



Contending for the Focused Life: 5 Steps

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Series: Contending for the Focused Life

Make Jesus Great in our Lives ***Contending for the Focused Life: 5 Steps***

As we move into 2017, I want to challenge you to the most glorious, most fantastic, more joyful year you've ever known.

I love the start of a new year because it's a chronological Kairos moment to refocus, redefine, and re-envision our lives. I'm not talking specifically about "New Year's Resolutions" but rather a "New Year's Vision and Purpose."

I want to take this coming week to talk about "Making Jesus Great," but this will only happen in your life by contending for it.

Here's what I know is that if you have a vision, if you have purpose, you can discipline your life to do almost anything! I mean it. This just might be the year for you to write a book, start a new company, redo your marriage and your family.

- You must contend for a focused life.
- You must contend for the vision God's given you.
- "Without a vision, any road will get you there." — Howard Hendricks

God wants you to define your life with vision to win. Paul understood this better than anyone in history. He wanted to win. He wanted the prize.

Listen to Paul in 1 Corinthians 9 talking about his pursuit of God:

1 Corinthians 9:24-25

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. 25 All athletes are disciplined in their training.

Don't you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win! (New Living Translation)

- Paul made Jesus great all over the known civilized world like no other.

- Paul is probably one of the most focused men the world has ever known.
- Arguably, no one, outside of Jesus Christ, has so influenced the world.
- Paul was the greatest theologian and missionary of all time.
- With no cell phone, no New Testament, no computer, no air travel, no social media, this man changed the civilized world like no other.
- How did he do it? It was a mindset—a mind set. A focused mind; a focused life.
- In Paul's letter to the Philippians, Paul takes a rare moment in his letter to open up about his personal life, how he views his life and ministry in chapter 3. We are invited into the mind of Paul and what motivates him.
- Ex. For you athletes, it would be like a moment of truth, a moment of candor with Coach K of Duke or John Wooden who took UCLA to 10 national championships in 12 years; it might be a one-hour discussion with Billy Graham or George Mueller ...
- Paul's writing about a focused mindset of joy. Paul is sharing with us how to redefine your mind. Paul is talking about a focused mind. He talks about "thinking on these things." If Paul is talking about being a "winner," then he is by extension also telling us about "loosing."
 - o Do you realize that a focused mind is joyful.
 - o You don't make joy your goal, you make Jesus your goal and joy comes.
 - o Chapter 1: Single mind—to live is Christ.
 - o Chapter 2: Submitted mind—to have the mind of Christ. Christ is our model for living.
 - o Chapter 3: Selfless mind.

Phil 3:1-16

1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.

- Paul is not rejoicing in circumstances. Indeed, he's in prison as he writes.
- He's rejoicing in the Lord (big difference).
- This is a focused mind — rejoicing in the Lord even when circumstances are bad, ugly, difficult, and confusing.

2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!

- Beware of the Judaizers — Jews who would follow Paul around and contradict what he had taught them. “Believing in Jesus is good, but you also need to be circumcised.”
- Paul calls them “dogs” and “mutilators.” They demanded a kind of external proof of your salvation.
- They taught that believing in Jesus is really not enough. You must do these other things to really be a Christian — basically they taught that you must become a Jew to become a Christian.
- This is the true disciple ...

3 For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, 4 though I also might have confidence in the flesh, I more so: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; 6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

- Paul put no confidence in himself. Paul was one of the most educated men of his time under the greatest teacher in Israel, Gamaliel. He was one who had once been on the fast track to becoming one of the top

leaders, top scribe in Israel. He says, “[I have] no confidence in the flesh.”

- o Which meant his focus was not on his education
- o Which meant his focus was not on his own ingenuity

7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.

- Put it all on the line. When Paul got saved, everything changed. He not only counted his life as loss for the sake of Christ, but he also lost everything.
- Paul was wholehearted! He was “all in.”
- You show me a person who is wholehearted for Christ, and I will show you a person who is full of joy.

8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

- Paul had a focused life! He was focused on knowing Christ. The passion of Paul’s life was to know Christ, to gain Christ, to experience His righteousness in his heart and life.
- Paul understood that God works in a man or woman, but it doesn’t just end there, He then works through a person.
- So what does Paul tell us about the focused life in the following verses?

5 Steps toward a Focused Life (from Paul):

12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

1. **Dissatisfaction.** Paul was not satisfied with his life. Paul was not satisfied with what he had already obtained. He realized that he had not arrived yet. He had a holy dissatisfaction.
 - Paul has experienced visions and dreams, even being taken up into heaven. The experience was so indescribable that he said he couldn't even repeat it. It must have been so powerful, so beautiful, so unearthly that he couldn't put what he saw into words.
 - Paul has seen people healed by the thousands. He even saw his own headband used to lay on people and they would get healed.
 - Paul even raised a guy from the dead, the man who fell asleep and fell out a window!
 - But Paul's not satisfied! He's not satisfied with his salvation; He wants more!! This man has a HOLY DISSATISFACTION.
 - o Most people are just so comfortable.
 - o They're not striving anymore, not pressing anymore.
 - o But they're totally worried about their life—worried about trivial things.
 - o If you're worried about stuff this morning, remember this: J.Vernon McGee said, "Today is the tomorrow that you worried about yesterday."
 - o Paul is pressing toward the future like a track star running a race.

12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

2. **Determination.** Pressing on to know Jesus! To love Him; to know Him; to experience His love and power in this life.

- Christ had laid hold of Paul's heart and Paul wanted to lay hold of Christ's heart. To love Him with all of his heart, soul, mind, and strength.
- A vibrant pursuit of the heart!
- What makes a winning athlete? A winning athlete doesn't learn by seminars and lectures. A winning athlete gets in the game. You have to work at it. Not just attending church services. That doesn't take any pressing! It means getting in the game, battling, contending for the love of Christ.
 - Ex. It's the young couple I counseled to practice the Covenant of Harmony and go to the offending person and begin the conversation toward forgiveness and reconciliation.
 - Ex. It's the former missionary who came to me and wanted to start reaching out to the houses and apartments around the church, to invite people to church. This man with a group of others gave out over 1200 gospel tracts and invites to the Christmas Eve gathering.
 - Ex. It's the guy who has a porn addiction and he's getting in a discipleship group with some other men and he's getting set free.
 - That takes determination! That takes a holy dissatisfaction. They want to experience more of Christ by taking new risks, facing fear, facing sin!

"Integrity is choosing Courage over Comfort; choosing what is Right over what is Fun, Fast, or Easy; and choosing to Practice our Values rather than simply Professing them." (Brene Brown)

- For many of us, it's more about having Christ follow us and our plans than us following Christ and His plans.

- It's a deep-down determination to know Christ, to seek the kingdom first. It's a spiritually empowered competitive heart—not for fame, not for personal glory but to experience the love of Christ.
 - o To experience MORE of Jesus in your life and heart.
 - o To not just have Christ within your life (salvation) but to have Christ work through your life (sanctification).
 - o In prayer, in signs and wonders, in worship
 - o In our job, taking Christ into our work, experiencing His power at your vocation

13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do,

3. **Direction.** “One thing I do” not “a hundred things I dabble in.” Paul had a vision for his life.
 - Paul had direction for his life — he knew what his goal was and if these other things didn't fit, he dropped them.
 - Ex. I will talk more about this tomorrow night at our “Make Jesus Great” Week of Impact—Vision, vision, vision.
 - The goal—being happy! That's not a vision. That's the result of a God-given, God-anointed, God-empowered vision. Vision brings joy.
 - Ex. You see Paul could say he was “rejoicing in the Lord” while in prison because even in prison, he was still pursuing his vision.
 - The eternal problem with most of us? We are too busy with things that just don't matter.
 - Ex. I'm the worst here. I get too caught up in “trivial pursuits” for the pursuit of all things trivial. Yes we have to take care of trivial things, but we don't have to pursue them. When the car breaks down, it's not about the car, it's about our direction: “How will my attitude with this broken-down car cause me to love Jesus more, experience His power more in my life, or be a witness for Christ?” That changes the circumstance from a broken-down car to a renewed visionary heart.

forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,

4. **New word: Disremember.** It's a real word. Forgetting the past, even the accomplishments and certainly the failures.
 - Paul had so much to be proud of. He had seen many miracles and signs and wonders, as well of things to be ashamed of. He was the catalyst for the imprisonment and execution of the early Christians before he got saved, yet he chose to forget about it and press toward the future.
 - He chose to disremember the past! He didn't dwell on the past.
 - At some point in our lives, most of us stop living out of our imagination and innovation and start living out of our memory and past. That's the day we start dying. To be fully alive, to be wholehearted, we must be fully in the present, still dreaming about a better future.

14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

5. **Discipline.** Pressing for the goal of God's call on your life will take discipline. Paul set goals. He had a vision but he also had a goal.
 - You can't wish things into existence. It will take discipline in your life.
 - I wonder if Paul set goals? We don't know but we do know that he planned and thought through the vision God had given him.
 - 4 D's that can change your life: Desire leads to Determination leads to Discipline leads to Delight
 - If you have no discipline you will be at the same place you were last year about the same time!
 - Someone has said, "Discipline is the bridge between goal and accomplishment."

1 Cor 9:24-25

Don't you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win! 25 All athletes are disciplined in their training.

- This is where we get the word disciple. You must obey the rules. Discipline yourself. This is a race with rules.
- He's talking about being a wholehearted disciple. The rules of the Word of God. God is looking for men and women who obey the Lord.
- We must all suffer either the pain of discipline or the pain of regret!
- Fasting and praying is key. PB&J is the start. You have to study God's Word.
- Ex. Join us this week as I walk you through how get a vision, how to change your life this year.

15 Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.

16 Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.

- Paul wants all of his followers to follow his lead, to do what he's been doing, to have the same mind, the same focused life.
- Paul's mind set was set! Paul's mindset was:
 1. A holy Dissatisfaction with the status quo
 2. A spiritually-empowered competitive Determination
 3. A "one thing" Direction
 4. A Disremembering of the past
 5. A Disciplined life

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kZIXWp6vFdE>

Hebrews 12:1-2

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. 2 We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne.