

## INTRODUCTION

Today we're going to be talking about eyesight and something even more important—spiritual eyesight. Do you have 20/20 vision? Here's a few questions to get you thinking about eyesight. Do you know what perfect eyesight is for a Martian? 20/20/20. Or, what do you call a fish with no eyes? A fsh. Did you hear about the lady who returned a pair of eyeglasses she had previously bought for her husband? She said, "These don't work, because my husband still can't see things my way."

This message is entitled, "I'll SEE it when I BELIEVE it." Of course, it's based on the familiar expression, "I'll believe it when I see it." It's the common statement of a skeptic. They have to *see* something *before* they'll believe it's real. When I moved to Tyler 17 years ago, I started hearing about a Loop 49 that would soon surround Tyler and alleviate the traffic on Loop 323. But when I asked some people about it, their response was, "I'll believe it when I see it!" Well, we're seeing sections of it—but it's two lanes, and a toll road! When it comes to road construction, you might have good reason to say, "I'll believe it when I see it!"

Sadly, many people adopt that same attitude in regard to spiritual matters. They have a hard time believing in God or the Bible because they want to see evidence before they believe. When you tell them there is a God who loves them, they say, "Oh, yeah? Well, I'll believe in God when I can see empirical evidence that He exists."

But the Bible teaches you must embrace the exact *opposite* attitude. In order for you to experience the blessings of Almighty God, you must say, "I'll SEE it when I BELIEVE it."

If you wait until you see something before you believe, you will never believe. But if you believe first, then what you believe will be seen when you learn to use the eyes of faith.

2 Corinthians 4:16–5:1. "Therefore [always go back and see what the "therefore" is there for! In verse 15 we see that since God's grace is expanding, then...] we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 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...[chapter breaks weren't added to the Bible until the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Sometimes these breaks actually confuse the truth. Paul is talking about fixing our eyes on the unseen and he continues] Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands."

In this message, I want us to do what the scripture says and "fix our eyes not on what is seen, but what is unseen." Does that sound contradictory to you? How can you see things that are unseen? Simple, by using your spiritual vision instead of your physical vision. That's difficult for us to do because we've looked through our physical eyes for so long we've come to believe the only things that are real are the things we can see with our physical eyes. But you can't always trust what you see even with your physical eyes!

When I was in high school, I won our school's annual science fair by doing a project on perception and optical illusions, and since then I've been fascinated with optical illusions. When you see something with your physical eyes, your brain interprets the input—but your brain can be easily fooled by what you see. For instance, look at this picture on the screen. (Appendix A) You may think the circles are moving, but I assure you they are all stationary. If you don't believe me, just try concentrating on the center of one of the circles, and you'll see that the others stop swirling. Your eyes and brain are interpreting something that isn't real. Here's another one. This shape (Appendix B) seems to be growing larger, but I assure you it isn't moving, and it is staying the same size. Again, you can't trust what your eyes tell you. Finally, look at this third example (Appendix C) the small squares seem to be shifting, but they aren't moving at all. To prove it, try focusing on the very center of the picture, and when you do, the squares stop moving.

Your eyes aren't playing tricks on you—your brain is. Ophthalmologists call this "lateral inhibition." That means the eyes throw away much of the input they receive and rely on the brain to fill in the gaps. So since our physical vision can be fooled, we need to learn there is a more reliable way to see reality: Through eyes of faith. There are three important truths mentioned in this passage of scripture that you can only see when you look with your spiritual eyes of faith.

## **1. SEE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOUR BODY AND YOUR SPIRIT**

Verse 16 says, "outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day." God created you in His image: You are a tri-unity. You are body, soul, and spirit. Your body is the physical flesh that you wear. Your soul is your personality, the part of you that relates to other people. Your spirit is the inner sanctum where you connect with God. The way you know you are a Christian is when your spirit has been made alive by God's Spirit. Romans 8:16 says "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."

But within your tri-unity of body, soul, and spirit, there is also a two fold division—your "outer person" (your body) which can be seen.; and your "inner person" (soul and spirit) which cannot be seen. Here are the differences between the physical you and the spiritual you.

### **(1) Your body gets old and eventually dies**

Verse 15 says "outwardly we are wasting away." That just means your body is wearing out. You start dying the moment you are born. People are doing everything they can to live longer and longer and that's fine. The longer we're on this planet the longer we can serve the Lord. But many people are trying to extend their life merely to postpone death because they're afraid of what will happen when they die. (That's next week's lesson). Whenever we meet someone who lives a long time, we want to find out their secret. I heard about a man who turned 100 and on the morning of his centennial celebration, reporters gathered around him to ask him the secret for long life. He said, "I never drank, I never smoked, I never partied, and I was home in bed by eight o'clock every evening. At that moment the reporters heard a ruckus in the next room. The reporters asked, "Who's that?" The 100 year old man said, "Oh, that's just my dad coming in after drinking and partying all night!" Long life is most often the result of good genes.

Even if you feel healthy, you've got to admit the older you get, the more your physical body wastes away. It gets tired; it gets sore; it's harder to get up in the morning. That's just a fact of the nature of flesh; it is temporary and it eventually runs down. But never fear because life is so much more than your physical life.

## **(2) Your spirit stays fresh and endures forever**

This same verse says, "inwardly we are being renewed day by day." What's happening on the outside has nothing to do with what's happening on the outside. Within our spirit, we can experience fresh renewal and strength every day. Have you ever heard the expression, "You're not getting older, you're getting better?" This is literally true in a spiritual sense.

While your body is wearing out, your spirit is growing stronger. The last Concorde flight between England and the U.S. was in 2003. Before they retired the supersonic Concorde, it could fly from London to New York in about 3½ hours instead of the eight-hour trip today. The Concorde flew at a speed of 1,350 mph which is twice the speed of sound. When it flew, the exterior of the plane was subjected to immense heat and pressure. In flight the exterior of the Concorde was 216 degrees, and the fuselage actually expanded in length by 10 inches when it was in flight compared to when it was on the ground. This tremendous pressure and heat led to structural fatigue and problems with the maintenance of the aircraft. But while the exterior was under great pressure, the interior space was maintained at a cool 69 degrees and the passengers sat in comfort and luxury. Since they were traveling faster than sound, the cabin was extremely quiet. Outwardly, the plane was under great stress, but inwardly, it was cool and quiet. That's a picture of us. Outwardly, we are under great pressure and strain, but inwardly we are at peace and even getting better and better.

One of the first choruses I learned is still one of my favorites: "Every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before. Everyday with Jesus I love him more and more. Jesus saves and keeps me, and He's the one I'm living for. Everyday with Jesus is sweeter than the day before." I really believe that.

## **2. SEE THE TRUE NATURE OF YOUR TROUBLES**

When you look through eyes of faith, you'll look at your troubles in a totally different way. Verse 17 says, "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all."

Once again, let me show you how we sometimes don't see things clearly with our physical eyes. Let me give you a quick eye test. I'm going to show you a statement and you count how many times the letter "F" appears. Ready? **FINISHED FILES ARE THE RESULT OF YEARS OF SCIENTIFIC STUDY COMBINED WITH THE EXPERIENCE OF YEARS.** Did you say "three?" Most people do. But actually, "F" appears six times. For some reason the brain just automatically skips the little word "of" and we don't even notice it. We can be fooled when we look at troubles from an earthy perspective as well. When you look through eyes of faith there are two things you'll see about the true nature of your troubles.

### **(1) Earthly troubles are only a temporary inconvenience**

Paul used the word “momentary” to describe our troubles. Have you ever been watching television and suddenly the picture goes out and the message comes on the screen, “We are currently experiencing technical difficulties. We apologize for the temporary inconvenience, please stay tuned.” In most cases, in a few minutes, the picture will be restored. Compared to eternity, any pain and suffering we must endure here is only a temporary inconvenience. Even if you suffer for years, in the light of eternity, it’s only a moment.

Verse 16 says we don’t lose heart—why? Because our troubles are momentary. What kind of troubles are you facing right now? You should say, “This is only for a moment. This is only a temporary inconvenience.” Whatever you’re going through won’t last long. It’s a like a storm that passes in the night. Storms don’t last forever. Your financial struggles aren’t eternal. Your sickness isn’t eternal. Your pain of betrayal and rejection won’t last forever. The grief over the death of your loved one isn’t eternal. Start looking at your troubles as temporary inconveniences, and you’ll be able to smile when you see hope is just around the corner for you!

### **(2) Earthly troubles are lightweight compared to heavenly glory**

When Paul wrote about “troubles” he wasn’t referring to some minor ailment like a headache or an ingrown toenail. This was a man who had been shipwrecked, beaten, imprisoned, and stoned until they thought he was dead. Yet he wrote our momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. That means the glory that is to come is a lot heavier and more substantial than any problems we’ll ever face.

When you were a kid did you ever get on a see-saw, or a teeter totter? You sat on one end and someone else sat on the other end. If both of you were about the same weight, you could push off and ride up and down. But if you put somebody 200 pounds heavier than you on the other end, then you were going to be stuck up in the air! They outweighed you.

Imagine a see-saw, and one end you put all the troubles you’ll face in this life, all your sickness, your sadness, your pain, your sorrows, and your woes. Pile all of them on: Past, present, and future. Now on the other side of the see-saw, let’s place the eternal glory of being with Jesus. Guess what? The glory of God **OUTWEIGHS** all your problems and trouble!

When you realize your troubles are temporary and they are lightweight compared to glory, then you will start looking at them in a different way. You’ll start seeing them through eyes of faith instead of through the eyes of flesh.

## **3. SEE THE INVISIBLE REALITIES AROUND YOU**

Verse 18 says we should “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.” The word “fix our eyes” is the word *skopos*, from which we get our word “scope.” You may be wondering how you can see something that is unseen. Actually, we do it all the time. There are plenty of things we can see that aren’t visible to the human eye, we just need a scope to magnify our vision. For instance, there are thousands of

stunningly beautiful galaxies out in space we can't see with the naked eye, but because of the Hubble Telescope we can see them now. For instance, one of the most beautiful galaxies in space is the Whirlpool Galaxy, located 23 million light years from earth. When you look through the lens of the Hubble telescope, you are seeing the invisible.

In the same way, there are things far too tiny to see with the naked eye, but with a microscope, they become visible. Here's a picture taken by an electron microscope of pollen spores that have been magnified 1,500X. No wonder they cause us to sneeze!

To see the unseen in the spiritual realm you don't need a telescope or a microscope, you need a faith-o-scope. It is faith and faith alone that allows us to see the unseen. And faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. Here's the difference between the seen and unseen.

### **(1) The visible is here today and gone tomorrow**

The Bible says what we can see is only temporary. This beautiful building we're in will someday be gone. One day Mt. Everest will be leveled. One day the mighty oceans will be evaporated. Those galaxies and constellations will be burned into dust. The schools you see now, they'll all be gone. The hospitals and nursing homes full of hurting people, they'll be gone. The cemeteries you drive by, they're only temporary. All the football stadiums full of people cheering for their teams, gone. The factories full of people working, all gone.

So much of what we consider to be real is here today and gone tomorrow. I sometimes smile when I hear the term "real estate" because the only real things in this world are the spiritual truths we hear and embrace.

Isn't it amazing how much of our time and energy we put into getting, protecting, and enjoying all these temporary things? In a million years, none of these things will matter. Jesus said it this way. "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." (Mark 13:31) He wasn't just talking about the black words printed on the white pages of your Bible either, because some day even this book will be gone. He was referring to the eternal Word of God found in these pages.

### **(2) The invisible is here today and here forever!**

You've heard the expression, "There's more than meets the eye." That is true spiritually. There are spiritual realities around us you just can't see. Now I don't want to spook you, but there are people in this room you can't see. I'm not saying like that kid in the movie "The Sixth Sense," "I see dead people" or anything. But there are people in this room you can't see. For instance, there are three ex-jocks talking about the upcoming NFL games today. At the same time, there are political talking heads sharing their ignorance about the upcoming election. And over here is a western show and cowboys are chasing the bad guys on horses. Do you see it? No? Of course, I'm talking about the invisible television waves passing through this room—all you need is a receiver and a screen and you'd see it.

Have you ever realized there is an invisible spiritual world around us too? You get a glimpse of

it from a great story in the Old Testament from the life of Elisha. In 2 Kings 6 the prophet Elisha and his servant were caught in a trap. Hundreds of Aramean soldiers surrounded them with orders to capture him. Elisha's servant was scared and said, "Oh, what are we gonna' do?!" Elisha said, "Chill out, because those on our side outnumber those on their side." The servant must have looked puzzled as he counted "one, two" and then looked at the Arameans and counted, "one, two, three, four...six hundred...two thousand. What do you mean, Elisha?" Then Elisha prayed a prayer we all should pray. He said, "Lord, open his eyes so he may see." Now the servant wasn't blind, he could see physically. Elisha was asking God to open his spiritual eyes to see the invisible. And the Bible says, "Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha." (2 Kings 6:17) God had stationed His angelic army around Elisha. They were invisible to the servant until God opened his eyes. Would you be willing to pray the same prayer? "God, open my eyes so that I can see the invisible, see the eternal, see what really matters to You."

There are only two eternal elements that we get to interact with in this life. I've already mentioned one: The Word of God. But the other eternal element is people—not their bodies, because even our bodies are temporary. But the souls/spirits of all people are eternal. So it makes sense that we should be investing our time, money and energy in the Word of God and in people. Some will spend eternity in hell, and some will spend eternity in heaven. There are only two eternal destinies for the souls of people. But once you understand immortality of a soul, you'll never look at people the same way again. In a powerful message entitled, *The Weight of Glory*, C.S. Lewis wrote: "There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilization—these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendours." (*The Weight of Glory*)

## CONCLUSION

The only way to see the invisible is to have eyes of faith. Sometimes those people who have suffered the most find it easiest to use their eyes of faith. One of my all-time Christian heroes is Joni Eareckson Tada. Since the time she was 17, Joni has been confined to a wheelchair. But she has become a great Christian artist using her mouth to hold a brush. In addition, she has spoken to millions of people about God's sustaining grace. She sees the difference between her physical body and her spirit. In her own words, here's how she describes her physical condition: "I can barely remember what my life was like before my accident. I was 17, young, healthy, athletic. I was a teenager that took a lot of risks and, when I dove in that shallow water 38, 39 years ago and my head hit bottom and I snapped my neck, little did I realize the different life I would end up leading. I'm paralyzed in all 4 limbs. My hands don't work. I haven't walked a step in 3 and a half decades or more. I feel like I'm sitting on a block of concrete from my collarbone down. I don't know how to describe it other than that."

