



THREE DAYS OF FOCUS

Three Days of Focus: Session THREE Orphans and Others

"I tell you the truth, whatever you did for the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me"
Matthew 25:40

*"Overtake the world with love for them; overstep regret get out of your hammocks
Because the orphans and sinners, loser, beginners
Freaks and the outcast, young and the downcast,
Poor and broken are now loved and chosen
And the one to bring the message is you."
—From TLB "Not Losing Any Sleep" from the album There Goes Our Innocence*

I can still remember how crazy it was waiting at the airport with my brothers and friends for my parent's return from Russia. They had been gone nearly a month and I felt very blessed to be back in St. Louis between mission trips for their arrival. As we waited expectantly, I recall thinking about how crazy it was that my mom and dad would travel half way around the world to bring home a little girl they had never met. This little girl who was so badly malnourished that she would have virtually no chance to survive in her current orphanage condition was about to become my sister. And though their actions were beyond me, when I saw them step into the airport with this lost angel I felt a compassion and love I had never know until that moment.

Being a Christian is more than going to a church a couple times a week or trying to be a good person. Nor is it being recognized as a member of a religious group. Being a believer is a life of **ACTION**. As Jesus stated, "If anyone comes after me he must deny himself, pick up his cross daily, and follow after me." It requires that we give up ourselves and walk as Jesus did. And what did He do? He stepped into a lost and sick world to offer radical world changing love to those who did not deserve it. Since he did it for us, it is our job to do the same for others.

In session one, we learned from God's word that the key to tuning out the world is to tune into God. To do this we must read his word and place our attention on the things that God values. The more our focus shifts to others the less we focus on ourselves. Jesus summed up everything in the whole Bible in this awesome passage. "Love the Lord your God with all you passion, spirit and intelligence. And love others as you love yourself."
From Mark 12:30-31 The Message Bible

The bible also amazingly sums up what religion is in the same way. Some think religion is being pious or following a strict set of “holy rules.” However, in James 1:27 it states “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep one’s self from being polluted by the world.” Isn’t that remarkable! The whole of religion is wrapped up in just the two simple acts of pursuing God’s purity and loving others.

This is essentially what three days of focus is all about. Through your fasting and fundraising you are keeping yourselves from being polluted by the media and you are showing love to orphans. Right now you are radically redefining religion to what it was originally intended to be. Religion should not be a pious ceremonial life that is “**out of reach**” but rather a radical Christian life of “**outreach**.”

Check out this verse!

1 John 3:16-18

Questions to consider:

1) What Christ did for us?

2) What can we do for others?

Conviction and Conscious

I remember once being at a bible study home group engaged in a discussion about international outreach when someone interjected, “I am doing my best to bless those around me. I am not feeling convicted to do more for international orphans and I’m not losing any sleep about it.

We all may be tempted to have that same attitude at times. After all, our lives are all busy and consuming. “I don’t want to be put on a guilt trip!” you may be thinking. However, according to the Bible we are all challenged to reach out more to the needy in order to go deeper with Christ.

Read this parable about a young man who had a chance to ask Jesus a life changing question.

Matthew 19:16-26

How did Jesus respond to the young ruler?

What was the response of the young man after Christ told him what he must do?

How do you think his life would have been different if he would have done what Jesus said?

In America, statistics show that the vast majority of Americans live in relative wealth compared to those in other countries. For an experiment, do a survey among yourselves and see how much your household spends on things like television networks, cell phones, internet, or any other item you can live without in a year. Then compare this cost to the *Give Hope to an Orphan Sponsorship* booklet to see how that same money would impact the life of children in another country.

It's not wrong for us to be blessed by God or have things but with greater privilege comes greater responsibility. As Jesus said, "To whom much has been given, much will be required." Whether God is moving you to do a mission's project in another city, rake leaves for an elderly person or sponsor an orphan, don't be afraid to follow God's prompting and move religion to ACTION.

The Good Stuff: Check out Matthew 25:34-36

- 1) *Who do the King and the Father represent?*
- 2) *Compare and contrast the rewards for those who helped the less fortunate and the penalty for those who didn't?*
- 3) *What are some ways you can personally show God's love to the "least of these"?*

Final thoughts from Travis Lee

A Life Changing Challenge

Do you want to have the absolute best day of your life? If so I want to challenge you with a new idea. God's word talks about how we should set our affections on things above and not on earthly things. It seems to me that when we do this, things always go better.

So here is the challenge! For one day, consider only others and NOT yourself. Be deliberate. The day before hand make a list of people you suspect that you will come in contact with the next day and plan how you will bless each one of them. Be creative!

It may seem strange, but if you do this you will have the very best day of your life!

What are some things you can do for others? Who are some enemies you can show love to? Think outside the box and let God's Spirit guide you! As you wrap up your media fast, don't let it stop here. Take this as an opportunity to start new and give God your all.

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