

Double vision or bifocal? Acts 26.19-32



²⁰ First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and then to the Gentiles, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds.

Those of you who have met me or have seen me on zoom will know that I have visual problems. They're not major and they are corrected by lenses made to the right prescription.

If I take my glasses off I can see reasonably well through one eye, by squinting, but I have to squint differently, if you get what I mean, in order to see through the other eye. Squinting gives me a kind of double vision of the world, but without my glasses and without squinting I only get a blurred vision – I can still see, but certainly not enough to drive with. It's only when I get the right lenses to look through that I get a clear bifocal vision of the world.

In Acts 26 Paul makes it clear that his call to mission is bifocal – that's to say it is to both the gentiles and the Jews at the same time.

Paul receives his commission on the road to Damascus. He is appointed as a 'servant and a witness' (Acts 26.16) of what he has just seen

Over the years I have come to recognise that ministry needs to be properly bifocal – that is to say, we need to be ministering to the community outside of the Church as well as the community inside the Church and that requires that in each sphere I use the correct lens to see through..

This came home to me very forcibly a couple of years ago, when I was on the margins of a conversation in a church elsewhere in the area. The minister was being taken to task for spending too much of his time out in the community; 'Don't you care about the people who come to church?' ran the question. 'Of course I do' came the reply, but I care even more about the 90% of the population who don't go to church!

Paul's mission is bifocal; he is servant and witness to both the community of faith (the Jews) and to those outside that community (the Gentiles). Our vision too needs to be bifocal, rather than double vision.

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