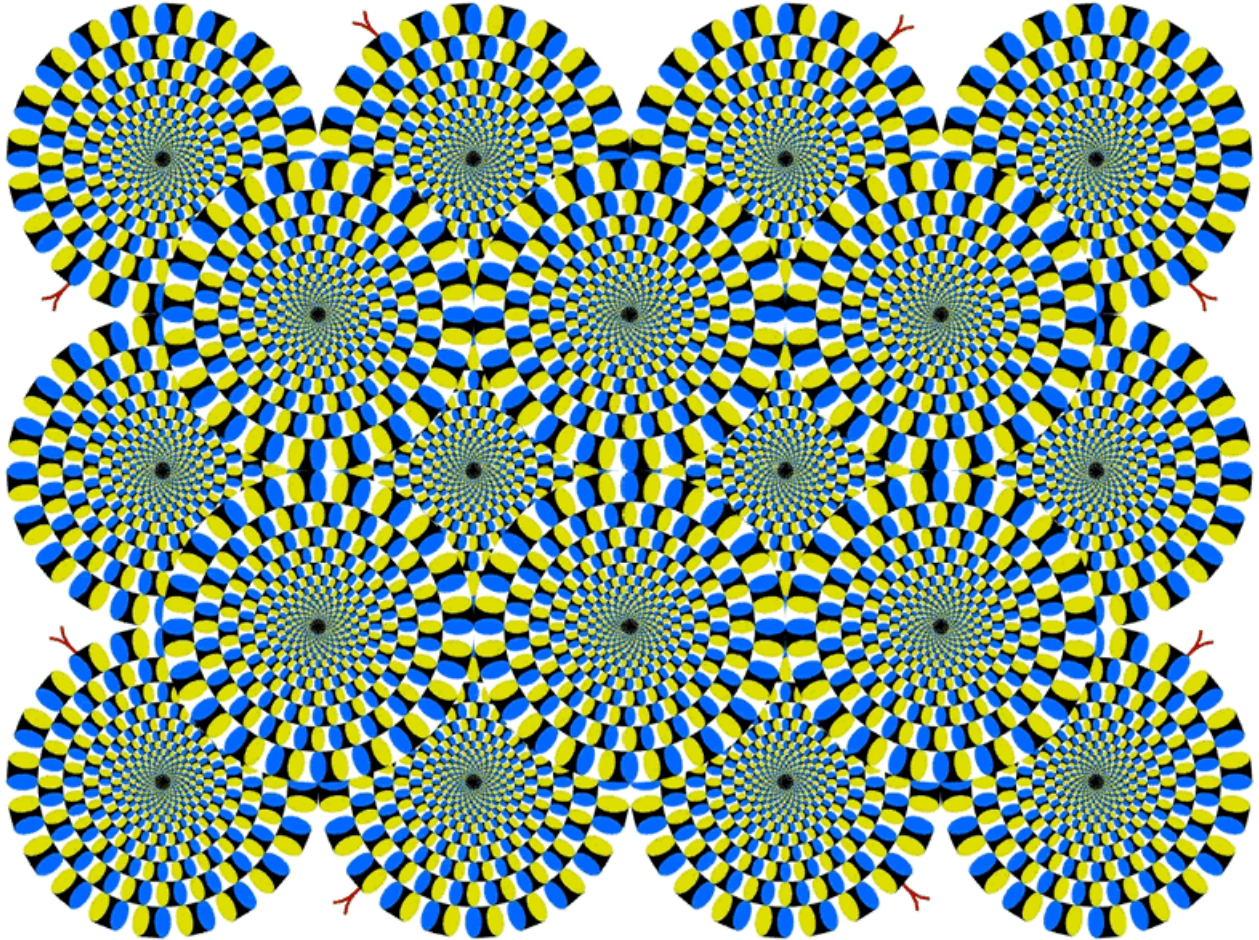
But God has given Joni the ability to see the unseen. She understands the temporary, lightweight nature of her troubles: "Whatever troubles are weighing you down are not chains. They are featherweight when compared to the glory yet to come...I wish I could take to heaven my old, tattered Everest & Jennings wheelchair. I would point to the empty seat and say, 'Lord, for decades I was paralyzed in this chair. But it showed me how paralyzed You must have felt to be

nailed to Your Cross.' At that point, with my strong and glorified body, I might sit in it, rub the armrests with my hands, look up at Jesus, and add, 'the weaker I felt in this chair, the harder I leaned on You. And the harder I leaned, the more I discovered how strong You are.'" Joni has her eyes firmly fixed on the unseen. She refuses to be defined by her physical disabilities. She can already SEE what she will be because she BELIEVES it.

Can you see it? Look! Look at the difference between your physical body and your spirit - start concentrating on the inner renewal that's happening day by day. Start looking at your troubles with eyes of faith. What you're going through is momentary and featherweight compared to the glory you're going to share! And stop staring at all these things that are going to be gone one day. Fix your eyes on Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. Like Elisha will you pray, "Open the eyes of my heart, Lord. Open the eyes of my heart. I want to see you!"

