

Chapter 5: Gaining a Good Eye

1. The “good eye” is for Jews idiomatic of a generous spirit. When Jesus warns that the opposite, a parsimonious attitude, fills one with darkness, what does he mean? Have you seen this principle at work in the lives of others around you?
2. First-century sages debated the relative importance of various sins. Jesus entered into this debate when he used “I desire mercy, not sacrifice” to permit healing on the Sabbath.

In Mt 6:22-23, the Good Eye saying from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus delivers a stern warning. He requires of his disciples generosity, or single-minded service of God and neighbor, and warns of the risks of self-encompassing darkness for the stingy.

Elsewhere in the Bible we see similar dire warnings. Paul writes in 1 Cor 6:18, “Shun fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself.” James writes, “And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature, and is itself set on fire by hell” (3:6). The OT prophets place tremendous emphasis on the dangers of idolatry.

Consciously or unconsciously, our choices reveal our own ranking of which sins are most dangerous or damaging—choices of how we vote, what causes claim our time and money, and where we give sin the widest berth. What do your choices indicate about your ranking of sins? How far down the list is stinginess?

3. Tverberg writes, “If you're generous, your whole life will show it. And if you are selfish, it will infect your very soul.” Generosity is one of the fruit of of the spirit, a willingness to share with others even at cost to ourselves. This is in imitation of Jesus: “For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich” (2 Cor 8:9).

Generosity can take various forms in our lives. Share an example from a friend or relative or even from your own life of generosity which came at a cost.