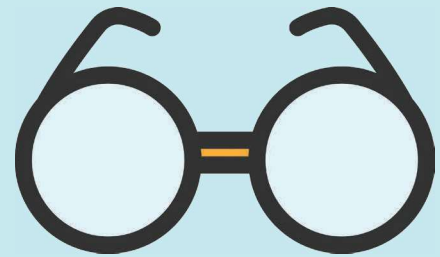
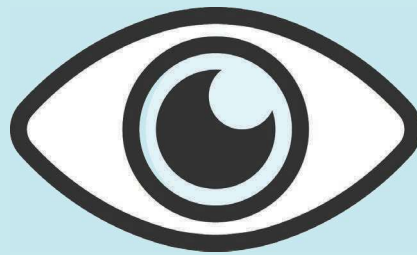
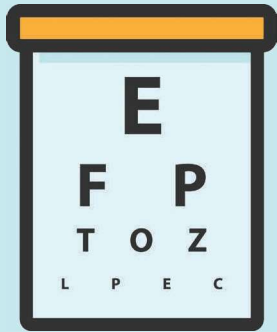


THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A FIGHT



FOR SIGHT

BY JASON MEYER

The Bible includes some stories that seem downright strange. Have you ever read something in Scripture and wondered how on earth it applies to our lives today? The Old Testament book of 2 Kings contains a story so archaic it seems unlikely that we could relate to it nowadays.

At the time the story took place, the nation of Syria was warring against Israel. Every time the king of Syria planned an attack, Israel's king would somehow find out about his plans and thwart them. Exasperated, the Syrian king declared there must have been a spy in his ranks and demanded to know who it was. His servant informed him that there was indeed a spy, but he wasn't from Syria. Instead, the informant was the prophet Elisha, who had been receiving visions of the king's secret plans directly from God and then relaying that information to Israel's king.

As you can imagine, the king of Syria did not take the news well.

One morning, as the prophet Elisha and his servant got up, they encountered a very troubling situation.

When the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. And the servant said, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" (2 Kings 6:15)

Elisha and his servant were going about their regular daily lives when suddenly they were surrounded by one of the greatest armies in the ancient world, the Syrian army. The imbalance of the situation seems almost comical. What were two people against an entire army? When Elisha's servant looked at the Syrian chariots and horses surrounding him, he cried out in despair at their seemingly

hopeless scenario. As we read this story, it's easy to think, "That's interesting enough. But what is the application for me today? I don't have a hostile army forming a siege circle around my home."

You and I may not be staring down an enemy force from a foreign country, but we do face seemingly hopeless circumstances every day. In 2 Kings 6, the dynamics of discouragement are almost perfectly on display. Like Elisha and his servant, we sometimes find ourselves surrounded by difficulties, and that is when the servant's question becomes our question: "What shall we do?" We share the same problem: We are blind to the big picture.

The Danger of Discouragement

Discouragement is a liar, and the danger is that sometimes these lies are hard to spot because of their sophisticated packaging. The distorted lies of discouragement come to us like a wolf in sheep's clothing. They are clothed in half truths because they only get part of the picture right. Here is where the story of Elisha's servant and the Syrian army makes its most powerful point. The servant was right about the reasons to lose heart. There was an army of reasons to be discouraged—literally! But the servant saw only half the story.

Elisha told his despondent servant to look at their circumstances again. He needed to be confronted with the full truth so he wouldn't be discouraged by the half-truth. Elisha told him,

"Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Then Elisha prayed and said, "O Lord, please open his eyes that he may see." So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold,

the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. (2 Kings 6:16–17)

Discouragement can be defeated only when the full truth of everything that is for us confronts and conquers the half truth of fear and despair. When the full truth vanquishes those half-truths, our hearts will be comforted and strengthened. In other words, we can "take heart."

This is the way the Bible speaks of discouragement again and again and again. It does not pretend that the problems are not there; it simply declares that there is more to see. The Christian life is a fight for sight. If all we see is what is against us, the shackles of discouragement will keep us confined to a prison of despair. When we see that the One who is for us is greater than all that is against us, our chains will fall off and our hearts will be free to hope again. Losing heart is easy when the chains of discouragement close tightly around our hearts and choke our hope. But we can take heart when the chains are gone and our hearts set free once again. Seeing the bigger picture is the key to unlocking the chains of despair.

The Dynamic of Discouragement

We lose heart when we believe half-truths because they remind us that there are *real* reasons to become discouraged. Those troubling facts feel compelling when they stand on their own, and it is easy to become overwhelmed by discouragement because the reasons are real.

I have bad news and good news to share. The bad news is that our fallen world is full of many reasons to lose heart, and they are easy to see. It does not take any special skill to recognize the reasons in



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our everyday lives. It does not take faith to become discouraged. We just have to take a look at some of the problems that plague us. Discouragement is a heaviness of heart that comes from feeling the weight of those problems piling up on us.

But here is the good news: The reasons to take heart are greater than the reasons to lose heart! In other words, we can defeat discouragement because it is only a half-truth. Encouragement does not come from wishful thinking but from seeing the totality of truth and embracing what is truly real.

Let's go back to the story of Elisha and his servant. When they were surrounded by enemies, Elisha said, "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them" (2 Kings 6:16). In the same way, encouragement comes when we are convinced that the reasons to take heart are greater than the reasons to lose heart. When we recognize that these reasons are superior, we can take up the biblical battle cry of hope: "We do not lose heart" (2 Cor. 4:1).

Now I have more bad news. Not only are the reasons to lose heart easy to see but the reasons to take heart are harder to see. Vanquishing discouragement is never automatic nor easy. It is a hard-fought *fight for sight*. But why is it hard? Like Elisha's servant, we are often painfully aware of what is *against* us but woefully unaware of all that is *for* us. Even though the reasons to take heart are greater than the reasons to lose heart, the former can often only be seen "by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7).

This is where good news comes back into the picture. The reasons to take heart are actually *more* real than the reasons to lose heart. Now I know that it usually feels the opposite because the things that are physically visible can feel more solid or substantial than the promises of God. But the Bible contradicts that half-truth with this full truth: "The things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18). The things we tangibly see are temporary. The things we cannot see— eternal things—are ultimately more solid and substantial and lasting.

The bottom line in the fight for sight is this: We lose heart when we lose sight of all that we have in Jesus.

When we lose sight of Jesus, we see only half the picture, we believe half-truths, and we are robbed of hope. But as believers, we are called to fight back.

If we belong to Christ, how can we lose our hope? Christ in us is "the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). The fallen world we live in has many reasons to lose heart, but Jesus says to you and to me, "Take heart; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). ■

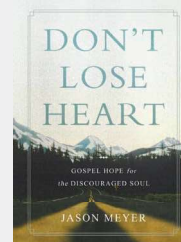
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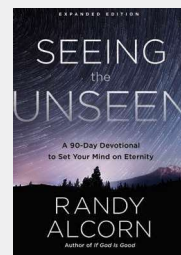


Resources to Help You See Beyond (available on Amazon Kindle)

In *Don't Lose Heart*, Jason Meyer shows us that though the reasons for discouragement seem strong, the reasons we have to take heart and hold on to hope are stronger yet.



Randy Alcorn's 90-day devotional *Seeing the Unseen* equips and inspires readers to live with a right view of eternity that can shape the way we think and live today.



In *Competing Spectacles: Treasuring Christ in the Media Age*, Tony Reinke shares the beauty of Christ, a Greater Spectacle—capable of centering our souls and filling our hearts.