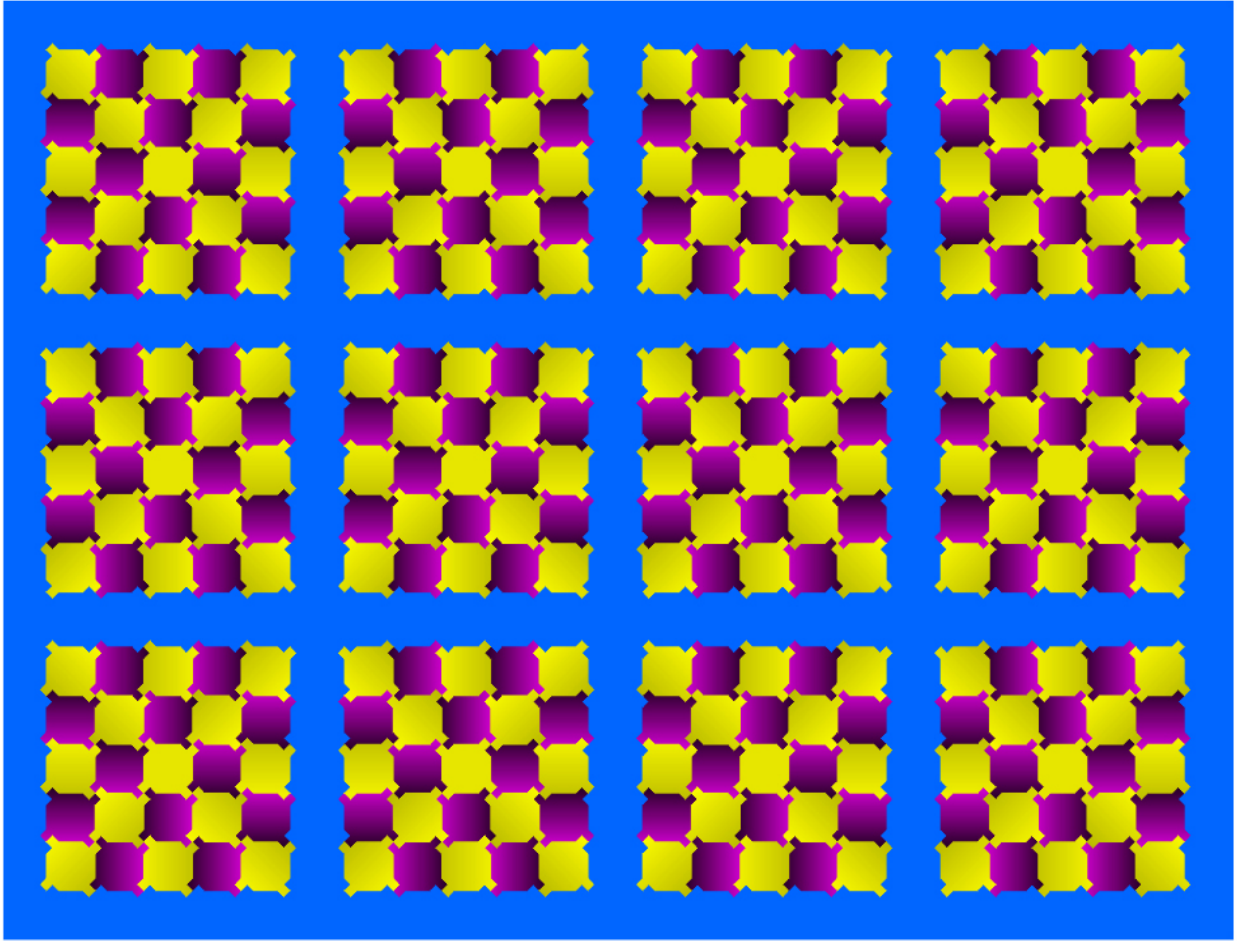
Don't wait until you see it to believe it. You'll SEE IT WHEN YOU BELIEVE IT!

## APPENDIX: OPTICAL ILLUSIONS

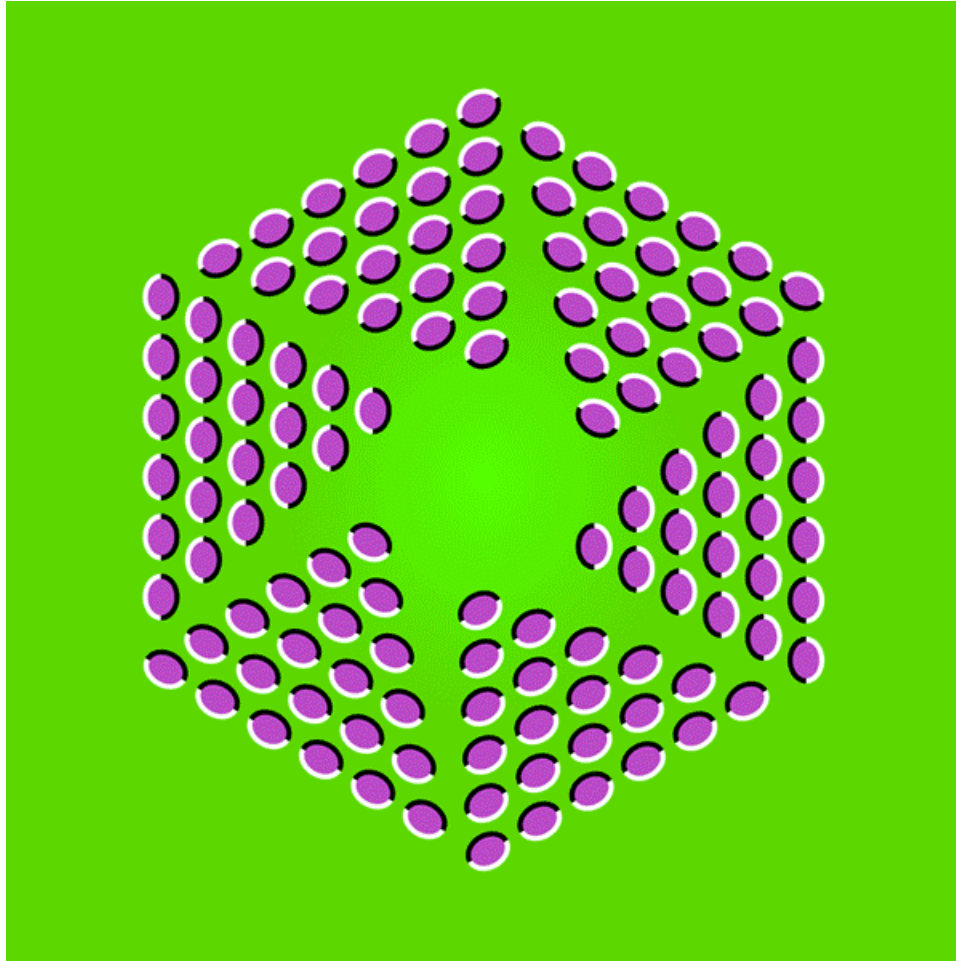


Appendix A





Appendix B



Appendix C

## OUTLINE

### 1. SEE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOUR BODY AND YOUR SPIRIT

"outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day." vs. 16

- (1) Your body gets old and eventually dies
- (2) Your spirit stays fresh and endures forever

### 2. SEE THE TRUE NATURE OF YOUR TROUBLES

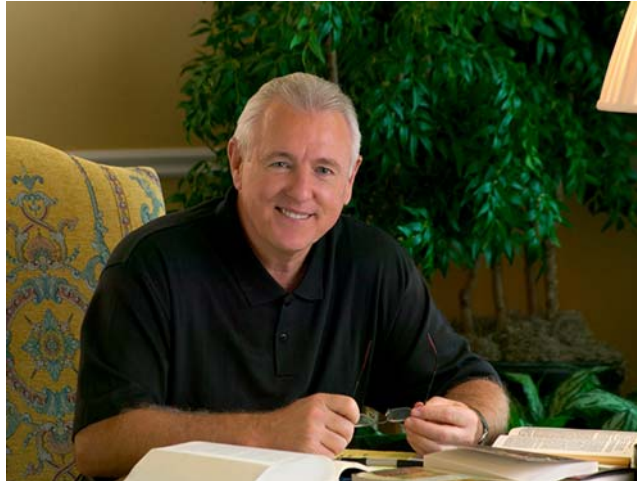
"For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all." vs. 17

- (1) Earthly troubles are only a temporary inconvenience
- (2) Earthly troubles are lightweight compared to heavenly glory

### 3. SEE THE INVISIBLE REALITIES AROUND YOU

"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." vs. 18

- (1) The visible is here today and gone tomorrow
- (2) The invisible is here today and here forever!



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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes