

City Life Church, July 26th 2026

Eyes Wide Open: Seeing the Spiritual Realm in the Ordinary

The Blindness of the Ordinary

I like movies, and as anybody of a certain age knows, the 1980s were a Golden age in cinema... In the 1986 film *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, the title character looks directly into the camera and delivers a line that continues to resonate 40 years later. **"Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it."**

In 2026 we still feel the rush every single day. We are constantly sprinting from one obligation to the next, managing calendars, answering emails or WhatsApp messages, paying bills, and putting out fires. We have never been so busy and somehow are actually doing less than we ever did. We don't walk through life - we run at a frantic, breakneck pace, and so we come to agree with Ferris - if we don't slow down, we're going to miss out on the moments that truly matter.

But as followers of Jesus Christ, there is a much deeper problem than just missing out on the good things of this world. The danger for the Jesus Follower is that we move so fast, and look at life so superficially, that we completely miss the *spiritual* world operating right in front of us. We will look at our schedules and only see tasks. We will look at our conflicts and only see difficult people. We will look at our shortages and only see problems. Moving at pace, we suffer from a spiritual blindness that convinces us that what we can see, touch, and measure with our physical eyes is all that truly exists. And yet we know that "if all you see is what you see, you do not see all there is to be seen."

So over the last three months we've been working through this sermon series - open our eyes. Segun kicked us off with open our eyes to the revival we long for. Omo talked about the power of prayer - the heart postures that create powerful and effective prayers. Linda led us to the beach at the side of the red sea in Egypt. Matt encouraged us to open our eyes to the blessings that are released when we give - bring all the tithes into the storehouse. Frank encouraged us to open our eyes to life abiding with God. Rosie opened our eyes to the spiritual battle all around us and pointed us towards the spiritual armour we are given. Anna talked about the power of thankfulness and gratitude even before our prayers are answered. Nikki encouraged

us to look inward and open our eyes to what is on our heart. Martin talked about the power of evangelism. Lorna taught us to see with compassion. Judith encouraged us to look and not to stare - to look up, look out and look in. And last week Matt called us to open our eyes to the church. All of these talks or their notes are available to listen to again on the church website. Today we are finishing up our series, and taking that encouragements that we have had over the past 13 or so weeks, I want to encourage us that once our eyes have been opened, we slow down and look...

So If you have a bible with you, or the app on your phone, turn with me to John chapter 2 and as we read it, let's read with fresh eyes how two thousand years ago, Jesus, His mother, and His disciples go to an ordinary village wedding in a town called Cana. To the naked eye, it was just a local party. It was a gathering of neighbours, a celebration of family, a joyous occasion filled with music, laughter, and food. But when there is a sudden crisis, Jesus saw past the panic to an intentional, divine opportunity to pull back the veil and reveal the glory of the living God.

[Read John 2:1-12]

Natural Sight Sees the Crisis; Spiritual Sight Sees the Opportunity

As those who were here a few weeks ago will know, my daughter has just become engaged, so we are at the very early stages of planning a wedding. Some of you have been in that position - it's a weighty job with much to plan and pay for. But if anything it was even more weighty in the cultural shoes of first-century Galilee. In the ancient Near East, a wedding wasn't just an hour ceremony followed by dinner and dancing. It was a multi-day, community-wide covenant festival. The groom's family was legally and socially responsible for hosting the entire village for up to a week. They had to provide food, lodging, and an abundance of wine for every single guest who walked through the door.

In that culture, hospitality wasn't just a nice personality trait; it was a societal mandate. Running out of wine wasn't just a minor social faux pas or an awkward moment. It was a devastating, catastrophic public humiliation. It sent a loud signal to the community that the groom's family was poor, disorganised, or stingy. It was a stigma that would follow this young couple for the rest of their lives. It would colour every business deal the groom tried to make, every social interaction the bride had at the village well, and every relationship their family held in the community. It was a social death sentence.

So when the wine ran out, the natural sight of those who knew saw a crisis. The master of the feast didn't know what to do. The family was likely slipping into a quiet panic behind the scenes, whispering in corners, frantically checking the cellars, desperately trying to figure out how to hide the truth before the guests noticed. They looked at the empty wine skins and saw the end of their reputation and the ruin of their joy.

But then there's the shift. Mary, the mother of Jesus, turns to Jesus and states the obvious physical problem: *"They have no wine."* Now, on the surface, this sounds like a simple observation. But Mary does something incredible she doesn't just stare at the shortage. She doesn't pull the groom's mother aside and start gossiping. She doesn't sit in a corner and wring her hands in anxiety. She shifts her gaze to Jesus.

Mary has a glimmer of spiritual vision. She has spent thirty years watching this boy grow into a man, keeping the mysteries of His miraculous birth hidden in her heart. She doesn't know *how* He will fix it, she doesn't know what His method will be, but she knows *He* can fix it. She looks past the empty barrels, past the human panic, and says to the servants, *"Do whatever he tells you."* She models for us what it looks like to pivot from natural sight to spiritual sight. She acknowledges the physical reality, but she knows that the physical reality is subject to the spiritual authority of Christ. Her eyes are open.

And Jesus sees the opportunity. This moment wasn't an accident; it was an appointment. He didn't hear that the wine was finished and think, *"This is awkward, the party is ruined, our trip to Cana is a waste."* No, Jesus saw a blank canvas upon which He could paint the first grand masterpiece of His public ministry.

Where is our "shortage" right now? Has your patience has run completely dry with your children or your coworkers. Maybe your bank account is running empty, and you are staring at bills you cannot pay. Maybe family relationships are strained. If you look at that situation with natural eyes, you will only see a crisis. You will see a dead end. You will panic, you will complain, you will cast blame on everyone around you, or you will freeze in despair. You may even go as far as that God has abandoned you, or that He is punishing you.

But when we shift our gaze to Jesus, through the Holy Spirit we begin to see that in crisis is actually opportunity. When we don't follow closely in step with God, we

more frequently find ourselves at the absolute end of our own human resources so that we are forced to look at His. When our wine runs out so that we stop relying on our own strength, our own intellect, our own talent, and our own bank accounts, the opportunity is there for Him to demonstrate His absolute fullness. Shortage does not have to be seen as a sign of God's absence; it is the invitation for His arrival.

The Hidden Machinery of the Spiritual Realm

Back to Cana... notice that when Jesus decides to act, He doesn't put on a theatrical show. He doesn't demand centre stage, dim the lights, call for an orchestra, or make a grand, dramatic announcement to the crowd. He does not draw attention to Himself. Look at how the spiritual world interfaces with the physical world in verses 6 and 7.

There were six stone water jars sitting nearby. Now, John is a masterful writer, and he makes a very specific, highly intentional note here: these weren't ordinary water pitchers used for drinking. These were massive, heavy jars made of stone, used specifically for the Jewish rites of purification. Each one held 80 to 120 litres of water. They were the jars used for washing your hands, your feet, and your cups over and over again, trying desperately to make yourself clean on the outside to satisfy religious law.

From these jars, from this old Jewish religious structure, God was going to do something new. And at this moment, those jars were sitting there empty, perhaps mirroring the spiritual condition of the people.

"Fill the jars with water." From a human perspective, this command is absurd. The family doesn't need water for washing; they need wine for drinking! The servants could have argued. They could have said, *"Sir, with all due respect, we've already done enough washing today. We need a vineyard, not a well."* But they don't argue. They obey. They go to the well, drop the buckets, and haul over 600 litres of water across the courtyard. John notes that they filled them right up to the brim. They didn't cut corners. They gave a full measure of obedience.

Then Jesus says, *"Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast."*

I want us to open our eyes to see how quietly, how subtly, and how invisibly the supernatural world moves. John does not say that there was a lightning bolt striking the courtyard. No holy thunder rolled across the Galilean sky. There was no magical

chant, no laying on of hands, no dramatic prayer. The transformation from simple, ordinary H₂O into premium, aged, complex wine happened silently. It was completely hidden in the ordinary, routine obedience of the servants walking across the room.

As they dipped the cup into the water and walked toward the head table, the molecular structure changed. Somewhere between the stone jar and the master's lips, the supernatural invaded the natural.

And look at the sheer comedy of the situation: the master of the banquet takes a sip of this liquid, his mind is completely blown, and he doesn't run to Jesus - he goes over to praise the groom! He has no idea where this wine came from. He says, *"Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now!"*

The master of the feast represents the spiritually blind world. He is sitting in the middle of a cosmic miracle, enjoying the supernatural blessing - and yes he gets to enjoy the blessing - drinking the very glory of God, yet he remains completely oblivious to the spiritual machinery that just operated right in front of his face. He thinks it's just a human stroke of luck. He thinks the groom just had a secret stash of premium vintage hidden away. He misses the miracle entirely because his eyes are locked onto the physical horizon.

But do you know who *didn't* miss it? The humble servants who drew the water. The text explicitly says, *"the servants who had drawn the water knew."* They saw the spiritual reality because they participated in the physical obedience. They were the ones who felt the weight of the water buckets. They were the ones who knew what went into those jars, and they were the ones who saw what came out.

In the modern western world, we can very easily make a massive, tragic mistake when we assume that the spiritual world only shows up in spectacular, dramatic, headline-grabbing flashes. In christian media we read of revivals, like the Asbury revival a few years ago, and use that as the measure for Gods intervention. We use our feelings as the measure of his presence. We can live waiting for a booming voice from heaven to tell us what to do in the next phase of our lives. We can use a goosebump-inducing emotion during worship as proof that God is actually present in our sanctuary and that the spirit is moving. And I'm not knocking those things - but

when our eyes are only open to look for the spectacular, and we will very often completely miss the supernatural.

Six months ago, after running home from work, I woke up with a bad back. A very bad back. I could hardly move. And though in the last six months I have seen progressive improvement, I still had bad days. A week and a half ago, I was having to stop work a couple of times a day to lie down on the floor to decompress my back. It was beyond irritating. It was certainly depressing.

Last week, Chris led our service, and part of it referenced 1 Peter 5:10 “ And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.” He played a song with the lyrics:

“This is where the healing begins,
This is where the healing starts
When you come to where you're broken within
The light meets the dark”.

After the service, I asked my brother Chris to pray for my back. I hoped for something spectacular. I hoped for healing. When Chris finished praying, I didn't feel any different. When I got home - after a detour around Aldi - I had to lie down with my legs in the air for 20mins to settle my back which had become really uncomfortable.

There was no spectacular. However I am certain that in the moment that Chris prayed for me, the supernatural invaded the natural. Every day this week has been better than the day before. I can stand without discomfort for an extended period. I can walk further and more comfortably than I could. My flexibility has increased. I will still need to stretch and strengthen muscles which are weak, and look after myself, but Church, I believe that through Chris' prayer for me after the service last week, God has been healing me and will carry that on to completion.

Somewhere between the stone jar and the master's lips, the supernatural invaded the natural.

To me it seems that God's deepest work is often hidden in the mundane, boring details we can easily ignore or get too used to... Growbaby. Lanterns. Restore. Lighthouse. Your bus ride to work. Your meeting in the coffee shop with a friend. The spiritual world is actively colliding with your physical world every day in your ordinary routine. It is moving in your repetitive family dinners, your secret moments of personal integrity when nobody is looking, and your quiet obedience to do the

simple things He commands you to do. It is hiding in plain sight, but not if we open our eyes to look for it.

If we show up to a job that feels empty and work with excellence anyway, we are filling the jars with water. If we choose to speak words of kindness in strained family relationships, we are filling the jars with water. When we faithfully open the Bible in the quiet morning hours, even when we don't feel a sudden rush of emotion, we are filling the jars with water. And when we do the practical, routine work of faith, the Holy Spirit silently, invisibly changes the substance of our reality behind the scenes. Do not despise the day of small, ordinary obedience, because that is exactly where miracles are born.

The True Purpose of Spiritual Vision

Why did Jesus do this? Why did the Sovereign Lord of the Universe, the One who flung stars into space and carved out the canyons, choose a small, insignificant village party in Galilee to unleash the very first miracle of his ministry?

John gives us the answer in verse 11, and it serves as the ultimate key to opening our spiritual eyes: "This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him."

Notice that John doesn't just call this a miracle or a wonder; he uses a very specific Greek word: *semeion*, which translates to "**sign.**" Think about a road sign. If you are driving down the A30, heading to Perranporth or one of our other beaches, and you see a massive green sign that says "Perranporth: 8 Miles," you don't pull your car over to the hard shoulder, get out, step over the guardrail, and start hugging the metal post. You don't set the picnic blanket underneath the sign and say, "*Wow, what a beautiful sign, we have finally arrived!*" That would be insanity. The sign isn't the destination; it's a pointer directing your eyes to where you are going.

Jesus didn't turn water into wine just to save a family from social embarrassment. He didn't do it to prove He was a great party guest who could keep the celebration going. He did it as a divine signpost. For just the first of many times, he pulled back the veil of the physical world so that the disciples could look *past and through* the wine and see the ultimate spiritual reality: that the Creator of the universe was standing in their midst.

He was showing them that He was the true Groom who had come to claim His bride, the Church, as Matt spoke about last week. He was showing them that the old, dry, empty stone jars of religion were being completely eclipsed by the new, joyful, overflowing wine of His grace and presence. Of relationship with him. This was a sign that the Kingdom of God had arrived and was being built, and it tasted like the finest vintage.

The opportunity Jesus saw at Cana wasn't just an opportunity to fix a temporary catering problem; it was an opportunity to **reveal His glory** so that people would believe. It was an opportunity to shift the disciples' gaze from the temporal to the eternal.

When our eyes are opened to the spiritual realm, our entire perspective on life, prayer, and blessings shifts dramatically. When God answers our prayers, when He repairs relationships, when He heals a physical body, or when He provides a financial breakthrough, it's right that we celebrate. But we should not stop at just celebrating the tangible blessing. The response is not to just get drunk on the wine of His provision. Instead, when look through the blessing with spiritual eyes, our only response is to begin to worship the Blessor. We see that every good gift, every healed disease, every restored relationship, and every financial open door is actually a signpost meant to anchor our faith deeper into the person of Jesus Christ and our relationship with Him.

You see the danger is that if we only see the physical blessings, we run the risk of becoming a consumer of God's gifts rather than a worshiper of His glory. We will live from miracle to miracle, constantly demanding more wine, completely blind to the Christ who stands right beside you. We will only recognise the spectacular. We will miss much of the supernatural. Open spiritual eyes allow us to say, *"Lord, thank You for the wine, but thank You even more that this wine proves You are the King of my life."*

The Dynamic Tension of Living in Two Worlds

To live with our spiritual eyes open means navigating a continuous, daily tension some would call The now, and the not yet. As believers, we are citizens of two worlds simultaneously. We have our feet firmly planted in the physical realm where we do have to pay rent or mortgages, go shopping, attend school parents evenings

and deal with physical sickness. Yet, our spirits are seated with Christ in the heavenly realms. One day we will be with Him in Glory, but until then there is tension.

Jesus navigated this tension perfectly. When He walked through the streets of Jerusalem or the dirt roads of Galilee, He was constantly interacting with both realms at the exact same time. When such a large crowd followed Him and then got hungry because apart from one of them, none of them brought lunch, the disciples saw a logistical nightmare and a budgetary deficit. They said, "*Send them away, it would take eight months of wages to buy enough bread!*" They were looking purely at the physical equation. But Jesus looked at the same situation and an opportunity for the Father to multiply a young boy's lunch and demonstrate his Glory.

When Jesus stood before the tomb of His dear friend Lazarus, the crowd saw a dead body that had been rotting for four days. They smelled the physical stench of death and wept in absolute finality. They saw a closed chapter. But Jesus looked at the exact same tomb, with spiritual eyes wide open, and saw an opportunity to demonstrate that He is the Resurrection and the Life. He spoke to the invisible realm, and the physical reality had no choice but to conform.

To live with our eyes open, is to learn to bridge this gap. We must learn to look at our physical environments through a spiritual lens. With eyes open, must slow down (Ferris Bueller) and look or we are going to miss it. When you walk into your workplace tomorrow morning, you aren't just walking into an office building with desks, computers, and fluorescent lights. With open spiritual eyes, you will see a mission field. That coworker who is incredibly difficult, bitter, and constantly spreading gossip? Natural sight says to avoid them, criticise them, or report them to HR. But spiritual sight looks deeper and sees a soul that is deeply wounded, trapped in bondage, and desperately crying out for the unconditional love and grace of Jesus Christ. Your presence in that workplace isn't just to earn a paycheck; it is to be an ambassador of the Kingdom of God, carrying the light of Christ into a dark place.

When we deal with chronic physical illness, natural sight looks at the medical charts, the lab results, and the long list of symptoms. But with open spiritual eyes we may look at the exact same diagnosis and declares in the words of the psalmist, "*My flesh and my heart may fail but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.* (Psalm 73:26)" Spiritual sight looks at illness and sees a platform where God's grace can be made perfect in human weakness. It does not deny the physical ailment, but it

does anchor itself in the eternal promise that Jesus is with us always, even to the end of the age.

Praying for the servants Eyes

Friends, life moves pretty fast. If we don't stop and look around with the eyes opened by the Holy Spirit, we are going to completely miss the kingdom of God moving in our midst. We will live our lives exactly like the master of the feast - drinking the rich blessings of God daily, breathing His air, waking up under His sun, enjoying our families, and experiencing His protection, but remaining totally blind to the Giver who is standing right next to us. We will live superficial, hurried, anxious lives, cut off from the supernatural peace and power that belong to us as children of God.

So as we finish this sermon series, that is my final challenge for us. Let's stop sprinting through our lives with our eyes permanently glued to our earthly problems, our phone screens, and our human limitations. Let's look for the supernatural, not just the spectacular. Rosie I think it was, talked about Elisha and his simple prayer in 2 Kings 6. Pray his prayer each morning before you get out of bed, before you check your emails, and before you step into your workplace, your school, or your home: *"Lord, open my eyes."*

When you see a difficult, aggressive colleague this week, don't just react in anger. Stop, take a breath, and pray: *Lord, open my eyes to see the hurt and the spiritual brokenness behind their behaviour.*

If you look at your family finances and see an empty or a closed door, don't spiral into anxiety. Stand firm and pray: *Lord, open my eyes to see the divine opportunity You are setting up right here to show Your faithfulness.*

When you are doing the boring, mundane, repetitive chores of your daily life - washing the dishes, making lunch, folding the laundry - don't just check out mentally. Pray: *Lord, open my eyes to see Your hidden glory in my quiet obedience.*

Let's step out of the frantic, hurried blindness of this world. Let's look past the empty jars of our human limitations. Let's follow Mary's instruction from that wedding feast "do whatever He tells us to do", and Follow Jesus instructions, no matter how small or insignificant they may seem, and watch with wide-open eyes as He turns our

ordinary, mundane water into the extraordinary, breathtaking wine of His supernatural presence.