

## Out of Sight, Out of Mind?

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**B**ack in the early to mid-1930s, Jean Piaget conducted some research in regard to the way that intelligence develops in humans. One of his conclusions dealt with the idea of object permanence. Through his experiments, he decided that children, specifically those under the age of 2, did not have a sense of objects still existing if they could not see them. He likens this to when you play a game of peek-a-boo with a child. They are surprised every time you peek out at them. However, as children get older, they gain this concept and are able to recognize that just because they can't see something doesn't mean that it no longer exists. The game of peek-a-boo becomes pointless to them.

While many have come along and challenged many of Piaget's ideas, there is still some truth in his conclusions. It can be very easy for us not to think about things that are not immediately around us. I have often had the issue of not thinking about things or people because they were not frequently visible to me. As has been said many times, "Out of sight, out of mind."

But is this attitude something that we should embrace, or is it something that we should strive against?

If we look at the example of Paul and his mindset, we can very quickly see through his letters that he constantly thought about those he had ministered to. In Ephesians, he talks about how he bows his knees before the Father so that the Father might strengthen them (**Ephesians 3:14-19**). Many of his letters express a similar idea. Paul was constantly praying for the churches, and his visits to them were frequently years apart. They were constantly out of sight, but never out of mind.

Similarly, many of my brothers and sisters have a prayer list that they constantly update. These lists can include those who are sick, those who are in ministry, churches, people they are concerned about, and many others. In this way, they have the same attitude as Paul. They are constantly thinking about those who are away from them.

A second thought that occurs to me deals directly with our Lord and Savior. As Jesus reminds us, "*God is spirit*" (**John 4:24**). We do not have the ability to discern spirits; they are like the wind. We can see their effects, but we cannot see them. And though Jesus spent time on earth as a human, he returned to the Father after his resurrection. We cannot see the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit. This difficulty is brought up in **1 John 4:20**, "*If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.*" John enjoins us to love those we can see, to show that we love him whom we have not seen.

These are ways in which we need to remember that just because something is out of sight does not necessarily mean it should be out of our minds. The game of peek-a-boo needs to be one where we know what is going on and do not forget what has been hidden from our sight.

We should always remember our Lord. We should remember our brothers and sisters. We should wrestle for them in prayer. We should show our love to the Father through our love for our brothers and sisters. These are things that though they are out of sight, should not be out of mind.

But there are other things that we should indeed keep out of sight and out of mind. In **Matthew 13**, Jesus tells the parable of the sower. In this parable, there are four different types of soil. The third type of soil is soil infested with weeds and thorns. The Lord tells us that these represent the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches. These things can get in the way of the word working in our hearts. These are things that we need to keep out of our hearts and out of our minds.

This goes back to the Lord telling us that we are not to be angry with our brother, we are not to look at others lustfully, and we are not to hate our enemies. These are thoughts that we are to avoid. Paul tells Timothy to avoid irreverent babble and those who have the appearance of godliness but deny its power. Titus is told to avoid quarreling, foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law. All of these things are labeled as unprofitable and worthless.

So we end up with things that we are to keep in our minds, and things that should be out of our minds. How do we make the right things permanent in our minds? The things we choose to make permanent in our minds will stay there. It is the things that make into habits we will be stuck with. So, as Paul says in **Philippians 4:8**,

*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.*