

Focus

"[Our culture]... saturates the self with conflicting and confusing images and ideas, with little unity or coherence at hand..." – Douglas Groothuis

This saturation of images and ideas overwhelms us, leaving us mentally dulled and distracted. In this environment our hearts and minds become battlefields in which economic, political and social interests vie for our attention and affection. Our ability to focus and live a directed life is significantly undermined.

We are reminded of the account of Peter walking to Jesus on the water. He was fine as long as his focus was set upon the Lord. But when he began to give attention to the darkness, the waves, and the impossibility of his situation, he began to lose ground. The application to our lives is clear: As long as we stay focused on Christ we thrive, but the moment we become distracted by all the sights and sounds around us, we sink. That's our lesson this week as we look at what Paul says about focused lives centered on Christ, his redemptive work, and his coming deliverance.

Monday – Setting Affections

"If we really believe not only that God exists but also that he is actively present in our lives – healing, teaching, and guiding – we need to set aside time and space to give him our undivided attention." – Henri Nouwen

1. Read Colossians 3:1-4. What two things are we told to set upon God? Why does the passage say we should do this?
2. What does it mean to "set your heart?" What "earthly things" are most likely to demand your affection and reflection? Are they worries, responsibilities or entertainment?
3. Read Philippians 4:4-9. How does Paul relate the pursuit of peace to disciplines of the heart and mind? Try to identify at least five suggested practices in this verse (e.g. thanksgiving).

Tuesday – Setting Thoughts

"[If we survey the history of the church we find]... Where Christian faith is securely rooted, where it penetrates deeply into a culture to change individual lives and redirect institutions, where it continues for more than a generation as a living testimony to the grace of God – in these situations, we almost invariably find Christians ardently cultivating the intellect for the Glory of God." – Mark Noll, "The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind"

1. When your mind is "at rest" (e.g. while you're exercising, taking a long solitary drive, or just daydreaming) what things are you most likely to think about?
2. Read Colossians 3:1-4 and 2 Corinthians 10:4-5. What does Paul tell us to do with our minds and thoughts? What do you think this looks like?
3. What practices, disciplines or attitudes have been most helpful in setting your heart and mind on things above? Choose one to focus on over the next week.

Wednesday – A Unified Life

"It is the whole person of intellect, of feeling, and of the will which finds its only true objective in the Christian God. Reason comes to the foot of the mountain; it is industrious will urged by the passionate heart which climbs the slope." – Evelyn Underhill

1. Read Mark 12:28-34 and Col. 3:1-4, side-by-side. What similarities are there between the "greatest commandment" and Paul's instructions in the opening verses of Colossians 3?
2. Do you feel like you have a balanced life of worship that integrates passion, reflection and action? Which of these do you feel might be most emphasized in your worship practices and spiritual disciplines? Which are least emphasized? How might you go about cultivating the latter?

Thursday – Christ Your Life

"Clearly Paul sees it as important that we identify with the death of Christ... He goes on to the thought that we have been raised with Christ; that is we have been made alive with him... (We) have died to (our) unregenerate past and have risen to a completely new way of life, a life in which Christ is everything." – Leon Morris, "N.T. Theology"

1. Read Colossians 3:1-4 and 2:9-12. What themes in chapter 3 have we already encountered in chapter 2?
2. What does Paul mean, "you have died?" How about "hidden with Christ in God?" How do these thoughts relate to what we are to set our hearts and minds on?
3. Do you often feel like you can say, "Christ is my life?" Are there times when it seems like something else is the essence of your existence or your reason for living? Consider spending some time in prayer today asking God to help you move forward in the lifelong pursuit of the *completely new way of life in which Christ is everything*.

Friday – A Past and Future Reality

"Salvation is an exceptionally complex idea, embracing not simply a future event, but something that happened in the past or is taking place now... The Christian understanding of salvation presupposes that something has happened, that something is now happening, and that something further will still happen to believers." -- Alister McGrath, "Christian Theology"

1. What common theme do the beginning of verse 1 and the end of verse 4 share? In what tense (e.g. past, present or future) do each of these verses speak of this event?
2. Theologians sometimes simplify the complex concept of salvation into a process with past (justification), present (sanctification) and future (glorification) components. Which of these facets of salvation do you think "raised with Christ" in verse 1 is referring to? What about "appear with him" in verse 4?
3. How do the realities that we *have been* raised and *will* appear with him affect what life will be like for you today? How do these past and future events impact the events, choices and focus of the present?

The Scrolls, FBC's daily devotional guide, is designed to work in tandem with our Sunday services to enhance what God wants to teach us from his Word. The Scrolls are best used with a "Spiritual Life Notebook," which is available Sunday mornings at the Information Table in the Plaza. For more information about using the "Spiritual Life Notebook," see the insert that comes with it. The Scrolls, along with companion materials for small groups, are also available online at www.fbcdavis.org.