

INTRODUCTION

There are good days and bad days. Here’s a humorous list of ten ways to *know* you’re having a bad day:

1. Your horn sticks on the highway behind 32 Hell’s Angels.
2. Your twin sister forgets your birthday.
3. It costs more to fill up your car than it did to buy it.
4. You have to sit down to brush your teeth in the morning.
5. You put both contacts in the same eye.
6. Your income tax refund check bounces.
7. Someone says you look good for 40, and you’re 25.
8. You call your answering service and they say it’s none of your business.
9. Your 4-year-old tells you it’s impossible to flush a grapefruit down the toilet.
10. You compliment the boss’s wife for her unusual perfume—and she isn’t wearing any.

There are plenty of bad days, but this Bible passage speaks of how we can love life and see good days. Are you interested? Here’s how: I Peter 3:8-12: 8

“Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. For ‘Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. For the *eyes* of the Lord are on the righteous and his *ears* are attentive to their prayer, but the *face* of the Lord is against those who do evil.’”

Verse 10 addresses how we can love life and enjoy good days. Too many people go through life dreading it; having one bad day after another. It’s sometimes called a “down day” or a “bad hair day.” Henry David Thoreau wrote: “The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.” But it doesn’t have to be that way. In John 10:10 Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”...“more and better life than they ever dreamed of.” (*The Message*)

You can love life and see good days because God is good—not because your circumstances are good. In verse twelve there are three fundamental truths about the goodness of God. This verse says something about God’s eyes, God’s ears, and God’s face.

Have you ever wondered what God looks like? Many people visualize God as old man with flowing robes and a long beard. That image probably comes from Michelangelo’s painting of the creation in the Sistine Chapel. He portrayed God with flowing robes and a long gray beard. He also looks a little angry with the furrowed brow and dark expression. His arms are raised as He directs the creative process like an orchestra leader.

No human being has ever seen God, so we are clueless about His appearance. Although most people have some mental image of God, it’s bound to be faulty. It reminds me of the story about the little boy drawing pictures with his crayons. His mother asked him, “What are you drawing?”

He said, “I’m drawing a picture of God.” She said, “But, honey, nobody knows what God looks like.” He looked up and said, “They will in a minute.”

God doesn’t actually have eyes, ears, a nose or a mouth. He employs these anthropomorphic images to help us understand His nature. It’s like a kindergarten teacher using an apple to explain the letter A. An apple represents only a tiny percentage of all the words starting with “A”, but it’s a good place to start. God having eyes, ears and a face is only a tiny sliver of the full truth about God, but it’s a good place to start. The use of these three physical qualities are simply word pictures to teach us one powerful truth: GOD IS GOOD. And in light of His inherent goodness, you can make every day a good day. Here’s how:

I. IT’S A GOOD DAY WHEN I SENSE GOD’S EYES WATCHING ME

Verse 12 says, “For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous.” “Righteous” doesn’t mean “self-righteous.” Anyone who is in Christ has been declared by God to be righteous. So if you are in Christ and Christ is in you; God has His eyes on you, and nothing escapes His gaze.

On the back of a one dollar bill, there are two circles representing the official seal of the United States of America. In the left circle there is an unfinished pyramid to represent the American endeavor is never completed. The Latin below the pyramid, *novus ordo seclorum*, is interpreted to mean “a new order for the world.” The Latin above the pyramid, *annuity coeptis*, means “God has blessed our undertaking.” The official translation by our U.S. State Department is: “He (God) has favored our undertaking.” The founders of our nation also wanted to declare that this great nation could never have been established without the help of Almighty God. Just below the statement about God there is an eye surrounded by light beams radiating outward. This is often called “the all seeing-eye,” however the founders of our nation never used that term to describe it. They included it because it is an ancient symbol to portray that God is constantly watching over the affairs of this world.

The Bible makes it clear God *is* watching the affairs of this world. “The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good.” (Proverbs 15:3) Have you ever had the feeling someone is watching you? When someone has that strange feeling, they often mistake it for the presence of ghosts or other spooky phenomena. But there is a legitimate reason for feeling you are being watched—you are. God is watching you.

There’s funny story about a burglar who broke into a house one night. He froze when he heard a voice saying, “Jesus sees you.” Finally, he took a few more steps and heard the same voice, “Jesus sees you.” The voice was coming from the kitchen, so he crept up to the door. Once again, the voice said, “Jesus sees you.” He shone his flashlight toward the voice and was relieved to see it was a talking parrot in the cage speaking those words. He said, “You stupid parrot, you scared me to death.” Turning on the kitchen light, he was shocked to see a large Doberman standing beneath the parrot’s cage. He looked at the parrot just in time to hear him say, “Sic him, Jesus.”

God really is watching you, but the truth is, He’s *not* going to sic you. Some people picture God as a mean despot who wants to make your life miserable. They think He’s like a heavenly

policeman who is watching from heaven just to catch people doing something enjoyable or fun. And when He does, He shakes His Divine finger and says, "Now, cut that out right now!"

God isn't watching to hurt you. He's watching to help you! The Bible says in II Chronicles 16:9: "For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him." God is conducting a global search for men, women, teenagers, and children who will commit their hearts to Him. When He sees that in you, He will give you strength. He's watching you because He loves you.

Just because you are one of six billion people inhabiting this planet, doesn't mean He will overlook you. God can watch you as if you were the *only* one in His focus. There's a true story about students who were standing in the lunch line in a Catholic elementary school. At the head of the line was a tray loaded with apples. The nun had made a note and posted it on the apple tray. It said, "Take only one apple. God is watching." At the end of the counter was a large pile of chocolate chip cookies. One of the students had placed a sign on it that said, "Take all the cookies you want, God is watching the apples." God can watch you at the same moment He's watching me. When I look at you, I can either focus on the crowd as a group or on one of you individually. I can't look two of you in the eyes at the same time. But the God who holds the planets and stars in orbit can peer deeply into your eyes as if He had nothing else to do at that moment.

When God looks at you, it is a look of love. Have you ever heard the expression, "the apple of my eye?" It means something that is extremely valuable and precious—and yes, that IS in the Bible. God uses the phrase, "apple of my eye" three times to describe how precious we are to Him. For instance, God gave this promise through the prophet Zechariah: "Whoever touches you touches the apple of His eye." (Zechariah 2:8) God sees you, and He isn't just an uninterested spectator. He really cares. He sees your attitudes and your actions. He sees your aches and pains. He sees your needs.

One of my wife's favorite songs is "Someone to watch over me." We all need someone to watch over us. Cheer up, someone is watching over you, and it's a good day when you know that.

II. IT'S A GOOD DAY WHEN I SPEAK IN A WAY THAT PLEASES GOD'S EARS

Verse 12 says, "His ear is attentive" Not only is God watching, He's listening, too. Sometimes when people get older they have trouble hearing well. A wife was looking at her husband of 60 years and she said, "Tom, I'm proud of you." He shot back, "Yeah? Well I'm tired of you, too!" My wife tells me I suffer from "selective hearing." That is, I hear only what I want to hear! Not only does God have perfect eyesight, but His hearing is flawless as well. Notice two things God hears.

1. God hears what I say to others

The Bible says in verse 10 the key to having a good day is found in restraining our runaway tongue. It says, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech." As followers of Jesus we speak a different language—the

language of kindness. Verse 9 directs us to repay evil with good. We don't insult others, even when we've been insulted. For instance, when someone boils over with anger and gets in our face, we remember the Bible says, "A soft answer turns away wrath." (Proverbs 15:1)

A pastor had two rowdy sons who were constantly fighting each other. He looked out the window one summer afternoon and saw the two of them fighting and kicking each other right in the middle of his vegetable garden. He rushed out and quickly separated them.

The younger son screamed, "He started it! He called me a bad name!" The Father said, "Now son, don't you remember the verse from Proverbs we read last night? 'A soft answer turns away wrath?'" The son said, "Yessir. That's exactly what I did! When he called me that nasty name, I responded with a soft tomato right in his face!"

We've all heard the little childhood taunt, "Sticks and stones may break my bones; but words will never harm me." That's a lie. Instead the truth is words can wound much deeper than sticks and stones. I saw a statement not long ago that caused me stop and read it again. It said:

BE CAREFUL WITH YOUR WORDS.
IN A MATTER OF SECONDS
YOU MAY INFLICT PROFOUND WOUNDS
THAT MAY TAKE YEARS TO HEAL.

If you or someone you love has trouble with words, you should memorize this prayer from Psalms and pray it whenever you're about to say the wrong thing: "Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips." (Psalm 141:3)

What if I followed you around for the past seven days secretly recording every word you spoke? And now, I'm getting ready to play back some of the choice selections for this congregation to hear. Would that bother you? Let's turn it around. What if you knew I was following you around over the next week recording all your words to play back *next* Sunday, what would be different about your speech? Don't worry. I'm not interested in recording you and hearing your conversations. But God really is listening, and we all should talk in a way that won't burn His ears.

(2) God listens when I call on Him

Not only is God listening to what we say to others, His ear is attuned when we talk to Him. He always answers prayer. Sometimes people pray and don't get the answer they want so they wonder, "Is God really listening to me?" He is always listening, but that doesn't mean He will always grant your requests. I've said many times: When you ask for something and the request is not right, God answers: No. When you ask for something and *you* aren't right, God answers: Grow! When you ask for something and the timing is not right, God answers: Slow. But when you ask for something and the request, the timing, and you are right, God answers: Go!

But prayer is much more than giving God a shopping list. Sometimes we cry out to God because we are facing a struggle. Here's a great promise: "The righteous cry out and the Lord hears

them...the Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” (Psalm 34:17-18) Do you have a broken heart? God is listening. Has your spirit been crushed? God is turning His ear to you. He’s waiting for you to call out to Him.

Last year while flying back from China I watched a movie entitled “Bruce Almighty” starring Jim Carrey. It’s about a guy named Bruce who became God for a few days. There’s not much we can learn from Hollywood about God, but there was one part of that movie that caught my attention. When Bruce was trying to listen to the prayers of people talking to God, he was totally overwhelmed. He heard thousands of voices simultaneously crying out for help, and he was frustrated because he couldn’t listen to each one. Bruce wasn’t *that* Almighty. But the God of the Bible is! He says, “Call unto me and I will show you great and mighty things that you don’t know.” (Jeremiah. 33:3) Here’s what is so good about God. Ready? Prepare to be blessed. Even though there may be millions of voice crying out to Him at the same instant, His ear is open to you, as if you were the only one talking.

One of the great spiritual giants of the 20th century was A.W. Tozer. In his book, *The Pursuit of God*, he wrote: “An infinite God can give all of Himself to each of His children. He does not distribute Himself that each may have a part, but to each one He gives all of Himself as fully as if there were no others.” Wow! What a mighty God we serve! It’s a good day every day that I realize God is listening to me.

III. IT’S A GOOD DAY WHEN I SEEK GOD’S FACE FOR MY DECISIONS

We’ve spoken about God’s eyes, and God’s ear, but verse 12 also says something about God’s face. We read, “But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” God is Spirit and God is light. He doesn’t have a face with a nose or mouth. He doesn’t need one. His face is a reference to His shining glory. The Bible tells us about the importance of seeking God’s face—that is, His glory. In II Chronicles 7:14 God says, “If my people who are called by name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways...” Notice two important dynamics about seeking God’s face:

(1) When I sin, I lose sight of God’s face

The Bible says when we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with God and with each other. But when we get off track, it’s like we turn away from the light of God’s face. God is holy and He can’t look on sin. The prophet Isaiah said it this way: “Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you.” (Isaiah 59:2) When we sin, we are walking away from God’s holiness and glory. It’s like losing sight of His face. When we sin, we must confess our sins and walk back into the light.

