

Back in the previous century, as a mechanical engineering student, I was required to take an optics class. This is basically learning about the reflection and refraction of light as it passes through a material (like glass or water.) When light enters a material, it will bend some amount, depending on the material properties. Light even bends after it travels through empty space and enters the air and moisture in earth's atmosphere. This is called refraction **and it is the reason we get rainbows and sunsets**. Optical engineers get to take many classes studying this. They are the designers that create and improve lighting, eyeglasses, telescopes, microscopes, laser surgery, fiber optic communication, cameras, the screen you are likely reading this on, and **even the lowly magnifying glass**. And for those few who received this letter on paper, I printed it for you using my laser printer, the design of which employed the skills of at least one optical engineer. Three cheers for optics and optical engineers!

The lowly magnifying glass? This simple device was invented in the late 1200's. (Actually, **God invented the eyeball long before** the 1200's!) It is the foundation for many inventions and discoveries that we take for granted today. The key feature of the magnifying glass is its focal point. This is the location where the light, entering the lens and bending, will be most highly concentrated. We can use this device for many things. If I were stranded on a deserted island and I had one, I could use it to concentrate the light coming from the sun and start a fire. And, while I was gathering firewood for the fire, if I got a splinter under my skin, I could use the lens to focus the image of the splinter on my eye so I could more easily remove it. Both of these examples would bring me great relief in such a predicament. But **I would probably regret trying to do both of those things at the same time!**

Multitasking is a modern term that came from the computer industry. Some computers are designed to be able to perform two tasks at the same time. Even though our brains are still superior to manmade computers in many ways, **our biological computer is not able to multi-task**. We might perceive such an ability, but scientists have proven that, when we think we are multi-tasking, our brains are simply shifting our concentration from one task to another very rapidly. This switching back and forth makes our brains more tired, using more energy and taking more time. Our great idea of typing an email while talking on the phone to save time is actually a bad idea. Just as we would not want to use a magnifying glass to start a fire and remove a splinter at the same time, another truly bad idea would be to attempt to read a text that you get while you're driving a car. **Magnifying glasses and our brains are both designed to focus on one thing at a time.**

*"The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!" "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. (Matthew 6:22-24)*

When we see a photo that is out of focus, **we cannot blame the lens. It always does its job**, focusing the light, or image, at the focal point. Our complaint with the blurry photo is that the focal point is not where we want it. The camera lens was focusing on the wrong thing.

*Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. (Philippians 4:8)*

This quote, as are most of the scriptures I cite, is taken from the New American Standard. The word “dwell” is translated from the Greek word, “logizomai.” The Complete Jewish Bible translates it as “focus.” **If you are focused on the right things, blessings will come – that is a promise.**

*How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers. (Psalms 1:1-3)*

Reading God’s word is wonderful and beneficial to us but, focusing on His word with intention to understand and internalize is essential. Try this: Read a passage of scripture, close your eyes and ask God to show you what He wants you to learn from that passage. Sit with that thought and consider. Focus on the thoughts that come into your mind and apply them to you, your life, the things that are concerning you. **This intentional focus is one way for us to grow and develop** and progress toward our goal of imitating Messiah. This is meditation.

Surely you’re familiar with the adage that positive people view a glass half full and negative people see the same glass as half empty. A good friend of mine proposed a variation of this that I want to share. A simple shift in our focus could bring about higher satisfaction, lower stress, more productivity, a change for better, etc. **Sounds like a miracle... but it is merely a shift in our focus.** Instead of living our lives concentrating on the events that lay ahead, the never ending – always lengthening - list of things to do, the schedule for next week, the tasks we need to accomplish, the deadlines we’re facing... try living with a focus on the things that we have accomplished. What has come about as a result of all the things we have already crossed off the list? Who has benefitted from our hard work and diligence? How have we made the world a better place lately? **This focus on the positive will energize your motivation.**

*See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people. **Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil. (1 Thessalonians 5:15-22)***

Rejoice Always. This is a **focus that we are called to**; that will yield a quality of life that we all desire.

*Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. (Colossians 3:2)*

Peace to you and glory to God!

-Nate

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