Christ.” Jesus lets Peter know that his eyes were opened by

the Father. Finally, Peter can see! Upon this Rock (faith) I will build my church and even the gates of hell won’t stop it. Even the encroaching pagan religions won’t overcome it. Now you see what is really at stake here! Stop worrying about bread!

There are a lot of things in this world that would cloud our vision of Christ as the Son of the Living God. The Pharisaical yeast of the legalism threatens to keep us Farsighted and focused on the actions of those around us. Focus on wicked neighbors or the corruption of whatever political party disagrees with you keeps our focus off of Jesus. The Nearsightedness of focus on self and your forgetfulness to do right (we forgot to bring bread) keeps your focus off of Jesus. Focus on self, whether it's how great you are, or how lacking you are, is missing the point.

On my bookshelf sits a jawbone of a donkey. It is there as a reminder to take the focus off of self. Any time I feel down and discouraged - like I can't do anything right - I look up at that jawbone. It reminds me that Samson swung a jawbone and killed a thousand of his enemies. In God's hand, I am a powerful (if unconventional) tool to defeat the powers of hell. I can do all things through Christ. Whenever I feel a little overconfident (not as often) and begin to admire the great things I have done, a glance just above my computer screen at the jawbone on the far wall reminds me that by myself, without His empowerment, I am just a dead, dry bone. Spiritual vision requires me to keep my focus on His strength and not my weakness.

The third cause of a blurred spiritual vision is Astigmatism. This is a warping of the shape of the eye or lens that takes things out of focus. The pressures of the world system that press against the lens of the Word of God in our life. We are constantly pressured to give a little on this side, or on that side to allow the values of this world to warp our vision of the Kingdom.

Walking by faith and not sight is not a call to be blind, but a call to see things more clearly. It is a call to allow Jesus to touch us and heal our focus on others, or on self, or on the values of this world. To focus on Him and declare Him as the Son of God to the world.

“Supernatural empowerment is more than help for your natural circumstances. Bread isn’t just bread!”



*Our Sincere Condolences  
to the family of Randall Williams  
Pastor of Pie Church of God,  
Who passed away on 12/27/2019*

**Mountaineer Ministries Prayer Requests:**

Our President and our nations leaders; Our military; Unsaved family; A friend who has cancer; Healing from a spinal injury; For my Pastor and his family; Unspoken request; Nephew in Prison; Our Health; Many in need of healing; Salvation for family and the community; Heart Cauterization and Heart procedure; My family; Unsaved Children; My daughter to make the right choices; God to bless finances; physical well being; My Health; My Marriage

**Mountaineer Ministries Praise Reports:**

Thankful for peace, and my family; Three people being saved at Thanksgiving Service; Thankful for our youth and Women's Ministries; Gods blessings when it was unexpected; Thankful for Gods Blessings; Church growth; New Members; Our Church

**EMPOWERED TO WIN  
MANY IN 2020**

WV Church of God  
Prayer Conference  
Family Worship Center Beckley, WV  
February 3-4  
Monday Worship 7:00pm  
Tuesday Bible Teaching 10:00am  
Tuesday Worship 7:00pm

**THE JOURNEY...  
DESTINATION HEAVEN**

WV Church of God  
Women's Conference  
Family Worship Center Beckley, WV  
April 24 - 25  
Guest Speaker Rhonda Holland



# Upcoming Youth and Discipleship Events

- \*\*March 5-7 Focus 2020 Gatlinburg, TN
- \*\*March 13-15 Smoky Mountain Winterfest Knoxville, TN
- \*March 28 Kids Adventure/Jr Talent at New River Ranch**
- \*\*April 3-5 Frontier Kidfest
- \*\*April 17-19 Midwest Kidfest Mason, OH
- \*\*April 24-26 Carolina Kidfest
- \*\*May 1-3 Smoky Mt. Kidfest

## West Virginia Church of God Youth Camp 2020

- \*June 15-19 Teen Camp at New River Ranch**
- \*June 22-26 Jr Camp at New River Ranch**
- \*June 29-July 2 Kids Camp at New River Ranch**

Should you have questions about any of the above events please feel free to contact Lisa at the State Office 304-252-0622 ext 3.

\*\*International Events

**\*State Events**

For God so loved the world  
that he gave his one and only Son  
who gave his life for us  
that whosoever believes in him  
shall not perish but have eternal life.  
**John 3:16**

**Mark  
your  
calendar**

***February 3-4, 2020 Prayer Conference***

***March 28, 2020 Jr. Talent/Kids Adventure Day***

***April 24-25, 2020 Women's Conference***

***May 25, 2020 Office Closed for Memorial Day***

***June 7-11, 2020 WV Church of God Camp Meeting***