

sermon study guide

May 29/30, 2021

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“How Then Shall We Live?” Part 6: Pursue Simplicity

Ashwin Ramani

IN - PURSUE RELATIONSHIP

1. What are your passions and priorities? What time and effort do you invest in them?
2. What do you want to be remembered for after you die? How are you living now to bring this about?

UP - PURSUE GOD

Read Philippians 3:4-14

3. To pursue simplicity implies a refinement of, and focus on, what we value in this life. Discuss the changes in Paul's life, values and mission after he met Jesus.
4. From these Scriptures, what is included in the pursuit of 'knowing Christ'? How does Paul keep his focus clear? What does success in life look like for him?

OUT - PURSUE MISSION

5. Pastor Ashwin said, “A simple life is a focused life”. What actions can you take to start simplifying your life that you may better pursue God, relationship, mission and generosity? How can the Philippians passage help bring you focus?
6. Discuss C.S. Lewis' words, “Aim at heaven and you will get earth thrown in; aim at earth and you will get neither.” What are you aiming for? What does focusing on eternity look like for you?

For Personal Reflection/Prayer:

What would you describe as your life's mission and purpose? How well are your passions and priorities aligned with Philippians 3:7-14? If you are unsure, have a conversation with a trusted friend about this.

THE WORD (NIV)

Philippians 3:4-14

⁴ though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

⁷ But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. ¹⁰ I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

¹² Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

sermon study summary

“How Then Shall We Live?” Part 6: Pursue Simplicity

Ashwin Ramani

This weekend we continue our series on “How Then Shall We Live?” as we look at pursuing simplicity.

Life has so many distractions and detours that it's easy to shift our focus away from the most important things in life. What are we living for? What are we giving ourselves to? Who or what do we value most?

Pursuing simplicity means we have the right focus. It is about identifying what is essential, what really counts, and then giving ourselves fully to it. It is most challenging, because we don't just simplify – we simplify to accomplish something more important. We need to pursue simplicity to excel in our other four pursuits: pursue God, pursue relationship, pursue mission, and pursue generosity.

Pursuing simplicity will help us to maintain our focal point. In Philippians 3:4-14 and Acts 26:12-18, the Apostle Paul describes his life after he encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus. He became consumed by one thing—knowing Jesus and the power of His resurrection. All other pursuits were as garbage (Phil. 3:8). He points us to the main focus of the Christian life, challenging us to examine our true priorities in light of the teachings of God's Word.

Focus on knowing Jesus more. What stands in your way of following Jesus faithfully? Does knowing Jesus eclipse everything else in life? Like Paul, could you say that whatever else you want in life doesn't come close to the joy of knowing Jesus? One way to keep growing in your knowledge of Jesus is by being in His presence! It means taking a portion of your day to worship, read God's Word and pray. As you spend quiet times in God's presence, He will speak to you through His Word and through His promptings. He will fine-tune you in those moments of stillness and will bring much-needed clarity and direction to your life. Everything else will flow from your daily walk with Jesus.

Focus on your personal mission. Paul illustrated his personal mission using the metaphor of athletes who train vigorously, are determined, and undistracted. He pressed on, straining forward to God's personal mission for him: to testify to both Jews and Gentiles of the saving power of Jesus.

God has a purpose only you can fulfill. He has made you exactly how He wanted you to be. He crafted every detail. He uniquely wired you, gifted you, and gave you certain passions and burdens. No one else can do best what God has called you to do. Do you know what your life's mission is? If not, take time to discover it. Pray Pastor Ashwin's prayer: “Lord, may I never miss out on anything you have in store for my life.”

Focus on eternity. Paul fixed his eyes on eternal rewards, not on regrets, nor past achievements, nor earthly benefits. These rewards in heaven will last forever. When we meet Jesus face to face, we will have no regrets for any sacrifices we have made. All that we believed in and all that we look forward to will become a reality. The day of our coronation with Jesus is the day we should be fixing our eyes on.

Are you single-minded in your purpose? Do you focus on knowing Jesus, His personal mission for you, and your eternal rewards? Run the race that really matters in light of eternity. Then you will hear Jesus say “Well done my good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of the Lord!”