

Fix Your Focus

Sunday, February 4th, 2024, 5:30 p.m.

Fix Your Focus**Colossians 3:1-17**

I say this every time I start, but I mean it. I recognize the honour and privilege it is to be asked to speak, and every time I'm asked I say yes. I'm not Pastor Don. So if that's what you're expecting, and you're disappointed to hear me teach. I guess you could plug your ears for the next 20 minutes if you wanted to.

For the most part, if you plan to be successful, you need to be focused. I guess it's true that some people just fall into their success without being focused. But that's usually short lived, they get their 15-minutes of fame and then they fade away. We thrive when we're focused... and we fizzle out if we're not. Tonight I want to work through the first half of Colossians 3 and look at what we should be fixing our focus on. And how we can fix our focus, to be on the things of God, instead of on the things of the earth.

Have you ever tried to fit in somewhere? When I was in high school, "screamo" music was really popular. It was a mixture between emo and heavy music. The most popular bands—even Christian bands—were "screamo". And with the music came the clothes and hair styles. The side-swiped hair, skinny jeans, sleeveless shirts and stretched earlobes. It was a whole scene. And I bought into it all. At some point though, we all should be honest with ourselves and ask the question: "Is this really where I fit in?" That old style I used to have has faded away as new styles came and went. I have a mullet now, instead of the long side-swiped bangs in my eyes. I only just took the spacers out of my ears a couple months ago. I've switched to "slim" leg jeans instead of "skinny" jeans... even though they still give away the fact that I'm a "millennial dad".

I'm telling you all of this, because the same applies to our spiritual life. We change to fit in, more than we'd like to admit we do. The world is always trying to steal our focus—and over time we usually give in. You're here tonight. so I imagine you consider yourself a Christian. But at some point along the way, we've started to get a little too comfortable when it comes to fitting in with the world. And that's because our focus has shifted. And even though we know the Bible says we don't belong to it. At the same time, a lot of us still try really hard to fit in with the world.

Being in the world is not a problem, in fact a criticism I have about "modern church culture" is we do so much inside these 4 walls, that we separate ourselves from the world. So please don't hear what I'm saying tonight and think my point is that the people outside of these 4 walls are evil and need to be avoided at all costs. No, if they're lost, then they need the hope we have in Jesus. But, if you're going to live in the world without fitting in and being of the world, you'll need to start with fixing your focus.

I loved the show "Canada's worst driver" I've seen every episode and hope one day they'll bring it back. In the show, in every single season, early on as they're teaching these terrible drivers how to fix their bad habits, they would always teach them to, "look where they want to go". And they'd put them through tests to show that if they look at the obstacle... their arms will naturally steer the vehicle into the obstacle. But, if they look where they WANT to go, and

try their best to ignore those distractions and stay focused on where they want to go, then they'll naturally avoid them.

And that's what I want to spend some time on tonight. When it comes to our spiritual lives, let's talk about where our eyes should be focused. And the first thing you should fix your focus on, is heaven.

1) Fix your focus on heaven.

Colossians 3:1-4

¹So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

These verses, and other like it, call us to “seek the things above”, “set [our] minds on the things above”. Set our eyes on our forever home, heaven! Think about and focus on the things of heaven. Don't be dragged down by the things and possessions of this world. Paul wrote to the Philippians to teach them, that as well... because we don't belong here:

Philippians 3:20

Our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly wait for a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you are a Christian and you have given your life to Jesus and have been “raised with Christ”. Your citizenship is no longer worldly... your citizenship is heavenly! Your home now belongs with your spiritual family—the family we find in Jesus Christ. When you know who you are and who you belong to, it helps you focus on the right things. We are citizens of heaven, not citizens of the world. This earth is not our home! And when you fix your focus on heaven, you're making positive changes to avoid the distractions that would steer you in the wrong direction.

Next,

2) Fix your focus on new life.

Do you know someone who is way too sentimental about things? To the point that they keep tons of old junk that doesn't even deserve to be kept? At the extreme cases of this we might label someone as a “hoarder”. We may not be “hoarders,” but we all have a tendency at times to hold onto things far longer than what is needed. I don't know about you... but I could go through my closet and donate almost the majority of what's in there. I know I could, and probably should. So why don't I? Well, when I go to do that I see a shirt I was given as a gift, and think, “Oh I can't give that away. I'll never wear it again, but I can't give it away”. “Oh I can't get rid of that, I wore that shirt in our engagement photos”. “What if those come back in style I should keep those just in case”. “I might lose 50 pounds and fit into that one day”. Come on, I can't be the only one.

We do the same thing in our spiritual lives as we do in our physical lives. We hold on to the old sins that Jesus has freed us from! Today is the day to throw some things away that you've been holding onto! When you follow Jesus, He gives you a new life, and a new nature. You don't need to hold onto that sin any longer! As Christians, we've been given a new nature. Which means we're not ruled by those sins any more. So throw them away, or as Paul says, put them to death.

Colossians 3:5-11

⁵Therefore, put to death what belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry. ⁶Because of these, God's wrath is coming upon the disobedient, ⁷and you once walked in these things when you were living in them. ⁸But now, put away all the following: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and filthy language from your mouth.

⁹Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old self with its practices ¹⁰and have put on the new self. You are being renewed in knowledge according to the image of your Creator. ¹¹In Christ there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all.

This isn't an exhaustive list, but they are examples of what earthly things look like. When we were enslaved to sin, this is what our lives looked like. Even if you weren't a wild child, there's examples in this list that still probably relate to your old self. Anger, greed, lust, lying. And for some of you, you've knocked most of those examples off at one point or another. But regardless of your past. All that matters now is Jesus. And the work He's done in your life! Set your focus on your new nature and new life that Jesus offers you. Put to death the wickedness of your past life of sin and fix your focus on Jesus—the Savior of your new nature and new life!

Point number 3:

3) Fix your focus on others.

It's no secret that we are called to love others. Jesus said that, after loving God, it was the greatest instruction we've been given.

Romans 12:10

Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters. Take the lead in honouring one another.

The question is, do you genuinely love others? Or are you only doing it out of obligation because you know we're supposed to? We are called to love others with genuine affection. The love of Jesus isn't love out of obligation. Keep that in mind as I read the next section of Colossians 3:

Colossians 3:12-16

¹²Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, ¹³bearing with one another and forgiving

one another if anyone has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you are also to forgive.

¹⁴Above all, put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. ¹⁵And let the peace of Christ, to which you were also called in one body, rule your hearts. And be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.

“Above all, put on love”. What’s the difference between genuine love and love that is done out of obligation? Well, genuine love is measured through our mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience for others. If it were up to us to choose the way we’d prefer to respond, our first instinct wouldn’t be mercy, kindness, humility etc. It would probably be pride, anger, unforgiving, harsh and impatient. One of the greatest ways we can focus on others, is by making allowance for people to make mistakes. We all make mistakes! When we make an allowance for the issues that we know will arise in relationships with others. We put ourselves in a place to genuinely love and forgive the people around us. This is exactly what Jesus did for us! It would be pretty selfish and unfair of us to expect it from God, but then not offer it to those around us. When we fix our focus on others, and genuinely love them, we pursue the peace that Christ promises us, and we walk with the wisdom He gives us.

My last point is:

4) Fix your focus on Jesus Christ.

This one sounds obvious, but hear me out. Many of us have set our focus on Jesus at some point, only to have it slip away. Some of us have become very distracted by the things of the world. I think about how much I hear people focused on: The approximately 30 seconds of airtime the NFL gives Taylor Swift during a Kansas City Chiefs game. Or about how ChatGPT and Ai are going to take over the world. Or about the dangers of using plastic straws. I think it’s time to put our focus back on Jesus. It’s so easy to lose focus in our day-to-day struggle that we call life. But most importantly—above all else—in all that we do... we have to keep our focus locked on Jesus.

Colossians 3:17

And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

This verse leaves us with the most important truth: You are an ambassador of Jesus Christ. An ambassador is a figurehead for someone with way more power than the ambassador actually has. The identity of an ambassador is based on who they represent. Everything they say or do... it’s like the person they are representing, is saying or doing those things. Ideally, they would be in perfect alignment with the person or government they are representing. And as an ambassador of Christ... that means you are not your own. You are an extension of the authority of heaven. You are a representative of the kingdom of God in all that you say and do. Your choices will show the world who you’re focused on. Is it Jesus? Or is it the world? If everything we say and do represents Jesus we need to continuously be putting our focus

back onto Him. It is impossible for us to live this out, and actually do this... if our eyes are focused on anything or anyone else. He deserves our full attention.

As I wrap up, let me ask you a few questions to consider. Does your life now, look like a new life in Christ? Or does it look like a life that's still enslaved to sin? Surrender your past, present, and future to the one who is willing to make all things new in your heart. We've been given free will, but it's for a greater purpose: So that we would choose to love, as opposed to being programmed to love. Are you loving others because you know we're supposed to? Or are you genuinely loving others? You have the choice. Out of the freedom God gave you, you can choose to love others and serve them... or not. Make a decision to take the focus off of yourself and put it on the people around you this week. Extend mercy, kindness, generosity, and love to them. We have a great hope in Jesus Christ. This is why we focus on Him, because He is returning for us. If you are struggling and have lost the hope of Jesus in your life. I wonder if maybe your focus has fallen off of Him and onto something else that will never be able to give you hope. We all want to focus on Jesus. The issue is, we all slip up in a moment of mental weakness and allow a distraction to steal our attention. If your mind has been caught up and polluted with the things of the world, choose to surrender those things and set your focus on the things of heaven. Fix your focus back onto Jesus.