

CHAPTER 14

Single-Mindedness

KEY IDEA

I FOCUS ON God and his priorities for my life.

KEY VERSE

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.
— Matthew 6:33

BEGIN BY RECITING THE KEY VERSE AND THE KEY IDEA TOGETHER AS A GROUP.

LESSON

INTRODUCTION:

How would you define single-mindedness?

The world defines it as: An adjective meaning: 1) Determined 2) Having one overriding purpose or goal. 3) Steadfast; resolute.

> The good form of "single-minded" is the ability to block out distractions and erroneous thoughts in order to concentrate better.

WIKIHOW.COM states: *Being "single-minded" has to do with the power of focus. Your ability to focus is ultimately your biggest ally in accomplishing tasks and projects. With practice this is an ability one can develop. Your level of achievement and success depends upon it.*

Even with the secular comment above, we see that single-mindedness is something that Christians should seek to practice, when it comes to the things of God.

This was found on a Jewish web-site.

"Most of us have at least one single-minded person in our lives. It may be someone at the office, a family member, a neighbor or a friend. The subject of their single-mindedness can be anything -- a cause, a political opinion, an obsessive hobby, a worshipped celebrity. It may be virtuous or ominous, fascinating or boring, intelligent or silly. Single-minded people come in many shapes and forms, but they all share a seeming inability to talk about anything else, even -- apparently -- think about anything else.

Single-minded people... there is something about them that elicits our amazement, even admiration. They have devoted themselves to something unequivocally. Imagine what we could achieve if we could make such a commitment to the things we truly care about!

What differences do you think you might see in the world, your community, your church, your home if all Christians had a single-minded purpose to do the things of God?

PARAPHRASED FROM: FROM *THINK, ACT, BELIEVE LIKE JESUS* by Randy Frazee

Because of our sinful nature and self-centeredness, we often start an endeavor with the mind-set of what we want and then ask God to bless it. This makes life about us, not him — about our will, not his.

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” -- Matthew 6:33

Matthew 6:33 inspires a fully submitted relationship in which God, his ways, and his plan are put first on a daily basis, trusting he will do the absolute best for us in any circumstance.

> While what he does is always right for us, we probably will not always agree with how he allows life to play out.

< This is where faith makes all the difference. Keeping our focus on “his kingdom and his righteousness” is what we mean by being single-minded.

> It is vital to understand what the phrase “these things” means in the second half of verse 33. Let’s look at verses 25 – 32 to understand.

“I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

“And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you — you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.”

What are “these things” spoken of in verses 25-32?

[Note that these are the basics in life! Food and water for sustenance, clothing for warmth and modesty.]

Jesus is letting us know he is well aware of what we need, if we will simply depend on him to provide.

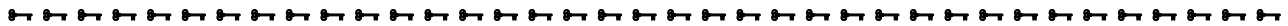
> Dependence on him is necessary to acquire single-mindedness — which leads us to verse 34: *“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”*

Jesus knows that a single-minded person will live each day yielded to God’s will and direction, just as he modeled for us in his three years of ministry.

> Jesus placed God’s will first, and he was provided for; so we can also trust he will do the same for us, his children.

> When we surrender to God, we receive an abundant life here *and* the gift of eternal life in heaven.

With this we come to our key question.



KEYQUESTION: How do I keep my focus on Jesus amid distractions?

Have you discovered a key(s) to help you keep focused on Jesus in your daily life? What is it?

To be single-minded means to have one desire that trumps all others. One goal. One focus. From the beginning God made clear what his people’s main focus should be — him.

PRINCIPLES OF SINGLE-MINDEDNESS

“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.” Exodus 20:2

In the first of the Ten Commandments, God commanded the Israelites to serve him exclusively because he was worthy of their trust, as he had proven by delivering them from Egypt. Later, just before Moses died and the Israelites entered the promised land, God inspired Moses to remind the people of their single-minded calling.

FROM Deuteronomy 6:1-9 (CEV)

Moses said to Israel: The LORD told me to give you these laws and teachings, so you can obey them in the land he is giving you. ... ² And if you and your descendants want to live a long time, you must always worship the LORD and obey his laws. ³ ... Be careful to obey him, and you will become a successful and powerful nation.

⁴ Listen, Israel! The LORD our God is the only true God! ⁵ So love the LORD your God with all your heart, soul, and strength. ⁶ Memorize his laws ⁷ and tell them to your children over and over again. Talk about them all the time, whether you’re at home or walking along the road or going to bed at night, or getting up in the morning. ⁸ Write down copies and tie them to your wrists and foreheads to help you obey.

The law was meant to reveal God and draw the people closer to him.

- > If God's people are to be a holy people, a holy law is needed to guide them.
- > There are never any options in doing the will of God.
 - < It is always His way—or no way—because he is God. (vs. 4) Full obedience to him brings fullness of blessing. (vs. 3)
- > In verse 5 "Heart, soul and strength" describes the whole person: intellect, desires and longing, and activity.
 - < Our obedience to God is to utilize all our being and a totality of effort—a single-mindedness.
 - < God's command to love him demands a single-minded love, focused and centered on him alone.
 - < The importance of verse five carries the Old Testament through to the New Testament in Matt. 22:38. When Jesus was asked "what is the most important commandment?", he replied, "*You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.*"
- > In verse 7 we see two pairs of opposites "*sit at home/walk along...like down/get up...*" These pairs suggest a meaning of any and every time, place, and activity. (A practice of single-mindedness.)

God's people needed to submit fully to his authority and believe he could provide all they needed. It's this kind of trust that Jesus calls us to demonstrate as his disciples.

FROM: Matthew 6:19-33 (CEV)

¹⁹ Don't store up treasures on earth! Moths and rust can destroy them, and thieves can break in and steal them. ²⁰ Instead, store up your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy them, and thieves cannot break in and steal them. ²¹ Your heart will always be where your treasure is.

We often divide spiritual and material, Jesus made no division. The right attitude toward wealth is a mark of true spirituality.

- > It's not wrong to possess things, but it is wrong for things to possess us. This leads to the sin of idolatry.
- > If our heart loves material things it can put earthly gain above heavenly investments.
 - < We can use earth's treasure for God, but if we gather them just for ourselves, they will eventually be lost.

NOTE: We need to refer back to the chapter on STEWARDSHIP where we learned that everything belongs to God in the first place. We are not the owners, we are the managers.

²² Your eyes are like a window for your body. When they are good, you have all the light you need. ²³ But when your eyes are bad, everything is dark. If the light inside you is dark, you surely are in the dark.

The eye represents the attitude of the mind. If the eye is properly focused on the light, the body can function properly.

- > A proper view of possessions is basic to Kingdom values.

²⁴ You cannot be the slave of two masters! You will love one more than the other or be more loyal to one than the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

It is not possible to give top priority to two masters. At any given point, one of them will be coming in second.

> How do we choose whom to serve? Our will makes the choice.

25 I tell you not to worry about your life. Don't worry about having something to eat, drink, or wear. Isn't life more than food or clothing? 26 Look at the birds in the sky! They don't plant or harvest. They don't even store grain in barns. Yet your Father in heaven takes care of them. Aren't you worth more than birds?

27 Can worry make you live longer?^[a] 28 Why worry about clothes? Look how the wild flowers grow. They don't work hard to make their clothes. 29 But I tell you that Solomon with all his wealth wasn't as well clothed as one of them. 30 God gives such beauty to everything that grows in the fields, even though it is here today and thrown into a fire tomorrow. He will surely do even more for you! Why do you have such little faith?

31 Don't worry and ask yourselves, "Will we have anything to eat? Will we have anything to drink? Will we have any clothes to wear?" 32 Only people who don't know God are always worrying about such things. Your Father in heaven knows that you need all of these. 33 But more than anything else, put God's work first and do what he wants. Then the other things will be yours as well.

DO NOT WORRY! All of nature depends on God and trusts him, except....?...!

> To worry means to be pulled or drawn in a different direction. Worry pulls us apart.

< Worry brings a loss of testimony (vs. 32).

< Worry brings a loss of joy.

< Worry about tomorrow robs us of effectiveness today.

> Worry draws us away from the practice of single-mindedness.

FROM JON COURSON'S APPLICATION COMMENTARY

I once read that it takes sixty trillion droplets of fog to cover seven city blocks. Now sixty trillion droplets, or seven city blocks' worth of fog, can close down airports and tie up cities. Yet, if you condensed those sixty trillion fog droplets, you would end up with only half a glass of water.

That's a good picture of what worry is all about. You begin with something little, only half a glass of water. But you start thinking about it and wrestling with it, wondering, "How is this going to work out? How am I going to do that?" And before long, you can't see straight, and your airport is shut down. You're not hearing from the Lord, and you're not soaring with the Lord as you once did because you're all fogged in. Jesus said, "Don't take any anxious thought whatsoever. Don't let worry strangle you. Don't end up in a fog."

This passage in Matthew calls on believers to put God first.

> Putting God first we will receive that for which we did not seek.

> If we seek first to meet our own needs, we lose the blessings we did not seek—the better blessings.

Why do you think people tend to believe that what they can do for themselves is better than what God can do for them?

FROM CORNERSTONE BIBLICAL COMMENTARY:

The Father expects his children to put him first, but he delights to meet their needs. Disciples must not permit their needs to dominate their prayers, their thoughts, and their activities. That is immaturity. However, disciples must not think that God doesn't care about their needs. That is unbelief. Disciples must prioritize their allegiance to God, his rule, and his righteous standards. In so doing they will receive all they need to eat and wear, ... But if they insist on prioritizing their own needs in their prayers and activities, they will never experience the joy of resting in the Father's care and provision.

If we are to **act like Jesus**, we must increasingly surrender our minds and hearts to his will.

During the first century, the apostle Paul traveled from city to city teaching people about the gift of salvation through Jesus and how believers could single-mindedly follow Christ. In many cases, a combative group of religious leaders approached the new churches after Paul left and tried to undermine his authority and teaching. They boasted about their religious credentials and weighed down Paul's message with Jewish laws and traditions. This infuriated Paul who then urged the believers to follow his example in keeping their focus steadfastly on Jesus.

Philippians 3:7-14

⁷ But Christ has shown me that what I once thought was valuable is worthless. ⁸ Nothing is as wonderful as knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. I have given up everything else and count it all as garbage. All I want is Christ ⁹ and to know that I belong to him. I could not make myself acceptable to God by obeying the Law of Moses. God accepted me simply because of my faith in Christ. ¹⁰ All I want is to know Christ and the power that raised him to life. I want to suffer and die as he did, ¹¹ so that somehow I also may be raised to life.

¹² I have not yet reached my goal, and I am not perfect. But Christ has taken hold of me. So I keep on running and struggling to take hold of the prize. ¹³ My friends, I don't feel that I have already arrived. But I forget what is behind, and I struggle for what is ahead. ¹⁴ I run toward the goal, so that I can win the prize of being called to heaven. This is the prize that God offers because of what Christ Jesus has done.

Because we are already the children of God through faith in Christ, we have the responsibility of "running the race" and achieving the goals God has set for us.

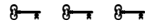
> In verse 13 we see that we need to ask God to break the power of the past.

< We cannot change the past. Our focus must be on the future.

Do you think that some people have trouble in Christian single-mindedness because of their past? What would you share with someone who was having this difficulty?

FROM THE TRANSFORMATION STUDY BIBLE

Too many Christians are shackled by regrets of the past. They are trying to run the race by looking backward! ... Some Christian runners are being distracted by the successes of the past, not the failures, and this is just as bad. The past must be set aside and "what lies ahead" must take its place.



PROFILES OF SINGLE-MINDEDNESS: JEHOSHAPHAT

King Jehoshaphat of the southern kingdom of Judah faced a tremendous challenge. His land was threatened by a hostile army. Rather than being overcome by fear, Jehoshaphat led the people to turn to the Lord in single-minded and wholehearted trust.

FROM 2 Chronicles 20:1-30 (CEV)

This passage in 2 Chronicles is written describing a victory over Judah's enemies in which the sovereign God alone acts for his people. In contrast to earlier battles, Judah's part is simply to pray for God's help, trust in his word, worship him, and then watch thankfully while He destroys the enemy.

20 Some time later, the armies of Moab and Ammon, together with the Meunites, went to war against Jehoshaphat. ² Messengers told Jehoshaphat, "A large army ... has invaded our country. ...

³ Jehoshaphat was afraid, so he asked the LORD what to do. He then told the people of Judah to go without eating to show their sorrow. ⁴ They immediately left for Jerusalem to ask for the LORD's help. ⁵ After everyone from Judah and Jerusalem had come together at the LORD's temple, Jehoshaphat stood in front of the new courtyard ⁶ and prayed: You, LORD, are the God our ancestors worshiped, ... ⁹ They believed that whenever this land is struck by war or disease or famine, your people can pray to you at the temple, and you will hear their prayer and save them. ¹⁰ You can see that the armies ... are attacking us! ... ¹² Aren't you going to punish them? We won't stand a chance when this army attacks. We don't know what to do—we are begging for your help.

¹³ While every man, woman, and child of Judah was standing there at the temple, ¹⁴ the LORD's Spirit suddenly spoke to Jahaziel, ...

¹⁵ Then Jahaziel said: ... the LORD says that you don't need to be afraid or let this powerful army discourage you. God will fight on your side! ... ¹⁷ You won't even have to fight. Just take your positions and watch the LORD rescue you from your enemy. Don't be afraid. Just do as you're told. And as you march out tomorrow, the LORD will be there with you.

¹⁸ Jehoshaphat bowed low to the ground and everyone worshiped the LORD. ... ²⁰ Early the next morning, ... Jehoshaphat stood up and said, "Listen my friends, if we trust the LORD God and believe what these prophets have told us, the LORD will help us, and we will be successful."

²² As soon as they began singing, the LORD confused the enemy camp, ²³ so that ... they turned against each other and fought until the entire camp was wiped out!

Jehoshaphat's faith is presented here in a positive light, however we find in vs. 35-37, that he did not retain his single-mindedness and lost the blessings of God.

PROFILES OF SINGLE-MINDEDNESS: JESUS

While Jehoshaphat certainly proved that his focus could be on God (in the above story), Jesus serves as the [perfect] model for the type of single-mindedness God had in mind when he announced in the first of his ten commandments: “You shall have no other gods before me.” Living out those ancient rules, Jesus didn’t make choices based on his desires or anyone else’s expectations. His sole goal was to live according to his Father’s will.

FROM John 8:12-30 (CEV)

¹² Once again Jesus spoke to the people. This time he said, “I am the light for the world! Follow me, and you won’t be walking in the dark. You will have the light that gives life.”

¹³ The Pharisees objected, “You are the only one speaking for yourself, and what you say isn’t true!” ¹⁴ Jesus replied: Even if I do speak for myself, what I say is true! I know where I came from and where I am going. The Father who sent me is here with me. ¹⁷ Your Law requires two witnesses to prove that something is true. ¹⁸ I am one of my witnesses, and the Father who sent me is the other one.

¹⁹ “Where is your Father?” they asked. “You don’t know me or my Father!” Jesus answered. “If you knew me, you would know my Father.” ...

²³ Jesus answered, “You are from below, but I am from above. You belong to this world, but I don’t. ²⁴ That is why I said you will die with your sins unforgiven. If you don’t have faith in me for who I am, you will die, and your sins will not be forgiven.”

²⁵ “Who are you?” they asked Jesus. ... ²⁸ Jesus went on to say, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, you will know who I am. You will also know that I don’t do anything on my own. I say only what my Father taught me. ²⁹ The one who sent me is with me. I always do what pleases him, and he will never leave me.” ...

In this passage write down some phrases that refer to Jesus’ single-mindedness.

The true believer has his citizenship in heaven. (Luke 10:20; Phil 3:20-21).

> His affection and attention are fixed heavenward. [A single-mindedness.]

> The Christian dies “in the Lord” because he/she lives “in the Lord.” (Rev. 14:13)

PROFILES OF SINGLE-MINDEDNESS: PETER

Unfortunately, Jesus’ disciple Peter had a bit more trouble retaining his single-minded focus when he was met with distraction. Peter’s experience is a good reminder of how we are to think about Jesus, and keep our eyes on him, even when we our thoughts get sidetracked or we feel frightened.

We see in Matthew 14:22-36 (pgs. 227-228 in BELIEVE) the story of when Peter desired to walk on water like Jesus.

After feeding the 5000, Jesus sends his disciples ahead of him in a boat to cross the Sea of Galilee. Several hours later in the night, the disciples encounter a storm. Jesus comes to them, walking on the water. This terrifies the disciples who think they are seeing a ghost.

- > Jesus tells them in verse 27 to not be frightened and identifies himself.
- > Peter responds with a request to come meet Jesus on the water. So Jesus invites Peter to come.
 - < Peter gets out of the boat and begins walking on the water toward Jesus. But when Peter takes his eyes off Jesus and sees the wind and waves, he begins to sink.
 - < Jesus does not allow Peter to sink, but stretches out his hand to help him back into the boat.
- > Peter doesn't begin to sink until he loses his single-mindedness and starts looking around at the wind and the waves.
 - < Taking our eyes off Jesus, and focusing on the difficulties of life will cause us to lose focus. But he is still there to lift us up.

FROM JON COURSON'S APPLICATION COMMENTARY

You see, faith is developed through struggle. If you ask people what faith is, most will answer "Faith is believing even though you don't have evidence." Not true. Faith is not "believing in spite of the evidence." Faith is obeying in spite of the consequence. Faith says, "I will do what the Lord says, even though it means a storm is headed my way. Even though it means there will be difficulties, obstacles, and challenges, even though it may be brutal and difficult, even though I must struggle, I will obey." ... He sent you into the storm, He's praying for you through the storm, and He'll come to you in the storm - perhaps when you least expect Him.

PROFILES OF SINGLE-MINDEDNESS: APOSTLES

Ultimately, however, the disciples adopted Jesus' bold and unwavering devotion to God and his purposes.

We read in Acts 5:12-42 (BELIEVE pgs. 228-229) of an experience the disciples had with the rulers of the Jewish faith.

In this passage, we see times are good among the Believers. A lot is happening to confirm their faith. Gathered at the temple at Solomon's porch, people from out of town start coming to visit these new believers, and they're bringing people with them to get healed; new people continue to get saved. The Apostles are winning the hearts of the multitude daily.

> But the Sanhedrin (the Jewish ruling council) have been worried about this new movement and fighting it whenever they could.

- < They arrest the Apostles and place them in prison until they can convene a meeting for the next day. However, an angel delivers them from prison, and the next morning they're out preaching in the temple again.

- < The guards are once again sent out to bring the Apostles before the Sanhedrin. But in fear of exciting the people, they do so with as little fanfare as possible.

> As the disciples stand before the Sanhedrin, the high priest says in verse 28, "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name... Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood." (meaning Jesus).

NOTE: The Sanhedrin had been responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus, but they had made every effort to make the crucifixion look like a Roman plot. That's why they had arrested Jesus at night and conducted six trials while the people slept. The next morning, when the Jewish people woke up, Jesus was hanging on a Roman cross. The Jewish leaders had gone to a lot of trouble to make it look like an all-Roman crucifixion. Now, here's Peter telling the crowds of Jews the real truth. Naturally, the Sanhedrin doesn't like the truth.

The response of the disciples is found in verse 29: *Peter and the apostles replied: We don't obey people. We obey God.*

> After this reply the Jewish leaders feel they have no other resort but to put the disciples to death.

BUT... Gamaliel (a Pharisee) was part of the Sanhedrin and well respected among them. He reasons that they should release the Apostles because, if what they are preaching is not of God, it will self-destruct.

> Looking for a face-saving way out, the Sanhedrin takes Gamaliel's advice as a solution

> The disciples are released after a beating and then they left rejoicing!

PROFILES OF SINGLE-MINDEDNESS: ISRAELITES

As the book of Deuteronomy — and Moses' life — was coming to a close, the Lord called the Israelites to make a choice: Trust and obey his commands or go their own way. Speaking through Moses, God gave this message to his people. And what was the result of the people's decision? Because they chose obedience, the following seven years were the most fruitful years in Israel's history — the Glory Days!

Deuteronomy is Moses' farewell message to the children of Israel just before he was to die and they were to cross over into the Promised Land.

> In it he reviewed the laws, emphasized the covenant blessings and responsibilities and shared the blessings of obedience and the curses of disobedience. It was crucial for this nation to be single-minded to the things of God.

Let's look at a couple of verses from this passage from the BELIEVE book (pgs. 230-232) and Deuteronomy 29:16-30:20.

29:29: *²⁹ The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.*

Not everything that is true of God has been revealed. There are some secrets that he chooses to keep.

> The secret things anticipate the need to trust, obey, and be humble before God.

< What God has revealed is for the sake of obedience.

> Also, what God **has** revealed belongs to us. We should hold them dear with a clear focus on why we do this and for whom we do it.

Is it hard for people to leave the "secret things" of God to God? Why?

Do you think that God may keep the "secret things" secret because we have enough difficulty with what he has revealed? Do you feel we are taking adequate responsibility of those revelations?

30:11 ¹¹ *Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach.*

God does not make it hard for us. He knows what we can do, so he puts his salvation and service within our reach.

> To be single-minded is to know that what God desires most from us is our obedience, love and commitment.

Verse 11 says what God commands of us is not difficult. Why do you think it seems difficult to some?

30:19-20 ¹⁹ *This day ... I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live* ²⁰ *and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, ...*

The Lord not only grants life as something outside himself, but he is life in himself.

> Knowledge of God brings life, and those who are truly alive testify to the presence of God in their lives.

> When we know that the Lord is our life, to be single-minded should come naturally.

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul also challenged believers to a single-minded commitment to God. And with his exhortations came encouraging promises about the fruitful results of such devotion. As with Israel so with us today: If we single-mindedly focus on Christ and his priorities for our lives, we will experience our Glory Days!

Romans 12:1-2

12 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

We are to give ourselves to God completely. Why? Because of what He did for us! There are two categories of people: Either we're conformers or transformers.

> Are we going to conform to the standards of the world, or are we going to transform it for God?

> Are we going to conform to what the world thinks is good, or are we going to transform and change to become a servant of God?

> Our transformation has the power to transform others.

How does Romans say we can make this transformation?

We can be changed by keeping our minds on him. How do we do that?

- > By keeping in the Word—by studying it, not for the sake of the Word, but in order to touch the Lord.
- > By honoring and obeying God, and by refusing to be influenced by societal pressures.

FROM THE QUEST STUDY BIBLE

As we replace our old way of thinking and adopt an entirely new perspective—from God's point of view - we'll begin to recognize God's will more and more. We'll find it easier to hear his voice ... God may not dictate the details of our lives ... but he will give us spiritual principles for everyday decisions. Knowing God's will results from doing his will as revealed in Scripture.

Colossians 3:1-4

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

We are to pursue a deeper knowledge of Christ himself and all that belongs to living with and for him.

- > This would include seeking first his kingdom (Matt. 6:33).
- > To “set your mind on” something means to make it your heart’s central focus.
 - < We know we have to pay attention to earthly things, but they must not be permitted to take precedence over the things of God.
 - < This must be the basis from which we pursue jobs, families, relationships and other important matters of our daily life.
- > Our life “hidden” with Christ expresses the security we have in God as we trust him.

FROM JON COURSON'S APPLICATION COMMENTARY

*I am thoroughly convinced ... that the people who are truly content are those who constantly realize that this world is not where it's at. ... those who try to find happiness here are perpetually frustrated. ... Nothing is ever quite right until we realize, "Hey, it's not here!"
I believe this is why the Lord constantly tells us in the Word to set our hearts on things above.*

Colossians 3:15-17

15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. 16 Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. 17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

If all believers took verse seventeen as their life's guide, doing everything with the name of Jesus endorsing it, how do you think it might change the world?

FROM THE TRANSFORMATION STUDY BIBLE

All that we say and do should be associated with the name of Jesus Christ. By our words and our works, we should glorify his name. If we permit anything into our lives that cannot be associated with the name of Jesus, then we are sinning. We must do and say everything on the authority of his name.



KEY IDEA: I focus on God and his priorities for my life.

Randy Frazee, in his book *Think, Act, Believe Like Jesus*, makes this suggestion:

A good place to start in putting God first is to evaluate and target areas where we may not be seeking him. Here's an exercise to help you do this.

> At the end of a day, take a few minutes to think back through your activities. Try to recall your thought processes as well.

- < If someone had shadowed you all day, what might they say you were seeking?
- < What would a stranger see you place first in your life?
- < What were you focused on?
- < Exactly what were your priorities?

God is all about our relationship with him. He seeks us all the time – forever.

> The challenge is for us is to remain faithful to him.

- < When we fail, our assurance is that we can seek forgiveness and regain that right relationship.

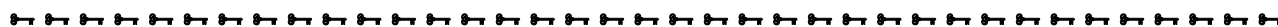
A strong indicator of single-mindedness is coming to the maturity of an ever-growing desire to simply love and seek the One who promises to never leave us.

> We do this not because we want more blessings or favor, but because he is worthy of our full focus and attention.

When we get to the point of asking “What is God’s will for my life?” Matthew 6:33 provides the answer.

> Single-mindedness is the answer in our search.

Unlike an earthly king’s physical realm, God’s kingdom is only visible in the lives of his followers who are doing the very thing we are talking about – seeking him first. Earthly kings have borders and boundaries; God does not. His kingdom is found in his people and his activity. As his temples, wherever we move, his kingdom is represented. - Randy Frazee



KEY APPLICATION: What difference does this make in the way I live?

FROM *THINK, ACT, BELIEVE LIKE JESUS* by Randy Frazee

What difference does this make in the way I live?

- We set goals informed by God's agenda and will.
- We don't ask God to bless our plan but to bless our alignment to *his* plan.
- We trust God to meet our needs and desires.

God makes a profound promise to us in Matthew 6:33 and offers a great blessing for being single-minded. He promises that if we will take care of his business here on earth, he will take care of us both here and in eternity. In short — we take care of his kingdom, and he'll take care of ours. Who else could offer you such an amazing deal?

As you practice single-mindedness, something begins to change within you. The words of the psalmist become true in your life:

Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. -Psalm 37:4

The decision to follow God is difficult at first because his plan often conflicts with your plan. But when you first focus on God, he promises to give you the desires of your heart. Here's how it works. As you go through the process of focusing on God, he changes the desires of your heart so that, over time, what you want for yourself mirrors what he wants for you.

No one can deny that our lifestyles today are chaotic and complex. Single-mindedness actually offers simplicity. Our lives can be uncluttered by the Creator and set on a path toward purpose and peace by his grace and mercy.