God’s holiness is immutable—but we sometimes wander from His light. When that happens, we don’t just lose sight of His face; verse twelve says God sets His face against those who do evil. It means our lives become miserable when we turn away from God’s face. But on the other hand:

(2) When I see God’s face I know that I’m on the right path

That's why the Psalmist says, "Your face, oh Lord, I will seek. Do not hide your face from me!" (Psalm 27:8-9) God isn't play cosmic hide-and-seek. He says when we seek Him we will find Him. When you face an important decision about which way to go, just look for His face—His glory, and you'll be going in the right direction.

If I was trying to direct you, I could do it with my face. If you started in the wrong direction, I could shake my head, and you would get the message. If you changed and started going in the right direction, I could nod. If there are two objects before you, and I wanted you to avoid one and pick up the other, just look at my face. I'll shake my head for the wrong choice and nod for the right choice.

That's why God says, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with my eye." (Psalm 32:8) In order for God to guide me with His eye, I've got to be seeking His face. The Bible says the glory of God is found in the face of Jesus. As long as you can see Jesus, you know you're walking in the light. The Bible says: "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." (II Corinthians 4:6)

CONCLUSION

Robert Louis Stevenson, who wrote *Treasure Island*, relates a little story that can help us understand something about God's face. He writes about a sailing ship caught in a terrible storm and the passengers below deck were alarmed the ship might sink. Finally, one of the men, against orders, went up on the deck and made his way to the pilot at the wheel. The seaman was lashed to his post to keep from being swept overboard, but when he saw the passenger was greatly frightened, he gave him a reassuring smile. The passenger made his way back to others and said, "I have seen the face of the pilot, and he smiled at me. All is well. Do not be afraid."

In Psalm 4:6 David sings, "Let the light of your face shine on us." The best translation of that phrase "light of your face" is "smile." God is in control of this universe and we should be looking for His smile. In the midst of pain and evil the Bible says, "The One enthroned in heaven laugh!" (Psalm 2:4) There is no panic in heaven, only plans. God is good and He's watching. God is good and He's listening. God is good and when you're seeking His face, He's smiling.

Erma Bombeck once wrote about sitting in church and watching a squirming child several pews in front of her as he turned around and looked at everybody with a big smile on his face. His smile was infectious and soon Erma and everyone around her were smiling. Then the mother jerked the child around and whispered, "Stop that grinning, you're in church!" Erma said she wanted to take that little boy in her arms and say, "Go ahead, son, smile...because our God is a God who smiles and He loves to see His children smile."

Do you realize just how much God cares for you? Jesus told His disciples God notices when a single sparrow falls to the earth. Then He said, "Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows." (Luke 12:7)

Exactly 100 years ago, Civilla Martin wrote the words to a song that is still true: "I sing because I'm happy. I sing because I'm free! His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me!"

Have a good day—because God is good and He's watching you. Have a good day—because God is good and His ear is attentive to you. Have a good day—God is good and He has invited you to seek His face. Every day *can* be a good day—because God is good!

OUTLINE

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I. SENSE GOD'S EYES WATCHING ME

"For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him." *II Chronicles 16:9*

II. SPEAK IN A WAY THAT PLEASES GOD'S EARS

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"Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips." Psalm 141:3

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III. IT'S A GOOD DAY WHEN I SEEK GOD'S FACE FOR MY DECISIONS

1. When I sin, I lose sight of God's face

"Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you."
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2. When I see God's face I know that I'm on the right path

"For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." *II Corinthians 4:6*



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes