



Vision

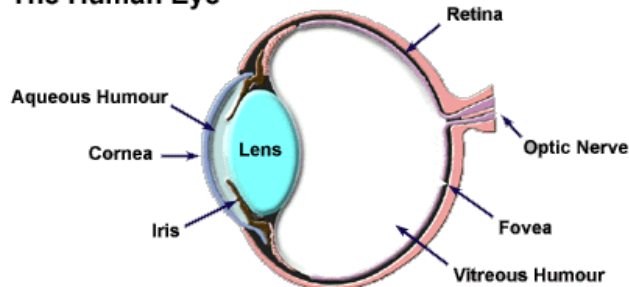
"the vision is yet for an appointed time" (Hab 2:3)

One day someone who evidently felt sorry for Helen Keller was reflecting her

miserable mute and blind condition. That person somehow communicated the idea that it must be horrible to have been born without the gift of sight. Helen Keller replied, "The greatest gift that God ever gave to humanity was not sight but vision!"

Helen's point was that vision is a function of the heart and not of the eyes. The key to successful living is our ability to see beyond what our eyes can perceive! Human vision is the capacity to see beyond sight!

The Human Eye



We live in the most fortunate generation because it has been the recipient of great vision! Think for just a moment of the great vision that permeated the thoughts of the individuals in the short list which follows:

Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Edison, Albert Einstein, Henry

Ford, the Wright Brothers, Alexander Graham Bell, John Deere, George Eastman, Philo Farnsworth, Bill Gates, Charles Goodyear, Guglielmo Marconi, Samuel Morse, and Nikola Tesla. The point is that these individuals were people of vision! True vision is seeing the future before it comes into being! Without vision, our future would look just like the past. However, for the first time in history, our generation does not look anything at all like the past! It is no longer a horse and buggy world. Think of all of the marvelous creations that have come about just during our generation! The laptop & desktop computer, rockets & space travel, etc. In all of these advances vision and not sight has been the source of innovation, transformation and progress!

Our English New Testament often employs the word "vision." That word ultimately comes from the Greek word "*optikos*." Most of us realize that the English word "optics" is the science that deals with light. Further, most of us realize the concept that "light" showed up on the first day of creation, "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Gen 1:3). Whereas the sun which produces every physical manifestation of light, as we know it, appeared on the fourth day, "And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night" (Gen 1:14). The whole point is that the light that showed up on the first day was the illumination of God. In contrast, the light that showed up on the fourth-day became the only awareness of light of which the natural man is fully conscious.



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However, the fourth-day light was merely a physical manifestation of God’s original illumination!

What is the difference between the two lights? Simply stated, if you live merely by the sight of your eyes (*vision produced by the light of the 4th day*) you will always be limited in your vision (*the illumination of the 1st day*). Eyes that look are common; but eyes that see are rare. In this Bible Study we are going to examine the Biblical difference between sight and vision.

We have learned that, “the *invisible* things of him from the creation of the world are clearly *seen, being understood by the things that are made*” (Rom 1:20). This emphasizes that there should be a connection between seeing and understanding. Therefore let us spiritually comprehend the physical eye in order that we may be able to better understand the depth of vision.

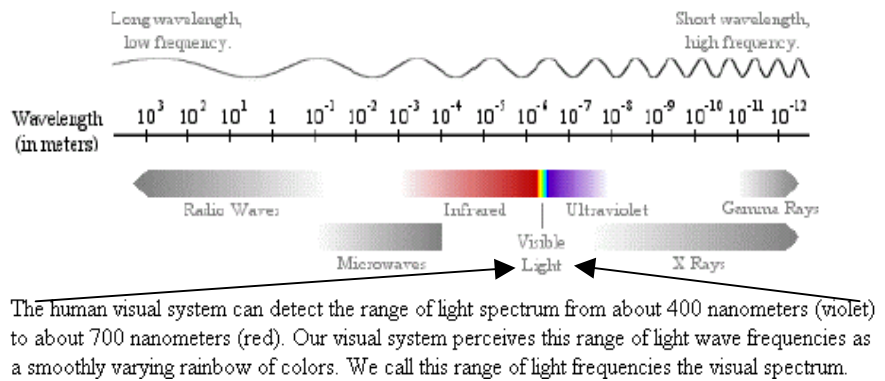
Light does not make an object real; rather, it simply makes that object visible. In actual fact, normal light is invisible until it strikes an object. God’s first created component was light, “And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. 4 And **God saw the light**, that it was good” (Gen 1:3-4). Notice that God could see the light; yet, there was nothing physical upon which the light could reflect! God created light before any physical thing. Any object is of no value unless there is a mechanism with which to perceive that thing.

Let’s consider some Biblical verses which reveal the significance of light. John the Baptist was sent to bear witness of the Messiah who turned out to be, “the **true Light**, which **lighteth** every man that cometh into the world” (John 1:9). Jesus himself said, “**I am the light of the world**: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have **the light of life**” (John 8:12). Therefore, the true light of God is not a physical essence out of the earth’s electromagnetic spectrum that reflects upon substance and thereby causes revelation of the thing upon which it shines!

Human eyes require light in order to detect any object. Things may certainly exist even without light or vision. Is what we see *all* there is to see? Not necessarily.

There is a world brightly illuminated by infrared

light. We live in this world, but we can't see it. They just cannot be seen. Some objects even have the ability to see heat, this requires special infrared detectors which must be cooled with liquid nitrogen or other elements that can get well below 0 C. In the same way that the inside of a camera has to be dark, the body of an IR detector intended to detect heat must be very cold. Just like the physical world hides secrets invisible to the natural eye, there are spiritual objects which are not visible with out the light of Jesus Christ! “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).



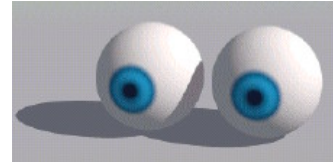


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In the same fashion, human vision requires more than light, and some object; vision also requires an eye to see. What are some characteristics of the eye? It is worthless without

light and an object to reflect that light. As we understand this let’s consider what Jesus said, **“The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. 23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness”** (Matt 6:22-23). The only way that we can have an eye that is spiritually sound is by, **“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith”** (Heb 12:2). Notice two things here! The Bible teaches us to **look to** Jesus; He is supposed to be the lens that we look through. Further, the Bible calls Jesus the **author** and **finisher** of our faith! The ancient prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah both lamented that their people had lack of vision! Notice, **“see ye indeed, but perceive not”** (Isa 6:9); and **“O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not”** (Jer 5:21).



Beyond the eye there are other systems permit humans to see. For example the optic nerve is a necessary part of vision. What is the purpose of the optic nerve? It forms the only path in which information can be relayed as it navigates from the eye to the brain. Without the optic nerve every other element of vision becomes irrelevant. The optic nerve does not create vision on its own; it is simply the conduit of visual information. You can locate your optic nerve (*blind spot*) of each eye by performing the following experiment:



View the above image at arms length, look at the cross and cover your right eye. Slowly move your head closer to the page, keeping your vision focused on the cross, but pay attention to the dot in the corner of your eye. As you move closer the dot will appear to vanish. This is because the dot is now over the blind spot on the retina of your left eye and your visual system is filling in the gap with the white color from the surrounding page.

Your brain just integrated information concerning the optic nerve (*blind spot*). By integration, I mean that it filled in the point of the optic nerve or “blind spot” with surrounding information (*the appearance of white*). In essence, your brain lied to you; it caused you to believe that its blind spot actually saw white! With that information, let’s realize that our human brain integrates understanding and perception into what we call knowledge. The brain is our physical center of information and intellect. It compiles the information from visual and other sensors and processes the information into understanding. Our brain is a powerful tool useful for understanding; nevertheless, because our brain can lie to us we must consider the following Biblical warning regarding human understanding: **“lean not unto thine own understanding”** (Prov 3:5); “seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and **not understand**” (Mark 4:12); “the peace of God, which **passeth all understanding**, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:7). From these verses we naturally realize that understanding is very important human quality; however, we need to be careful to focus (*through the lens of Jesus and his word*) upon spiritual understanding rather than mere human understanding. We already know that our physical center of understanding can give us false information.



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We are going to learn from our natural eyes that it is important to discern all things with a spiritual heart. Notice the first incomplete object that God identified in His perfect creation, "the LORD God said, It is ***not good*** that the man should be ***alone*** (*the man was at this point in time still incomplete*)" (Gen 2:18). Adam was perfectly made in every way; nevertheless, God did not form him in such a fashion that he was perfectly able to properly function all by himself! Therefore God said, "I will ***make him an help*** meet for him" (Gen 2:18). Through this important example we must realize that God did not intend for any person to function all alone! God told him ***while he was still alone***, "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it" (Gen 2:17). This became a private vision for Adam. Nevertheless, notice Eve's words to the serpent, "the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: 3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, ***Ye shall not eat of it***" (Gen 3:2-3). Here Adam's private vision had also become a corporate vision for both!

The lesson for us is that our God-given vision likewise turns out to be both personal and corporate. Every God-given private vision is also attached to His corporate vision that we all share. We need to realize that we are all part of the Creator's ultimate vision. Jesus was the creator, "For ***by him*** were all things ***created***" (Col 1:16). Notice His own commission, "And he said unto them, ***I must preach the kingdom of God*** to other cities also: for ***therefore am I sent***" (Luke 4:43). Jesus incorporated (*made a corporate vision*) His Church within His own commission, "Go ye therefore, and ***teach all nations***, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 ***Teaching them*** to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt 28:19-20). The Church's great ***commission*** is a part of His ***mission*** given to us so that we can (*co*)operate (*work together*). Jesus claimed that His job was to preach the kingdom of God!

Let's recognize how our God-given vision turns out to be both personal and corporate. We will read how Esther recognized through Mordicai's words that her personal vision was associated with the nation's corporate vision. Mordicai said, "if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews ***from another place***; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and ***who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?***" (Est 4:14). If Esther had chosen not to lend her support, God would have found another way of escape for His people; nevertheless, she accepted her private vision and became the perfect vessel for her people!

People sharing a corporate vision add quality to the vision. It is like common eyes viewing an object. Notice how shared vision brings about the appearance of depth.



The other technique is called parallel viewing, where the left image is meant for the left eye, and right image is meant for the right. To see this illusion you must look through the picture, again trying to form a third image in the center (although this time the third image will look further away). This technique asks your eyes to position themselves as if staring off into the distance, yet at the same time asking the lenses in your eyes to focus on the actual images at their real distance. Parallel image pairs are quite small because the distance between the two images can't be further apart than the distance between your eyeballs.



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Like Esther, Joseph experienced both personal and corporate vision through his involvement with his brothers. They had sold him into slavery because he openly expressed his own private vision and they did not appreciate their personal state of affairs as described by his vision. Consequently, he departed in bonds for Egypt; however, his personal vision (*purpose*) turned out to be directly tied to the salvation (*corporate vision*) of all of his brethren, **"ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive"** (Gen 50:20). Joseph's personal vision became directly tied to his brother's corporate vision.

When Moses first became acquainted with his personal vision, he jumped the gun and killed some Egyptian taskmasters. As a result, he fled from Egypt and went to the backside of the dessert where he became completely familiar with his own personal vision. Nevertheless, Moses' private vision did not remain private! Many others including: Aaron, Eliezer, Miriam, Joshua, and indeed the whole nation of Israel became part of the corporate vision, **"I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; 2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea"** (1 Cor 10:1-2). Everybody in the nation joined with Moses as his personal vision become part of their corporate vision! We all have a personal and corporate vision.

So what is your personal vision? Biblical vision in your life is a spiritual manifestation of your purpose; it is the creator's specific assignment for your life. When you begin to discover your personal vision you can expect to be overwhelmed by that vision! The magnitude of the vision is actually a confirmation that the vision originates with God. Vision becomes our source of courage, when we can see our future it will give us courage to act out whatever is required during our present circumstances.

Many Christians have discovered their personal vision. Like Joseph, a visionary leader tends to aggravate everyone around him because his vision is generally all that he talks about. The visionary understands that some people read history while others make it. Often people tell the visionary, "Okay, alright already; its time to come back to reality!" In actual fact, what we will learn is that the visionary's future has essentially become more of a reality to him than his present. We will also discover that vision renders present conditions into merely a temporary circumstance, **"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, (as merely a temporary condition) despising the shame"** (Heb 12:2).

- Vision creates the leader then the leader creates the vision;
- Leadership without vision is simply management;
- To a visionary leader, their God-given vision has become their reality!

Where does vision come from? Vision should always precede sight. Vision actually existed before sight, **"Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, 10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: 11 Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, ***I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it***" (Isa 46:9-11). God is essentially saying, "I don't begin with the beginning, I speak of the end of things first! ***"Declaring the end from the beginning."***"**



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He goes on to say, "Whenever I begin something, that beginning instant is proof that the end is already finished!" That is why Jesus tells us, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last" (Rev 22:13). This means that God essentially declares to the beginning everything that the end needs to know!

What does this mean for you and for me? Since I have had a beginning, there must be some imperceptible thing ahead which is already finished for me! My personal purpose is an unseen vision, "To every thing there is a season, and **a time to every purpose** under the heaven" (Eccl 3:1)! My purpose is my personal vision, "The LORD will fulfill **[his purpose]** for me" (Ps 138:8 NIV). God's purpose for me becomes my ultimate **destination**; that is why it is called my **destiny**. Before I ever knew anything about it, it was simply known as **predestination**, "For whom he did foreknow, (*know ahead of time*) **he also did predestinate**" (Rom 8:29)! We can learn to perceive what we are predestined to complete; even our physical eyes teach us that perception of the natural unseen is possible (*notice the night vision equipment at right*).

Once I perceive my personal vision it becomes my purpose. When I see it in my mind's eye it becomes my vision. Jesus understood his ultimate purpose in life, "Thou sayest that I am a king. **To this end was I born, and for this cause came I** into the world" (John 18:37). Mary was told that His name was going to be Jesus (*Yeshoah*)! He fulfilled the purpose for His name, "thou shalt call his name JESUS (*Salvation*)" (Matt 1:21). He fulfilled the



prophecies, "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and **they shall call his name Emmanuel**, which being interpreted is, **God with us**" (Matt 1:23). Jesus' purpose was to become a king in the Kingdom of God; it was to become Salvation for all of humanity; His purpose was to be "God with us!" He has completely fulfilled his purpose!

How powerful is vision? Like the famous inventors, only by seeing what is not there can you birth something new into existence, "we **look not at the things which are seen**, but at the things which are **not seen**" (2 Cor 4:18). Paul writes about Abraham, "(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those **things which be not as though they were**" (Rom 4:17).

My personal assignment existed long before I did; the very fact that a God-given assignment for my life exists is the reason that my mind can perceive it in the first place! God would not give me a vision of something that does not even exist. Everything in between me where I am at present and the completion of my vision is merely temporary! God finished everything before he started; this includes the vision that He has given to me! He would not allow me to see something that was not there, "the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, **5 Before I formed thee** in the belly **I knew thee**; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations" (Jer 1:4-5). Like Jeremiah, you and I were born so that we would have the ability to complete our assignment!

- God gave us vision so we don't have to live by what we see;



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- vision is the capacity to believe what our eyes cannot see and prepare and plan to get there;
- once we understand and wholly pursue our vision our provision will likewise become manifest (*where God guides he provides*).

Let us take a close look at a story out of the bible which emphasizes these exact concepts, "Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the LORD: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen. 2 And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee? tell me, what hast thou in the house? And she said, ***Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil.*** 3 Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels; ***borrow not a few.*** 4 And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full. 5 So she went from him, and shut the door upon her and upon her sons, who brought the vessels to her; and she poured out. 6 And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, ***There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed.*** 7 Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest" (2 Kings 4:1-7). From that lesson we learn that God takes the very little that we possess "***hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil***" and multiplies it according to our vision. Only the total number of vessels that she gathered together limited the amount of miraculous oil (*anointing*) that the woman was able to receive!

Big thinkers achieve great things; therefore, we need to stay closely attached with visionary people. People who are doing nothing want you to hang around and do it with them. My grandmother, Elvira taught my mother who intern taught me the Spanish phrase, "Dime con quien andas; y te digo quien eres." Meaning, "Show me your friends and I will show you your future!" Our associates eventually determine our destiny! It is said that the poorest man in the world is the man without a dream or a vision.

Big thinking precedes great achievement. Nothing worthwhile has ever been done without a vision, "For ***we walk by faith***, not by sight" (2 Cor 5:7). Our vision will teach us that we need to stop making a living and start making a difference!

Solomon wrote, "The poor and the deceitful man meet together: the LORD ***lighteneth both their eyes***" (Prov 29:13). Perhaps the New International Version once again renders a passage a little more clearly; notice, "The poor man and the oppressor have this in common: The LORD gives ***sight to the eyes of both***" (Prov 29:13). What could this possibly mean? They both have vision don't they? Your vision determines your destiny! Eyes are limited to sight; but vision has no boundaries! Let me share with you the story of two young college men . . .

These two young college men went to India and they were appalled at the poverty and squalor! Everywhere they saw people walking around barefoot. The mud and the mess was absolutely unbelievable. One of the young men said can you believe all of these people walking around barefoot; the other young man said can you imagine the possibility for a shoe business! That young man eventually designed and



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manufactured a pair of cheap shoes that the masses in India bought by the millions! We know that young man's name as Thom McAnn, the shoe manufacturer!

Every problem is a business waiting for a solution! Every good business is simply someone's solution to a problem!

Your purpose and my purpose are essentially solutions to some problem! We were born right on time to solve that specific problem!

Vision has an impact; it clarifies purpose. With vision we can see how we are to proceed. Vision gives us a life of precision instead of just hit & misses approach as we seek solutions.

Like Adam, Joseph, Moses, and Esther, whatever vision God has given us to accomplish will never be possible as long as we act all alone! No man is an island is truly appropriate where God's visions are concerned. We will never have enough money to accomplish what God has given us to do! We will never have enough time or resources to complete that vision! Therefore, my personal vision is part of someone else's corporate vision and someone else's personal vision is part of my corporate vision!



When we discover our vision it will very likely frighten us. Nevertheless, courage comes to life in the face of apprehension. After Joshua timidly discovered his vision, God, "gave Joshua the son of Nun a charge, and said, **Be strong and of a good courage**: for thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land which I swear unto them" (Deut 31:23).

Wise people make choices that protect their vision! Your vision creates natural consequences; it will affect your time and circumstances. The clearer the vision the more restricted your life will become. Vision is the source of our discipline; with vision we become self imposed and we do not need much external motivation. Our vision will motivate us! Once vision has come, the only thing that we find ourselves thinking about is our assignment. Vision will consume our heart because vision is a function of our heart, "A good man **out of the good treasure of the heart** bringeth forth good things" (Matt 12:35).

Every vision in life has clear restrictions. Notice in Matthew what we discover, "Enter ye in at the **strait gate**: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; Because **strait is the gate**, and **narrow is the way**, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt 7:13-14). Vision should cause us to live narrowly.

Successful and visionary people live narrow lives. Their whole lives are focused on what they do! Notice how Paul puts it, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. 13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark (*not marks*) for the prize (*not prizes*) of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus



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mindful: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you" (Phil 3:12-15).

Vision disciplines your life and controls everything important. Once we discover our vision that vision points us toward the future. Vision tells us who our associates will be. Our vision should also dictate our friends. Our friends and especially our advisors should be smarter than we are.

Vision chooses our library and training materials. Our books and magazines and tapes should be indicative of our vision. Everything in our personal library should be something that moves us toward our future.

Vision should also choose our time. It is so easy to just sit down and mindlessly waste our time flipping through the television channels. Even if we do find something that is interesting to watch, how can we be sure that is the best use of our resource of time? How does that use of time get us to our future? Don't get me wrong; some "frivolous" things can be relative to your vision; for example, two hours wisely spent in an inspirational movie may well advance our vision! Librada and I went to see the movie "Seabiscuit." Some may think that movie would be a frivolous waste of my time; however the movie's major underlying theme was a message of, "second chances;" since I have been given a second chance by the God of second chances, that movie was of great inspiration to me!

You become what you spend your time doing! You become what you spend your time doing! You become what you spend your time doing! You become what you spend your time doing!

Your vision should determine how you use your energy. Beware of energy stealers, "All things are lawful for me, **but all things are not expedient**: all things are lawful for me, but **all things edify not**" (1 Cor 10:23). Jesus often stopped doing things abruptly and He always chose where He would spend His energy! The Lord also chose when to rest.

Our energy should be consumed by our vision. Sitting down and listening to a half hour of gossip will never get you to your ultimate vision. Watching two hours of swearing and violence in a mindless action movie will rarely advance you into your vision.

So, what is vision? A vision could be defined as: (1) Vision is an internalized image of a preferable future imparted by God through inspiration in the spirit and heart of a human; (2) Vision is the visual reality in your mind's eye of your purpose for existence; (3) Vision is foresight with insight based upon hindsight.

So how do we ultimately measure our success in this life? Success is only measured according to what we have done based upon what we should have done to the degree that we comprehend our vision from God. Given what we have learned, I echo with Helen Keller,

"The greatest gift that God ever gave to humanity was not sight but vision!"

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