

Seeing Things The Right Way

Psalm 73

MEMORY VERSE

PSALM 73:25

“Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

A sheet of construction paper for each child (various colors), scissors and tape.

A picture (from a magazine or another source), poster board, a pencil and scissors.

ATTENTION GETTER!

Things Are Not Always as They Appear!

For this activity, you will need a sheet of construction paper for each child (various colors), scissors, and tape. Give each child one sheet of construction paper. Have them cut the sheet in half (width). Set the other half aside. (They will use it later in the craft so make sure they hang on to it.) Have the children roll it to make a tube about 1 to 1 1/2" in diameter and tape it.

Next, have each child hold the tube up to their left eye to look through, kind of like a telescope. Tell them to keep both of their eyes open. With their right hand, they should cover their right eye (palm of hand facing eye). Then tell the children to move their hand away from their eyes to the center of the tube. Both eyes should be kept open during this process. A large hole should appear in the palm of their hands.

Next gather your children in a circle and explain that things are not always as they appear. Even though it looks like there is a big hole in your hand, you know there really isn't one. Sometimes in life, we can look at people or things and not see the big picture. We might think that something is a certain way when really it isn't. Our *perspective* is skewed. **God wants us to see things the way He does.**

NOTE: Make sure the children hang onto the tube and the other half-sheet of construction paper for the craft later in the lesson.

LESSON TIME!

Have you ever wanted what someone else has; or, have you ever hoped something would not work out for someone else so "you" could take his place in doing something you would really like to do? Have you ever wondered why people who are not Christians do not ever seem to have any problems while you do? A man by the name of Asaph had similar questions!

Asaph was one of the main musicians at the temple, responsible for leading the many musicians and singers in worship to God. Asaph had some questions that really bothered him. He began to look at evil people and notice that it seemed like they never had any problems. It looked like they had everything they wanted, and nothing bad ever happened to them. Asaph even began to wonder why he should continue serving the Lord; but, the Lord in His love and mercy taught Asaph some valuable lessons. We can learn from his experiences. **God wants us to see things the way He does.**

PSALM 73:1-16

Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are pure in heart.

But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; my steps had nearly slipped.

For I was envious of the boastful, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

For there are no pangs in their death, but their strength is firm.

They are not in trouble as other men, nor are they plagued like other men.

Therefore pride serves as their necklace; violence covers them like a garment.

Their eyes bulge with abundance; they have more than heart could wish.

They scoff and speak wickedly concerning oppression; they speak loftily.

They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walks through the earth.

Therefore his people return here, and waters of a full cup are drained by them.

And they say, “How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?”

Behold, these are the ungodly, who are always at ease; they increase in riches.

Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence.

For all day long I have been plagued, and chastened every morning.

If I had said, “I will speak thus,” behold, I would have been untrue to the generation of Your children.

When I thought how to understand this, it was too painful for me—

Asaph was very honest with God. God always wants us to be honest with Him. He does not mind when our minds or hearts are struggling with hard questions. He is always up to the challenge of our “hard questions.” God knows our weakness--He knows we are made of dust and in need of His help and guidance.

Through Asaph’s struggles, he writes, “...my feet had almost stumbled...” In other words, he almost fell away from the Lord. Asaph was struggling with envy. He began to look at all of the wicked people in the world around him and began to make conclusions about life and fairness. He ran into serious problems with his own conclusions; since he did not look at the big picture or ask for God’s opinion on this.

As Asaph looked at the wicked people around him, he began to point out all the good things about their lives. He saw them as prosperous, never suffering pain, strong, having no problems, and having everything they could possibly wish for.

Asaph points out while they have so much in this life, they are boastful, wicked, proud, violent, scoffers, and hurtful to other people. Asaph could not figure out how bad people could be doing so well.

In our world today, there are so many people who set themselves up as popular or heroes. They may be beautiful, strong, or very popular, but they may also be wicked, proud, and boastful. It may be tempting to want to be like some movie star or sports hero. But, we, like Asaph, could be guilty of not seeing the “big picture” like God does. Asaph took his eyes off of God and placed them on other

people, the ungodly of this world. We, too, will be short-sighted, if we fail to keep our eyes on the Lord. **God wants us to see things the way He does.**

Asaph bemoaned that it seemed the wicked were getting away with their bad attitudes. It is kind of like when we see something that does not seem right, and we tell our parents, "It's just not fair!" It seemed to Asaph like God was not paying attention. He wanted to know why God was letting them get away with this while he was going through hard times.

It seems as though Asaph was wondering if it was worth all the pain to walk the narrow way. He was wondering what he was going to get after all his years of looking to God and choosing to walk in love, purity, and the fear of the Lord.

Helping Us To See

For this craft, you need the 1/2 sheet of construction paper and the tube listed with the supplies for the first craft as well as scissors, tape, and markers. The children will be making paper telescopes with today's theme. Have them take the 1/2 sheet of construction paper and cut that in half to make two 1/2 pieces. Take one piece at a time and roll it into a tube slightly smaller than the tube that has already been made. Do the same thing with the second piece. Insert the first tube into the tube the children made earlier. Then place the third tube into the second.

You can have the children use tape or gluestick to place the three tubes in place. Next, give the children time to decorate the telescope and have them write today's theme on the larger tube along with Psalm 73 and their name.

PSALM 73:17-28

Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I understood their end.

Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction.

Oh, how they are brought to desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors.

As a dream when one awakes, so, Lord, when You awake, You shall despise their image.

Thus my heart was grieved, and I was vexed in my mind.

I was so foolish and ignorant; I was like a beast before You.

Nevertheless I am continually with You; You hold me by my right hand.

You will guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.

Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You.

My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

For indeed, those who are far from You shall perish; You have destroyed all those who desert You for harlotry.

But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all Your works.

Asaph was aware that envy was keeping him from seeing things the right way. He went into the sanctuary, the place of God's presence. It was there his understanding was increased and his shortsightedness healed.

Note a key word in verse 17: "until." It was at the point that Asaph went into the sanctuary that he stopped thinking the way he had been thinking and began to look at things another way, God's way. He got a view of life on this earth through the Lord's eyes. **God wants us to see things the way He does.**

When Asaph turned his thoughts and attention to God, everything began to make sense. It was like Asaph asked himself, "What in the world was I thinking?" We can do that sometimes when we take our eyes off of God and place them on this world. Let us commit to spending time in God's Word and worshipping Him, so we can have the right perspective and keep the right attitude.

Asaph received an "eternal" perspective. He remembered what happens at the end of the path for those who choose to live a wicked life apart from God. Their path leads to destruction and judgment, not blessing. It may appear that everything is *okay* now, but there is coming a day when they will be judged; and if they do not have a relationship with God, they will be destroyed.

Seeing things now from God's perspective, an eternal perspective, Asaph realized the wicked are in slippery places. In other words, they could fall at any moment. We need to be on a solid place, firmly planted. The only solid place in this world is the place in which we stand through faith in Jesus Christ—the solid rock and His Word. The wicked will one day be destroyed; and, it can happen in a moment. Life is short; it can end quickly. Eternity lasts forever—we need to be prepared for eternity.

Asaph adds, “They are utterly consumed with terrors...” Not only do the wicked face eternal judgment, but a wicked life brings many griefs and sorrows. Sin has consequences. People may look like all is well on the outside, but those who live wickedly often suffer the consequences caused by foolish choices: pain caused by damaged relationships, the entrapment of sin, and guilt.

Asaph was grieved and troubled over his foolish behavior. In his shortsightedness, he had almost wandered from the God who loved Him. Now, seeing things rightly, Asaph began to praise the Lord. He recounted the blessings of his life. He understood that even though he might not have a lot of money or all kinds of material things, the Lord was always there for him, no matter what his circumstances. God was holding him by His strong right hand. He had everything he needed. He remembered the Lord was guiding him with His counsel and strengthening him through this life. If that’s not enough, after his life was over, the Lord Himself would bring him into glory!

Having an eternal perspective is, first of all, remembering we are going to heaven. I Peter 1:4-7 describes the glory: “...to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ...”

It is true that life is not always fun, or easy, or painless. There may be times, if we look at this life only, we will be tempted to question God’s fairness. But, we like Asaph, can see the big picture: God is with us continually, holding our hand, and guiding us by His wise counsel. And after this, we are going to Heaven!

Asaph once more affirmed his faith and stated: "...there is none upon earth that I desire besides You." In the midst of a confusing world, Asaph drew near to God and put his trust in Him. Asaph knew the result would be praise—declaring all God's works—"for truly God is good!" Will you praise Him? For, God is good to you!

Looking for the Big Picture

You will need a picture (from a magazine or another source), poster board, a pencil and scissors. Find a picture of someone doing something nice for someone else or that would communicate seeing things the way that God sees them. With a glue stick, paste the picture onto poster board. Turn the picture over and make squares. Make enough so that each child in your class can get one square. Next, number the squares so it makes it easier for you to put them together later. Cut out the squares.

Next, without saying anything about what the picture is, mix up the squares and pass out one square to each student. Go around the room and ask each child to tell you what the picture is that their square comes from. If no one guesses, allow the children to get together and try to put the picture together. If they are still having trouble, put the picture together using the numbers.

Use this activity to reinforce that if we have just one small piece of the puzzle, we probably cannot understand what is happening. If we look at our circumstances and compare them to the circumstances of others, we may be tempted, like Asaph, to question God. Remember, we cannot see the whole picture. We need to put our eyes on God and not on ourselves or those in the world around us.

PRAYER

Pray the Lord will help the children to resist the temptation to look at their own situation and compare their situation with others. Instead, may they, as Asaph, draw near to God, see things from His perspective, and recognize His goodness to them. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity.