

Blinders

What you are about to read is a devotion I wrote for our first SE Region board meeting nearly two years ago. We had just begun our “race” in this unfamiliar “arena,” and I was unsure of my “footing.” As I prayed about my position on this board, I kept getting this image in my mind of blinders. In telling my husband about these images, I put my hands by my face, blocking my peripheral vision, and suddenly the light bulb started flashing!

I like horses and I’ve ridden horses, but I am not a horse person per say, so I didn’t know much about them or their “accessories”, but I was suddenly very interested in discovering what the Lord was trying to teach me through horse blinders! At our board meeting I actually had horse blinders to “show and tell” – fortunately for *me* – you are missing out on my “modeling” them! Here is what I learned about horse blinders and what the Lord taught me through them.

I have discovered many interesting things about horse blinders. Blinders are used on a horse that pulls a cart or buggy. Amish buggies are a common sight in Pennsylvania, where my Dad retired. Some of you may have even taken a romantic horse-drawn carriage ride in a tourist city. The blinders block a horse’s peripheral view, keeping him from being startled by cars that whiz by. Drive horses race with a cart and use blinders, too.

When driving a horse, it is common practice to use mainly two of his senses. Putting blinders on limits his sight, so that he must rely more heavily on the sound of voice commands. When a horse has blinders on, his hearing will make up for what he cannot see.

A drive horse can be trained at an extremely young age. He must be infallible in responding to verbal cues. He must also be curious and possess natural courage. A drive horse must be independent without being stubborn or aloof. Above all, he needs to lean towards being sedate and not be quick to use his hind-quarter defenses. Blinders are not to prevent a horse from seeing what’s behind him, but rather to keep him focused on the job in front of him. Some horses will “rubber-neck” while harnessed and cause the vehicle to snake down the road. The harness, traces, collar or breastplate all go on first. The blinders are put on last.

The more I learned about horse blinders, the more I saw a spiritual application for Christians. The harnessing apparatus for a drive horse reminded me of the full armor of God that Paul talks of in Ephesians. It has many pieces that all fit together to provide a safe structure for the horse to operate and the full armor of God, when worn properly, also provides us safety in which to operate.

I believe that we all wear blinders to some degree already, but what kind of blinders are they and whose blinders are they? Did we chose them or are they hand-me-downs? We have “traditions of men” that the Bible talks about. We have family traditions, too. Our traditions may be important to us because we’ve always done them, but are they important to God? We also have denominational blinders; we each walk according to our denominational beliefs. Why can’t we all simply be “The Way” as the early church was called? Do the blinders we already wear actually blind us? Maybe we should take off denominational blinders and traditional blinders, which don’t fit everyone, and put on

God's spiritual blinders, that are one size fits all. As PWOC and chapel participants, we get to practice this every week.

When we are wearing God's blinders, we need to be more in tune with His voice, as His sheep we are to know His voice, intentionally listening, because our sight is limited. By wearing God's spiritual blinders, we won't get distracted by the world, the evil around us, our own fleshly desires. We also won't get distracted by other Christians; comparing walk with theirs and wondering why God is doing this or that in their lives and not in ours, or seeing another's walk as inferior to ours. Wearing God's spiritual blinders will not blind us to distractions, but enable us to walk "straight", not turning our foot to the right or the left (like God's instruction to Joshua in chapter 7:1), and not lose time by snaking down the road.

When wearing God's blinders, we will walk before Him (Gen 17:1); in His instruction (Ex 16:4); in His statutes (Lev 26:3); before Him in truth (1Kings 2:4); in the Light (Isaiah 2:5; 1John 4:1); in newness of life (Romans 6:4); by faith (2 Cor 5:7); by the Spirit (Gal 5:16); in love (Eph 5:2); and as children of light (Eph 5:8). It's the only way we can walk worthy - and not only to walk, but to run. We can run the race that is set before us with endurance and confidence because we can trust Him to "drive" us and keep us on course.

Who are we to fix our eyes on? The writer of Hebrews (chapter 12) tells us that we are to "fix" our eyes on Jesus. I looked this word "fix" up in the Greek Word Study book and it means "to look away steadfastly or intently toward a distant object; metaphorically, to behold in the mind, to fix the mind upon." We can endure this life, like Jesus did. He kept His focus on the joy that awaited Him, that's how He endured the cross and made it to the finish line.

My daughter, Alisha, was expecting her first baby and was afraid of the pain during delivery. As I look back on that time almost six years ago, her fear rubbed off on me a bit, too. We were both pregnant at the same time, her first, and my fourth child. As I tried to encourage her, I ended up encouraging myself. I told her to not think about the actual delivery, but to focus on the result, to look past the pain and imagine holding her precious baby in her arms.

We are to focus on the joy that is set before us, our goal, and fix our eyes on Jesus, our encourager, because He's already run the race and is standing at the finish line cheering us on. So much like a horse getting that second wind the closer he gets to the finish where the owner awaits to heap praises on him. He also knows that a rub down and bucket of oats await him. One day soon we will be forever with our Heavenly Father where there are no more tears, no more pain, and no struggles of any kind. We will enjoy complete rest and pure joy because we will finally be with Him, face to face, forever in His presence.

I see all of us in this race, a race not against each other to see who the best is, but in this race each of us is running to do our best. We are striving toward the same goal. The only difference is what we are pulling in our cart, the job God has assigned for us to do. We each have our own lane, our own responsibilities, in this life and as part of PWOC, and with God's expert driving and our keen listening, and our eyes fixed on the goal, we will win our race and receive our reward. As we cross the finish line our Owner

will heap praises on us and give us a crown, not a bucket of oats, but a rub down would be nice!

* I hope learning about horse blinders has given you encouragement in this race. Pray for us, your SE board as we round our last lap and head to the finish line in October. Also pray for the next runners who will take our place. God bless and God's speed!

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