

# KEEP THY HEART

A Bible-Based Devotional

Turn to: **Revelation 1:1-8**  
“Resetting Our Focus”

Do you ever feel like sometimes you're losing your focus on eternal things, and instead focusing on things down here on earth? I know that's easy for me to do; yet when we start looking around at the boisterous waves around us instead of keeping our eyes on Jesus, that's when we begin to sink (Matthew 14:29-31). I'd like to examine three ways we can get a "check-up" on our spiritual vision to make sure our focus is where it ought to be.

**1: The Word (v1-3).** First, let's check our spiritual "reading" vision, or our near-sighted vision. How well does your heart enjoy reading the Bible? John talks about the *giving* of the Word. This book of the Bible is particularly interesting; it is a **revelation**—a "sneak peak" into the future. This isn't the time for bleary spiritual vision; we should be on the edge of our seats, so to speak. These end time events will happen **shortly**, or like a flash of lightning once it begins. This Word is so important that God has not only **sent** but also **signified** it, as with a stamp from the King's ring (Esther 8:8). In computer programming, there is something called public/private key encryption, where a message can be sent to a specific user and "signed" by the author. If we are saved, the Holy Spirit deciphers God's message to us in a way that's unique and personal, such as when you feel like the Bible was written just for you, or when you feel conviction, as though God is singling you out. We get the same exciting task that **God's angel** has in this passage, who delivered this letter to John; we get to deliver God's Word to the world.

**(v2)** We also see the *components* of the Word. When we share Jesus Christ with others, I think we should use the *written* Word (**the word of God**), referencing Scripture; we should use that to introduce others to the *living* Word (**the testimony of Jesus**

**Christ**), pointing them to the cross and the resurrection and Who Jesus Christ is; and we should back all of this up with a *personal* word, sharing what we **have seen** of Jesus Christ in our own lives.

**(v3)** Finally, we see the *blessing* of the Word. The whole Bible is blessed, but Revelation alone contains this unique **blessing for reading, hearing, and keeping** this book. It is relevant, since **the time is at hand**; it is like an army manual describing how to fight a battle that is about to start (contrast Daniel 8:26).

What are some signs of failing spiritual "reading" vision? Maybe the entire Bible makes no sense to you (I Corinthians 2:14); certainly, many parts are difficult to understand, but if you're a Christian, then the Holy Spirit can help illuminate it to your soul. Or maybe, it seems boring (cf. Psalm 119:18). Sometimes, we can daydream while reading (cf. Psalm 1:2). Or maybe we just don't keep and apply God's Word to our everyday lives (Matthew 13:14). If we have fallen into that trap, it's time to renew our spiritual reading vision.

**2: The benediction (v4-6).** Second, we must test our spiritual "color" vision; we must reset our focus on the benediction and blessings of God. Sometimes we *understand* the Bible perfectly, but it doesn't seem as exciting as it used to be; the zesty flavor seems to have faded over time. It's easy for us to read the Bible in black-and-white, missing out on the deep hues of colorful emotion.

If you are saved, then God's **grace** swept into your heart, fighting evil and bringing lasting personal **peace** with God. Though the hues of earth are drab and dark, yet we serve a God **which is, and which was, and which is to come**, eternal; and the Christian's big-picture world is glorious and incredibly bright on the horizon, even though the here-and-now may be very difficult. The **seven Spirits before God's throne** remind us that God is difficult to figure out! Yet that means He's exciting, too.

**(v5)** Because **Jesus Christ is the faithful witness**, then we know we can trust

His promises; in fact, He has been open with us, as with friends (John 15:15). He is **the first begotten of the dead**, introducing the vibrant colors of green and yellow, colors of life and springtime, defeating death. He is **the prince of the kings of the earth**, meaning He is poised to take over this world soon, full of royal hues of blue, purple, silver, and gold. And He **washed us from our sins in his own blood**; of all the colors, let's never lose sight of the deep scarlet of Jesus' blood, which is the only thing which can wash away our sin.

**(v6)** And these royal colors are for **us** who are saved, who will be **kings and priests** literally! Jesus Christ has all **glory**, with a regal and shining and precious crown on His head; but He also has **dominion** with His powerful sword. A king with glory but no dominion is a sitting target for attack and plunder; and one with power but no glory is militarily secure but drab. But Jesus Christ has both glory *and* dominion. And His kingdom is **for ever and ever**; no one will throw Him out of office, He can't be voted out, and against Him is no successful uprising (Proverbs 30:29-31). The heart of a Christian can say **Amen** to such a glorious future.

How can we tell if our spiritual color vision is failing? Maybe we have understanding without excitement. Roller coaster announcers understand how the machines work, but sometimes they sound bored to death while describing it to excited passengers! Perhaps you are interested in the Bible factually yet have no enthusiasm; you are like a meticulous botanist who looks at a flower without any of the innocent wonder of a child. Or maybe you have knowledge without wisdom; you can quote Bible verses but don't know how to apply the Word to your life. These are warning signs that we need to focus on restoring our spiritual color vision.

**3: The Champion (v7-8)**. Finally, let's reset our focus on Jesus Christ, our Champion. In one sense, this is like our far-sighted vision; we must keep our eyes on Jesus Christ at the finish line (Hebrews 12:1-2), looking to heaven. Everyone will see Him one day, even those who are not looking for Him; I sometimes wonder

whether **those which pierced Jesus** were especially evil, as they are called out specifically. **All kindreds of the earth** are represented in heaven, but all are represented in hell, too; and His return will cause **wailing**, though today the world laughs at Jesus. But **even so, Amen** (Matthew 11:26, Revelation 16:7, 22:20); Jesus is coming back whether people like it or not.

**(v8)** And Who is this Champion? Well, He is **Alpha and Omega**, or A-Z; He has all wisdom. He is **the first and the last**, encompassing all positions, since He is eternal God yet chose to be born in a lowly stable. He is **the beginning and the ending**, encompassing all purpose and goals; and He **is, and was, and is to come**, encompassing all of time; and as **the Almighty**, possessing all power. Certainly, no one else in the universe could meet even one of these statements! Yet Jesus meets all of them.

What are some signs of failing far-sighted spiritual vision? First, despair (II Corinthians 4:8); it's fine to be sad, but despair gives up hope, and God doesn't want us to do that. Or maybe we are weary and fatigued (Galatians 6:9); it's okay to be tired, even really tired, but let's not lose heart. The finish line isn't far away (I Corinthians 7:29-30), though at times it can feel as though it is. Perhaps we are fearful; when Peter looked at the wind and the waves, he began to sink (Matthew 14:30). Let's keep our eyes focused on Jesus Christ and on the reward that awaits us at the finish line.

So how is our spiritual vision? Is our near-sighted reading vision good? Do we enjoy reading God's Word and understand the important aspects of it? How about our spiritual color vision? Does the Bible excite us with colorful emotion, or is it drab and uninteresting, or merely intellectually fascinating? And finally, how is our spiritual far-sighted vision—are we looking forward to heaven and keeping our eyes on our Champion? Let's resolve to keep our spiritual eyes "in shape," and it will help us to live better for Jesus Christ today.