

SIMPLIFY: THE NECESSITY OF FOCUS

Sermon by Todd Lester

May 1, 2016

Living Simply: We value uncluttered lives, which free us to love boldly, give generously, and serve joyfully.

Ephesians 5:17 Don't act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do.

FOUR QUESTIONS TO FOCUS YOUR LIFE

1. THE _____ QUESTION:

WILL IT BE _____ OR _____?

Psalm 62:10, 2 Corinthians 5:14, Philippians 4:6



2. THE _____ QUESTION:

WILL IT BE MY _____ OR MY _____?

Romans 8:29, Philippians 2:5, 2 Peter 1:5-7



3. THE _____ QUESTION:

WILL IT BE ABOUT _____ OR _____?

1 Peter 4:10, Ephesians 2:10



4. THE _____ QUESTION:

WILL IT BE _____ OR _____?

1 Thessalonians 1:8, Philippians 1:27a



Take some time to share with the group about your eyesight. How often do you get your eyes tested? Do you wear glasses or contacts? Have you ever had an injury or operation on your eyes? Share a story about your eyes or eyesight.

Eye Exercises

1. Palm your eyes

Rub your hands together until they feel warm and then lightly cover your closed eyes. Take slow deep breaths and imagine blackness.

2. Focus exercise

Put your thumb in front of you about 30 cm from your face for 10 seconds. Then, without moving your head, focus on an object several meters away. Alternate between the two several times.

3. Zooming

Stretch out your arm with your thumb up in front of you. Focus on your thumb and then slowly bring it closer until it is 5 cm in front of your face. Move your thumb back and forth a few times.

4. Figure 8

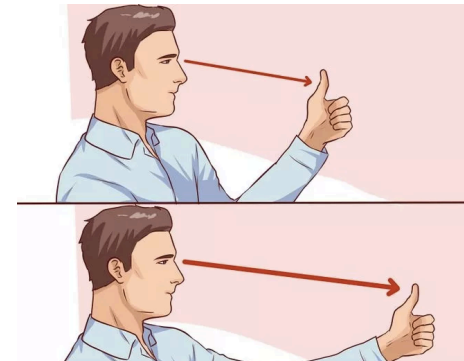
Imagine a giant figure 8 on the floor about 3 m in front of you. Trace the figure 8 with your eyes slowly several times, then trace it backwards as well.

5. Directional Exercises

- Look straight ahead and without moving your head look to the left. Focus on what you see for several seconds, then look to the right and to the same thing. Repeat.
- Without moving your head, look down and focus on what you see for several seconds. Then look up and do the same. Repeat.

Do your eyes feel a little bit tired after these exercise?

(They are adapted from <http://www.wikihow.com/Exercise-Your-Eyes>)



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Icebreaker/Introduction

The 'Focus Your Vision' activity focuses (see what I did there?) our attention on physical vision, while the flip side is about our spiritual focus. Have group members share about their eyes and vision. Scan through and consider trying some of the eye exercises that are included.

Ask if there was anything from this week's message that stood out – either a point that was made which really resonated with them, or perhaps a question or difficulty that came up for them.

Read [Ephesians 5:17](#) Does anything stand out to you from this text? Discuss Todd's statement that in today's world not very many people take time for reflection.

Todd said that part of living simply is cutting out superfluous things (things that don't matter) in our lives. What are some things that come to mind for you that you could get rid off?

FOUR QUESTIONS TO FOCUS YOUR LIFE

1. THE DEVOTION QUESTION: WILL IT BE SELF-CENTRED OR GOD-CENTRED?

Focuses on [Psalm 62:10](#), [2 Corinthians 5:14](#), [Philippians 4:6](#)

Recall some of the things that Todd mentioned people tend to centre their lives around (career, hobby, sport, money, having fun) and add any others you can think of. Why did Todd say these are dangerous as centres? (not solid, secure, strong enough)

Consider someone who makes money (or other things) the centre of their life. Could it appear that their life seems to be working out okay, even without God at the centre? (consider Psalm 49)

Discuss Todd's statement that 'worry is a sign that Jesus has been replaced at the centre of your life.'

Todd said that whatever you think about most is what is at the centre of your life. What do you feel you think about most?

Todd explained how Jesus shouldn't be just a piece of the pie in your busy life but He is to be the filling in every piece. How can we bring Jesus into every aspect of our 'pie'?

2. THE MOTIVATION QUESTION: WILL IT BE MY COMFORT OR MY CHARACTER?

Focuses on [Romans 8:29](#), [Philippians 2:5](#), [2 Peter 1:5-7](#)

Share about a time when you made a decision to do what was right instead of what was easy.

Todd used the phrase "God puts you in situations" that help us develop character. How active a role do you believe God plays in your day to day life? Does He 'allow' difficult circumstances or 'send them'?

Todd said that our character is simply an accumulation of good habits. Encourage the group by talking about character development you've seen over time in yourself or someone else.

Todd encouraged us to use our calendar to become who we want to be. What are some things you could put on your calendar to help accomplish this?

3. THE AMBITION QUESTION: WILL IT BE ABOUT GETTING OR GIVING?

Focuses on [1 Peter 4:10](#), [Ephesians 2:10](#)

Discuss Todd's statement that everyone wants to make a difference or leave an impact with their lives. Would you agree that this desire comes from God? How do non-believers account for this drive?

What are some of the gifts or resources or traits that you have been given by God? How have you used them to serve others?

Todd asked us to consider this powerful question: "Based on who I am and how I am made, what is the greatest contribution I can make to my world?"

It was pointed out that we need both time and financial margin in order to be able to help others. How can you create some margin for that?

4. THE PROMOTION QUESTION: WILL IT BE MYSELF OR MY SAVIOUR?

Focuses on [1 Thessalonians 1:8](#), [Philippians 1:27a](#)

How comfortable are you with talking to non-believers about your faith? Does it come naturally or is it something that challenges you? What have you found to be effective ways to share about your relationship with God?

Todd said that the best messages are personal messages. Have you ever taken time to think about (or write down) how you could explain what the Lord means to you? Do you think it would be helpful to do so? (read 1 Peter 3:15)

Do you tend toward 'show it' or 'share it'? What do you think is the right balance between these two ideas?

Discuss Todd's statement that "we often are more concerned about what people think of us than that they hear about Jesus."

Which of the above 4 questions do you find most challenging? What steps can you take to address that area of your life?

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WILL IT BE SELF-CENTRED OR GOD-CENTRED?

Psalm 62:10 And if your wealth increases, don't make it the centre of your life.

2 Corinthians 5:14 Either way, Christ's love controls us. Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life.

Philippians 4:6 Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.

2. THE MOTIVATION QUESTION:

WILL IT BE MY COMFORT OR MY CHARACTER?

Romans 8:29 For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

Philippians 2:5 You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

2 Peter 1:5-7 Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone.

3. THE AMBITION QUESTION:

WILL IT BE ABOUT GETTING OR GIVING?

1 Peter 4:10 God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

4. THE PROMOTION QUESTION:

WILL IT BE MYSELF OR MY SAVIOUR?

1 Thessalonians 1:8 And now the word of the Lord is ringing out from you to people everywhere, even beyond Macedonia and Achaia, for wherever we go we find people telling us about your faith in God.

Philippians 1:27a Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ.