

Look Up ↑

By Bill Marianes¹

“*LOOK UP!*” Everyone has heard that shouted at them at some point when they were playing sports or just having something thrown their way. If you don’t, you will probably end up getting bopped on the head, or in some other body part, by a ball or other thing being thrown at you. It is great advice since it is harder to see (and catch) things with your eyes closed.

More recently, I found the need to exclaim “*LOOK UP!*” more frequently in daily life as we all have become fixated with our eyes looking downward at so-called “smart” phones. Ever notice that when you are in an elevator, waiting in line, on a train, etc., more people are looking down at their devices than at each other or what is going on around them. And how many times have you either called out “*LOOK UP!*” or been tempted to do so (or use your car horn equivalent) at people walking down the street or headed your way who are not looking where they are going but are instead glued to the little electronic screen in their hands.

In a study released by the Pew Research Center, as of January 2014:

90% of American adults have a cell phone

58% of American adults have a smartphone

42% of American adults own a tablet computer

67% of cell owners find themselves checking their phone for messages, alerts, or calls
(even when they don’t notice their phone ringing or vibrating).

Think about it. Do you know anybody who does not own a cell or smart phone?

The Knight Foundation, in partnership with the Pew Research Center, found that:

64% of adults in the United States use Facebook, and staggeringly

30% of Americans get their news on Facebook

There is a whole lot of “looking down” going on in our society. And these downward looking trends are increasing.

In contrast, “The State of the Bible 2013” study completed by The Barna Group for the American Bible Society found that:

77% of Americans think the nation’s morality is headed downhill

88% of respondents said they own a Bible

80% of respondents think the Bible is sacred

Yet only 26 % of Americans said they read their Bible on a regular basis (4 or more times a week). In other words, we may be looking down more, but perhaps at the wrong things!

These disturbing facts got me wondering about the great advice “*LOOK UP!*” and where else I had heard it. My Yiayia (paternal grandmother), an uneducated, immigrant woman of strong faith would frequently admonish me to look upward to the heavens where our Lord resides and where he is waiting for us if we live a righteous and faithful life. And while we clearly bow our heads for many prayers, she reminded me that it was in looking up that we saw the glory of God’s great creation and could be inspired to aim toward the goal of all of eternity in a state of theosis.

Are you living your life by looking down or up? And what form of example are you setting for others who may be watching (in between glances up from their electronic tethering devices). Are you following the clear guidance of our Lord in Matthew 5:14-16?:

“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Indeed, the Holy Gospel is replete with many admonitions to **“LOOK UP!”** and see the wonders and miracles of the Lord, and also some examples of those who could not **“LOOK UP!”** in shame for what they had done (or not done), including the repentant tax collector in Luke 18:13.

The message today is to humbly, inquisitively and prayerfully **“LOOK UP!”** as we celebrate the glory of God’s creation, the wonder of the world around us, the incredible actions of faith we can pursue in our lives, and the proper living of the stewardship callings each us have been given. We also do this as a testament and in grateful appreciation of Christ’s redeeming love and on our journeys on The Path toward theosis.

I believe stewardship is what you do with all of the gifts God gave you. All of those gifts and talents. So if you want to live the stewardship calling entrusted to you by your Father, ask yourself, “What have I done today (or this week) to live the stewardship calling given to me through the many gifts of which I am a mere steward on this earth?” In what person or ministry of your church or community have you “invested” your valuable time and talents in hopes of the ultimate “return on that investment” of an eternal life filled with joy, peace and love?

Yes, you must periodically look down to humbly pray, or answer (or screen) a call on your cell phone, or to ensure that you don’t stumble or misstep as you walk on your journey through this life. But your ultimate destination is hopefully headed toward a higher trajectory. So take aim on that which you seek, and expend your energy in that direction. You just might be amazed at the wonders of God’s creation available to those who seek, see and hear, and then pursue their stewardship callings. May God bless you as you pursue your own unique stewardship calling. Stay on The Path and enjoy the journey. (SOTPAETJ)

¹ Bill Marianes is the Chief Evangelist Officer of the Stewardship Calling ministry focused on helping people and parishes discover and live their stewardship callings so that they may have a good account before the awesome judgment seat of Christ. The always free www.stewardshipcalling.com website contains many resources to help churches and parishioners with stewardship, strategic planning, engaged discipleship, discovering your WHY, servant leadership, effective communications and church operational excellence. Bill is also a member of the Orthodox Ministry Services Team: <https://orthodoxministry.org/>. Bill can be reached at Bill@stewardshipcalling.com.