

Pastors Corner

- Philip and Angie Nation
- John Gregory
- Doug and Angela Hull
- Youth Pastor
- Children's Pastor

Deacons

- Rick Bennett
- Mike Golda
- Mark LaRowe
- Claude McGavic
- Kyle Reilly
- Ron Shroyer
- Richard Wood

Cancer

- Susan
- Buddy Wheeler
- Betty Ratliff
- Dan
- Patrick Caldwell
- Corinne
- Joe Conard
- Okai
- Tara
- Gary Clark
- Margaret Frey
- Wyatt Fulghum

Military

Army

- Amber J. Cox
- Col. Scott King
- Sgt Matthew Lowe
- PFC Nathan Meyer
- Zack Cooper

Marines

- Jeremiah Iverson

Navy

- Motte Morrison

Friends & Family

- Nilsa Pizarro-Chronic pain
- Victor Pizarro-Dementia and Parkinson's
- Jeff Nelson- Healing-body, mind and soul!
- Scotty - Pain, health
- Maureen - Considering adoption for newborn twins
- Alaura- Life struggles and difficult decisions
- Will Hutchings - Back surgery
- Ron - Throat surgery
- Conant Carr - Health
- Wyatt Fulghum - Brain cancer
- Phyllis Jones - ALS
- Wess - Heart surgery, stroke
- McKenzie - Lupus (teenager)
- Rodney Potter - Health
- Mack - Open heart surgery
- Marian - Health
- April - Infection after cancer surgery
- Charles - Injuries from 2 Auto accidents in 10 days
- Dennis Powell - Fluid on the lungs
- Rick Schappacher - Surgery

Members

- Betty Huth-Memory issues
- Palm Shores Teams
- Ed Rawsthorne - Infection
- Marcella Fielder-Health
- Maurice Cooper - Spinal stenosis
- Rosner Samma - Recovery
- Sandy & Gordon Boettcher - Health
- Art & Sonja - Health
- Zach Cooper - ARMY
- Mary Gentry - Back surgery
- Jeanette Goins - Fractured spine
- Bill Romine - Health
- Candi Evans - Healing
- Estelle Goldsby - Health
- Hilci Benzing - Pregnancy
- Floyd Bailey - Neck pain
- Gary Clark - Leg healing
- Debi Clark - Health
- Julie Kerber - Health
- Barbara Almandinger - Eye surgery
- Margaret Bryant - Stroke

Shut Ins

- Phyllis Murphy
- Thelma Weese
- Barbara Johnson
- Harold Douberly
- Jean Basehore
- Margaret Bryant
- Paula Johnson
- Melba Gentile
- Charlie Elmore
- Doris Miles

Salvation

- Hilary G
- Chris and Troy Pettit
- Betty Lidster
- Todd and Terri Heasley
- Christie Galase
- Chris, Gracie and Cameron Hill
- Kim Harding
- Bob Fisher
- Christina and Jennifer
- Levi and Calvin Blair
- Jerry McAninch
- Steve Bell's family
- Josh Conard
- Susie
- Nik Knoth
- Brenda Smith
- Bobby Williams
- JR
- Idelle Bee
- Herb Frith
- Meri and Krishna
- Todd Center
- Brent Shearl
- Zachary and Nicole
- Jim Evans
- Bob Luersen
- Joel Grimm



Watchman
prayer alert

On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed a watchman...
—Isaiah 62:6

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The Secret of Spiritual Success

Defender of the Faith

Stephen, the great defender of the faith, was on trial before the religious elite who were hell-bent on a conviction for blasphemy. The man of God knew his odds. He saw the murder in their eyes. More than once he'd witnessed the martyrdom of his friends. He knew the political climate among the Jewish community was hostile towards the growing Jesus movement of his day. But none of this captured his attention on that eventful day.

He eloquently defended the faith with a lengthy discussion about the history of his people that led up to the life and death of his Savior, Jesus the Christ. At the point where he accused the Jewish leaders of being stiff necked and resisting the work of the Holy spirit, their venomous rage exploded. They drove Stephen from the city to stone him.

Stephen was not naive. He knew he was headed for his execution. Yet, he didn't focus on the murder in the eyes of the Sanhedrin or the rocks being hurled at his head. He was full of the Holy Spirit, and he set his gaze intently on heaven. He saw the light in the midst of the darkness. He saw Jesus in the middle of the storm. In that very moment he saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at God's right hand.

In the midst of the rain of rocks Stephen cried out, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." Forgetting the pain of his own torture and transfixed by the glory before him, Stephen was even able to say, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"

When he no longer had the physical strength to stand, he fell to his knees, and he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!"

Read the account for yourself in Act 7. In the face of darkness and death, Stephen fixed his eyes on the spiritual realm and actually saw the heavens open. Instead of focusing on his own pain, he locked eyes on the Creator and witnessed the glory of God. Let us together consider where we intentionally fix our own gaze in difficult times.

Lame Man's Expectation

Peter and John, pillars of the early church, were headed to the temple for their regular prayer meeting when a crippled man called out to them. That poor man had been lame from birth and sat daily at the temple gate to beg. Because of his condition, he was not allowed to enter into the temple itself. He had his pitch perfected. He relied on the charity of temple goers in order to subsist.

He spotted Peter and John and must have figured they would offer some change. “Can you spare a dollar for a crippled man?”

Peter and John didn't ignore the man and continue on their way. Instead, they “fixed their gaze” on him. Then they commanded the man, saying, “Look at us.”

Surely the man had seen them. He's the one who initiated the conversation. So Peter wanted something more. Peter commanded his full attention. “Look at us!” At that point, the lame man began to search their face and focus on Peter and John. He fully expected to receive something.

Peter and John had no money, but they freely gave what they had. “In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!”

He must have reached up, because they took him by the hand and helped him to stand. Immediately he was healed and began to walk and leap and praise God. For the first time, he could enter the temple to pray.

You can read this story in Acts 3:1-8. Consider this. A man sat in his misery every day, knowing no other life. Watching others milling around, he couldn't even stand. Where was his focus? At what point did the situation change? It appears that his reality didn't change until his focus shifted from his physical reality to the Light of the World that he could see radiating from the men who had been with Jesus. Heaven invaded earth the moment the lame man fixed his gaze intently on the hope offered by the men of God. Where is our focus?

The Eye of the Storm

After a long day of ministry, Jesus got into a boat with the disciples as they headed across the sea. Sometime later gale-force winds picked up and threatened the craft. These hearty fishermen were afraid for their own lives. This was a fierce storm with some wicked waves. They woke up Jesus who was sleeping in the bottom of the boat. At wit's end, they cried out, “Save us, Lord; we are perishing!”

Jesus asked them why they were afraid. He wanted to know what happened to their faith. At that point,

He yawned and rebuked the storm. Instantly, the sea became calm.

Then, the fearful disciples wondered just what kind of Man Jesus was that He could command the waves and wind.

Read this account in Matthew 8:18-27. In the midst of the chaos, where did the disciples focus their attention? They knew only what they could do in their own strength. When they finally abandoned hope and gave into fear, they turned their attention to Jesus. The Lord simply spoke peace to the chaos. How often do we see the circumstances and forget that the God of the Universe is right there with us in that same predicament? How often do we focus on the storm instead of the Savior?

A Walk in the Wilderness

God led the Hebrew people out of Egypt with great signs and wonders, but after wandering in the wilderness for a little while, the people began to grumble against both God and Moses. At one point God sent “fiery serpents” among the people, and many died. When the people repented, God gave Moses a prescription for healing. He told Moses to make a bronze serpent and lift it up on a standard. When the people gazed at the serpent, they were healed.

Read this account in Numbers 21:4-9. What caused the people to sin? They focused on their circumstances and became disgruntled. What was their salvation? Intent focus on the bronze serpent lifted up on the standard. I believe the serpents are a physical representation of our sin which is causing our death. Jesus took on flesh, the very nature of our sin. He became sin so that we could be healed. He, like the bronze serpent, was lifted up on a standard (the cross). Only when we intently focus our eyes on that cross do we find our own salvation from the sin that threatens to destroy us.

2019 in the Physical Realm

We see nuclear powers on the precipice of war. We are appalled at legislation passed in the House that would prevent doctors from rendering medical attention to babies who survive abortion. Landfills are piled high with all the disposable necessities of our instant generation. Our freedoms are trampled

by the tolerance agenda which is intolerant of Christian beliefs. We are free to say anything we want unless it rubs someone else the wrong way. Entertainment had degenerated to the point that even nature videos promote the atheistic and humanistic agenda.

Slowly, ever so slowly, our own culture has eroded to the point where we as Christians feel like the unwanted fringe. Have you given up listening to the news, because you can no longer believe the depths to which humanity has fallen? Do headlines break your heart? Do you wonder where hope has gone? When our world seems the darkest, what must we do?

Light of the World

Remember, we are the light of the world. When it is darkest, the light shines even brighter. We see the darkness closing in when we focus on the physical realm of our existence. But God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. (1 John 1:5) When our eyes are fixed on Jesus, our heart is at peace in Him, even in the midst of the chaotic storm. The question then becomes: how do we keep our eyes trained on the Light when our mortal bodies experience the terrors of darkness first hand?

The secret of seeing the Light is training our gaze. We must constantly force ourselves to focus on Jesus and not on circumstances.

The author of Hebrews give us plain instructions on how to overcome. He said, “*Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, ‘My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprovved by Him; for those whom the Lord*

loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.’” (Hebrews 12:1-6)

Not only must we intently focus on our Savior, but we also intentionally lay aside ANYTHING which would hinder our view of Him. If Jesus who was God incarnate suffered while in this mortal body, how can we expect to escape hardship? Jesus focused on the end result, His joy. It was the only way He could face the torture and the cross.

The challenges which God allows in our lives are for our development. He refines us like gold, which is purified by fire. He trains us, because He loves us. Even when we walk through the trial, we never walk alone, for He is always with us in that crucible.

King Solomon also instructed his son regarding his direction and his focus. Solomon wrote:

“My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your sight; keep them in the midst of your heart. For they are life to those who find them and health to all their body. Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life. Put away from you a deceitful mouth and put devious speech far from you. Let your eyes look directly ahead and let your gaze be fixed straight in front of you. Watch the path of your feet and all your ways will be established. Do not turn to the right nor to the left; turn your foot from evil.” (Proverbs 4:20-27)

In other words, we are to intentionally meditate of these words, always keeping them in clear view. We must guard our hearts, because our affections are prone to wander. It is only natural to struggle with the physical nature we are wrapped in. But we are so much more than the physical body we inhabit. Our eternal soul is spiritual and endures long after the physical body decays.

Our charge it to look straight ahead, not to the right or the left. Watch where we put our feet so we will not stumble. If we are to be victorious in our faith, we must firmly fix our focus, our gaze, our eyes on our Redeemer and the joy that is set before us. Rather than grumble, let us remind each other that even in the midst of trials and suffering, we are more than conquerors.

Fix your eyes on Jesus.