DATE: October 16, 2011
TEXT: II Corinthians 4:16-18
TITLE: "WHERE IS YOUR FOCUS?"
SERIES: Made For More #4
We are made for more than just the temporary.
The transformed life is a shift from the seen to unseen.
The transformed lifestyle is a shift from embracing things that are temporary to embracing things that are eternal.

INTRODUCTION: (* PROP - Little flashlight like doctors use to look into the eyes) I have been to the eye doctor many times. When it is time to physically exam my eyes, the doctor uses a small light. The doctor tells me to look straight ahead, look to the left, look to the right, look up, look down. He wants me to focus my eyes so He can see the condition of my eyes.

Your focus can reveal much about your life**.** The key to the victorious Christian life is all in one's focus. Pastor of one of the largest churches in the world, David Yonggi Cho said: "Show me your vision, and I will show you your future. The transformed lifestyle results from focusing upon the one who transforms. Where are your eyes focused today? Are you focused upon the temporary or the eternal? We are made for more than the temporary things of this world.

Paul said, <u>"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."</u>
<u>(II Corinthians 4:18)</u>

I. (v.18) FOCUS BY <u>FAITH</u> UPON WHAT IS <u>UNSEEN</u>

1. Some things are only seen with the eyes of faith.
2. Many of us have times when we want to see what cannot be seen with human eyes.
3. We want to see what the future will hold.
4. Many want to see what their lives will be like 10 or 20 years from now.
5. Some want to see what the end times will look like and when Jesus will come again.
6. Perhaps some would like to see problems they might face so that by knowing ahead we might avoid them.
7. Many want to know what heaven will look like.
8. Many of us here want to see Jesus.
9. Have you ever had a time when you wish you could see Jesus, sit down and talk to Him face to face and ask Him questions?
10. Faith opens our eyes to see what can only be seen with the eyes of faith.
11. Are you a person of faith?
12. If so, what does your faith allow you to see?
13. Webster's Dictionary describes faith as "a firm belief in something for which there is no proof, complete trust; allegiance to duty or a person."

14. The word “faith” can mean “belief, trust, firm persuasion, or firm conviction,” but in the Bible, it always finds its object in God.
15. The word “faith” is used more often in the book of Hebrews than in any other New Testament book of the Bible.
16. In chapter 11, the word “faith” occurs some 24 times as the writer with undivided attention focuses on faith and its application and relevance for our daily lives.
17. Chapter 11 of Hebrews starts with the words, **“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” (Hebrews 11:1)**
18. The theme of faith in Chapter 11 connects with the previous chapter where quoting from the Prophet Habakkuk, the writer says, **“But my righteous one will live by faith…” (Hebrews 10:38)**
19. True faith impacts the way we live our lives.

ILLUSTRATION: **Nazarene author and former professor of mine, W.T. Purkiser said, “Faith is more than thinking something is true; faith is thinking something is true to the extent that we act on it.”

20. Faith impacts the way we live because of the power of the one our faith is in.

ILLUSTRATION: * Early church reformer, Martin Luther said, “Faith is a living, daring confidence in God’s grace, so sure and certain that a man could stake his life on it a thousand times.” (Martin Luther)

21. Faith takes us beyond the facades of doubt, enabling us to experience the reality of faith.

ILLUSTRATION: * Actor, lawyer, writer, and commentator, Ben Stein said, ”Faith is not believing that God can. It is knowing that God will.” (Ben Stein)

22. Faith rises above doubt.

EXAMPLE: Thomas, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus, has been called the doubting disciple. The other disciples of Jesus had seen the Lord after He had risen from the dead. However, Thomas was not there and had not seen the risen Lord. When the other disciples said, “We have seen the Lord!” Thomas responded, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.” (John 20:25)

23. He was limited in part to what he could see.
24. **Jesus appeared to Thomas a week later, and said to Thomas, “‘Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.’ Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!’” (John 20:27-28)**
25. Jesus confronted the doubts Thomas had head on.
26. However, school was not over yet. “Then Jesus told him, **“Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” (John 20:29)**
27. I believe John is writing to initiate and to confirm faith in the hearts of others.

28. John's purpose is to enable others to experience the blessedness that Jesus has just spoken of, which comes through faith.
29. The purpose of the word of God is to help us to believe with our hearts the things we have not seen with our eyes.
30. Faith takes us past the 'seen' and the 'temporary' of life.
31. Those who have seen provide a foundation for those who have not seen with our own eyes.

"But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:31)

32. The very life of God Himself is made available in the risen Son, Jesus Christ.
33. It is in His name because it is in fellowship with Him through faith that we experience the fullness of life.
34. Faith calls us to go beyond what we can see.
35. **ILLUSTRATION: **The ancient philosopher, Plato observed "There are some truths that are too big to enter by the narrow slit of reason." (Plato)**
36. God's word is given so we can and will believe the things we have not seen with our own eye so that by believing we may have life in His name.
37. **Paul wrote to Rome, "Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the word of Christ." (Romans 10:17)**

ILLUSTRATION: **Commenting on this verse, D.L. Moody, The Billy Graham of his day, said, "I prayed for faith, and thought that some day faith would come down and strike me like lightning. But faith did not seem to come. One day I read in the tenth chapter of Romans, "Now faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." I had closed my Bible, and prayed for faith. I now opened my Bible, and began to study, and faith has been growing ever since." (D. L. Moody)

38. God's word opens our eyes to see what is unseen.
39. The word of God has been given so we might believe.
40. To fix our eyes on what is unseen is to live by faith.
41. Faith takes us into the realm of the unseen.

"So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen." (II Corinthians 4:18)

42. Paul is talking about an act of faith.
43. The verb 'fix' has the force to fix one's gaze upon or to concentrate one's attention upon some object.
44. Sight limits our vision, faith open our eyes to see that limited by sight.

"We live by faith, not by sight." (II Corinthians 5:7)

45. If you believe that Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead, you have a faith that is not limited by what you see.
46. If you believe that your sins are forgiven and that you are living in a right relationship with God, it is because you have a faith not limited by what you see.

47. If you believe in heaven today, it is because you have a faith not limited by what you see.

ILLUSTRATION: When I was a youth pastor, we had a youth choir that traveled around and sang. Years ago, we had a medley about heaven we used to sing. One of the choruses was,
(Snap fingers)
****Words on screen**
"Heaven is a wonderful place,
Filled with glory and grace;
I want to see my Savior's face
Heaven is a wonderful place."

48. If you believe in hell today, it is because you have a faith to believe what is unseen.

EXAMPLE: In the book of Luke, we find the story of Lazarus. Lazarus was a beggar who died. Jesus said, "The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So, he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue because I am in agony in this fire." Abraham replied, '…between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us." The rich man then said, "'Then, I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' 'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'" (Luke 16:19-31)

49. God has given His people His word and His Spirit so we might believe.
50. Faith opens our eyes to see things that are there but cannot be seen with human eyes.

ILLUSTRATION *"If I hadn't believed it, I wouldn't have seen it. (Yogi Berra)

51. Faith doe not speak things into existence, but faith enables us to believe that not seen by those who live by sight alone.
52. The unseen is no less real just because it takes faith to see it.
53. Heaven is not less real just because some don't have eyes of faith to see it.
54. The peace of God is no less real just because some don't have faith to experience it.
55. The grace of God is no less real just because people don't have faith to receive it.

<u>"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:2)</u>

56. By faith, we see Jesus as Lord of Lords and King of Kings, because that is who He is.
57. By faith, we see Jesus as the Redeemer and Savior, because that is who He is.

ILLUSTRATION: "Faith is not a once-done act, but a continuous gaze of the heart at the Triune God." (A.W. Tozer)

II. (vs.16 & 18) DO NOT FOCUS UPON WHAT IS <u>SEEN</u>

1. If we are going to focus on the unseen, we cannot keep our eyes fixed on what is seen.
2. Faith calls us to stop fixing our eyes on the temporary things of this world we can see.
3. We are not to look to the things of the world for hope and purpose in life.
4. The world and the things of the world want your attention.
5. The seeable, tangible things of this world call loudly.

<u>"Do not love the world or anything in the world…For everything in the world-the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does-comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever." (I John 2:15-17)</u>

6. When we focus our eyes on the things of this world, we fail to see all the unseen things God has to offer us.

ILLUSTRATION: When I had my retinal detachment, I lost the sight in one of my eyes. It limited my vision. Yes, I could see with one eye, but I could not see what I used to see. When the eye was repaired, and as healing began to take place, I could begin to see with a much wider perspective.

7. Faith enables us see so much more than what can be seen without faith.
8. Faith enables us to look past the things of the world that disappoint us and let us down.
9. Faith enables us to look past the things of this world that quickly fade away.
10. Faith enables us to look past the visible things of this world that cause us to loose heart or become discouraged.

ILLUSTRATION: 20th century writer, Thomas Merton reminds us that those who live only by what they can see, live a life of despair.

11. Faith enables us to look at the temporary things of life from a different perspective.

ILLUSTRATION: (John draw cartoon of turkey hiding under barn and eagle spreading wings and flying. Second cartoon with caption, "How do you react to the storms in your life?") In her book, <u>Why? Trusting God When You Don't Understand</u> (W Publishing Group), Anne Graham Lotz points out that a turkey and an eagle react very differently to an**

approaching storm. The turkey reacts by running under the barn to hide, hoping the storm will go away. The eagle, on the other hand, leaves the nest, spreads its wings, and rides the air currents of the storm, apparently knowing the storm will carry it higher than it could ever soar on its own. How do you react to the storms in your life: as a turkey or an eagle?

12. Listen to Paul's testimony on how he responded the storms of life:

"Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day." (II Corinthians 4:16)

13. Paul is simply stating that because of God's mercy at work in our lives, we do no lose heart.
14. We are not without hope because we are not focused upon the things that are seen.
15. People may have not responded as Paul hoped, and ministry was difficult, but he did not lose heart.
16. Faith keep ours hearts renewed.
17. God was doing something greater within than what was taking place outwardly.
18. Ministry and life itself was taking its toll on him.
19. The word translated, 'wasting away' is in a sense that which indicates a steady and irreversible process.
20. These bodies are falling apart and wasting away, for we begin to die as soon as we are born.
21. Paul contrasts what is happening spiritually with what is happening physically.
22. He is wearing out on the outside, but not on the inside, for he is being renewed day by day.
23. The word 'renewed' means 'taking something that is just barely moving and making it vital and alive again' – book.
24. The inward is being renewed so that it matches step for step the process of physical decline.
25. Their eyes were fixed upon the God who is greater than the temporary storms, troubles, and things of this world.

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

26. Don't get caught up or side tracked by the stuff of this world.
27. Don't let your focus be on the things of the world, but rather, focus upon spiritual things that are unseen.
28. When your vision is on the things of this world, you can find yourself discouraged, helpless and filled with fear.
29. Look past the things of this world you can see.

EXAMPLE: Elisha was a man of God who had someone who was out to get him. The King was at war with Israel and Elisha, the man of God, was sending words of warning to the king of Israel. Enraged with Elisha,

the King of Aram wanted to capture him. Discovering he was in Dothan, the king sent horses and chariots and a strong force there to capture him. By night, they surrounded the city. When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, he saw an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. In fear, he came to Elisha and said, "What shall we do?" "'Don't be afraid,' the prophet answered. 'Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.' And Elisha prayed, 'O Lord, open his eyes so he may see.' 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." (II Kings 6:16-17)

30. God opened his eyes so he could see what was already there.
31. Like the servant, we sometimes see what is happening and we cry out in fear.
32. We see cancer and fear sets in.
33. We don't know what that will mean for our future.
34. But, when our eyes our opened by faith, we see that we are not facing cancer alone but that God and His angels are standing guard with us.
35. As parents and grandparents, we can see kids making choices that break our hearts and we can become so trouble and lose heart.
36. But, when our eyes our opened by faith, we see that we are not alone but that God and His angels are at work.
37. When we see jobs lost and careers vanishing, we can cry out in fear over what will take place in the future and we can lose heart.
38. But, when our eyes are opened, we see that we are not alone, for we can see the God is standing with us.
39. When we see health failing, we can be filled with fear and we can lose heart.
40. But, when our eye our opened by faith, we can see that we are not alone and that God is with us.
41. Faith sees, **"…the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world." (I John 4:4)**
42. Faith sees, **"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." (Romans 8:37)**
43. Faith sees, "**If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31)**
44. Faith sees, **"I can do everything through him who gives me strength." (Philippians 4:13)**
45. Faith sees, **"You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you." (Isaiah 26:3)**
46. Do not fix your eyes on the seen things of this world, for you will lose heart.
47. Faith opens our eyes and sees so much more when we do not fix our eyes on the things of the world that are seen.

III. (vs.17-18) DO NOT FOCUS UPON WHAT IS TEMPORARY
"For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all." (II Corinthians 4:17)

1. Christians are not exempt from trouble.
2. However, the transformed life transforms our perspective on trouble.
3. This verse exposes Paul's perspective.

ILLUSTRATION: **Early church Father and Archbishop of Constantinople who died in the year 407, remarks on this verse, saying it "<u>Sets side by side the things present with the things to come, the momentary with the eternal, the light with the weighty, the afflicting with the glory." (Archbishop of Constantinople)</u>

4. Paul paints a picture of the value and priority of the eternal glory.
5. The Greek noun for "troubles" has the meaning of pressure in the physical sense and oppression in the figurative sense.
6. The troubles Paul faced were light because they were without lasting substance.
7. Paul did not have to embrace his troubles, because his troubles were temporary.
8. Paul did not have to be consumed by his troubled, for he had hope in that which is eternal.
9. The word "momentary" here expresses the temporary nature of Christian adversity.
10. Viewed from the perspective of the eternal glory, they are light and momentary.
11. How we view our troubles says a lot about our perspective.

ILLUSTRATION: I remember reading about a girl's volleyball team in a small, obscure Midwest town that had assembled an unbelievable winning streak of 65 games. What was so incredible about the feat was this—the school had only 18 girls total and 16 of them were on the volleyball squad and a 17th was the scorekeeper. Although it was one of the smallest Class B high schools in the state, it won the Class B volleyball championship for three years running. Then, after 65 victories, they were eventually defeated. The local paper reported the defeat with a large headline one night. Then, two days later, another headline appeared in the small paper "Team Rebounds With a Winning Streak of One." What a perspective.

12. The phrase "eternal glory" far outweighs them all, and is literally an eternal weight of weights.
13. The term "far outweighs" means "all out of proportion to the ninth degree."
14. This weight of glory is something that is all out of proportion in duration, for it is eternal in substance, for it outweighs all the troubles now.
15. The eternal is the reality that transforms the present.
16. In one sense, troubles in the Christian life produces muscles that become a permanent part of our spiritual physique.
17. What we see with our human eyes is temporary.
18. **EXAMPLE: When you look in the mirror, you may see a strong, young, handsome man, but the reality is that is temporary.**

19. **EXAMPLE: When you look in the mirror, you may see a picture of a young, beautiful young woman, but that is temporary, for those things fade.**
20. Photographs or pictures are reminders that the things of this world are temporary.
21. The things of this earth will run through our fingers like sand.
22. The afflictions will pass and the night of sorrow will end.
23. The present age is transient.

"…For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." (v. 18)

24. Do not focus on the things that are temporary.

ILLUSTRATION: Some years ago, a friend by the name of Duane Laflin was showing me an antique he had purchased. It was nice. He was talking about it and how much he paid for it and what a value it was. But then, my friend, who is a devoted Christian, said, "But, some day, it will burn."

25. He understood that it was temporary and that kept its value in perspective.

EXAMPLE: One of the miracle stories in the Bible is the feeding of the five thousand with five loaves of bread and a fish. After the feeding of the five thousand Jesus left and went to the other side of the lake. The people found him and said, "When did you get here?" Jesus said, "You are not looking for me for the right reasons. You are not looking for me because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Jesus than admonished them saying, "<u>Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."</u> (John 6:27) The people asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

26. The warning is to not spend your life seeking after or focusing on the temporary.
27. Our focus is to fix our eyes on food that endures to eternal life.
28. It is to be more eternally minded.
29. The eternal kingdom is approaching with racing speed.
30. Young people, focus on the spiritual and eternal, not the temporary things of the world.
31. We need to focus upon the eternal

ILLUSTRATION: "Suppose I should be taken away suddenly, what would become of you, son?" "I'd stay here. The question is, 'What would become of you, Dad?'"

32. Let us all thing about what we do in terms of its eternal value.

ILLUSTRATOIN: **William James said, "The best use of life is to spend it for something that outlasts life."

33. Paul helps us to put it into perspective by not focusing upon the temporary.
34. "Only one life will soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last."
35. Do not focus upon what is temporary.

ILLUSTRATION: (Prop – a Big Sticker with word, Temporary) I heard about a speaker who had a roll of stickers in his hand. He had things in front of him that represent the stuff of our lives: cars, house, office, etc. He then made the point that they were all temporary. He put "temporary" stickers upon them. Living for these things is living for what is temporary: temporary satisfaction, temporary fulfillment, temporary meaning, but it will come to an end. Are you focusing on the things that have temporary stickers upon them?**

IV. (vs.17-18) FOCUS WITH <u>HOPE</u> UPON WHAT IS ETERNAL

<u>"For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all." (II Corinthians 4:17)</u>

1. Paul is writing with the ink of hope.
2. Hope is all over the page.
3. Do not live for the temporary.
4. His afflictions were temporary, but his reward eternal.

ILLUSTATION: * Pastor A.W. Tozer said, "Eternity will not be long enough to learn all He is, or to praise Him for all He has done, but then, that matters not; for we shall be always with Him, and we desire nothing more."

5. Looking beyond the transitory moment, Paul knows that the transformation taking place within him is eternal.
6. The afflictions will pass, and the night of sorrow will end, but the joy of the Lord is eternal.
7. His eyes are fixed on that Eternal City which wasteth not away.

EXAMPLE: In the passage in Hebrews, chapter eleven, sometimes called the Hall of Faith, is this example of faith of Moses:
<u>"He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible." (Hebrews 11:25-27)</u>

8. Focus on things that have eternal value.

ILLUSTRATION: How long is eternity?; it extends like a piece of paper with an end. Yet, if you take pen and put a dot on it there in the context of eternity is the length of our lives. Yet, we spend so much time working in the dot and so little preparing for the rest of the page.
<u>"Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes." (James 4:14)</u>

9. Let's make our life count for something that has eternal value and lives beyond our lives.
10. The legacy ministry is to provide resources to help us reach beyond the years we live.
11. There is a great difference between the temporary and the eternal.

12. Our troubles are temporary, but on the other hand, the invisible things, the joy of his Lord into which one day he will enter, the inheritance for him in heaven, are eternal.
13. The eternal glory is greater than any of the temporary troubles we face.

ILLUSTRATION: **John Wesley said, "I judge all things only by the price they shall gain in eternity."

14. God changes our focus.
15. We focus not on the temporary things but the eternal

"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Matthew 6:33)

16. The call is to focus on things of eternal value.
17. In I Corinthians, quoting from the Old Testament, Paul said**, "…No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" (I Corinthians 2:9)**
18. We do not embrace the temporary but the eternal.
19. This focus on the eternal brings with it urgency.
20. Focus on the things of eternal value.

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things." (Colossians 3:1-2)

21. This kind of faith changes our values.

ILLUSTRATION: Though the following story comes from the distant past, it speaks forcefully to the present: King Henry IV of France once asked the Duke of Alva if he had observed the great eclipse of the sun that had recently occurred. "No," said the duke, "I have so much to do on the earth that I have no leisure to look up into heaven." Commenting on this, Thomas Brooks said, "It is sad to think how heart and time are so taken up with earthly things that we have no leisure to look to Christ and the things that belong to everlasting peace." Yes, how foolish is the person who caters entirely to this temporal world! It gives only momentary pleasure, and cannot bring the eternal rewards of Heaven.

CONCLUSION: WHERE IS YOUR FOCUS?

I. (v. 18) FOCUS BY FAITH UPON WHAT IS UNSEEN
II. (v.16 & 18) DO NOT FOCUS UPON WHAT IS SEEN
III. (v.17-18) DO NOT FOCUS UPON WHAT IS TEMPORARY
IV. (v.17-18) FOCUS WITH HOPE UPON WHAT IS ETERNAL