



Staying Focused ~ Part 3: Finishing What You Start

- STAYING FOCUSED SERIES:

- **Week 1...The Goal Is Relationship with God**
- **Week 2... Dealing with Distractions**
- **Week 3...Finishing What You Start**

Here We Go!

- GOD'S PLAN TO MOVE YOU FORWARD

- **We are compelled to move forward**, not because of our own abilities, talents and strength, but because of who we are in Christ...
 - The righteous keep moving forward, and those with clean hands become stronger and stronger. (Job 17:9 NLT-SE)
 - ³ Who may climb the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? ⁴ Only those whose hands and hearts are pure... (Psa 24:3-4 NLT-SE)
 - **What does it mean to have clean hands in God's sight?** The word "clean" in Job 17 and Psalm 24 comes from the Hebrew word **naqiy** (pronounced, naw-kee) which means, "innocent, blameless, free, guiltless." (Strongs) This Hebrew word, **naqiy** is used when a person is liberated from slavery or released from an oath they made.
 - **Our innocence is not negotiated, but is a direct result of the blood Jesus** being shed for the forgiveness of our sins. We cannot "wash" our hands to make them clean, but our hands (acts of faith) can be washed by the blood of Jesus, making us innocent and free to "live and move and have our being" in faith .
- When the Word says that we were "**purchased**" **with the blood of Jesus**, we were made righteous and set free to follow him. We are no longer being held captive to our past, but we can press on in what we were created by God to be and do...
 - ¹² I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. ¹³ No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us. (Phil 3:12-14 NLT-SE)

- **God directs our paths to the degree that we trust His leadership in our lives.** As we seek to understand His will for our lives, we will receive the full benefit of His leadership and guidance...
 - ⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. ⁶ Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take. (Prov 3:5–6 NLT-SE)
 - The LORD says, “I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you. (Psa 32:8 NLT-SE)
- We risk being distracted and confused if we look only at our circumstances or available resources to try and gauge whether we are in the Lord’s will. **He is completely able and willing to lead us on a path we have never seen or even heard of** in order to get us moving in the direction leads us into His plans for our lives...
 - I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness. I will create rivers in the dry wasteland. (Is 43:19 NLT-SE)
- **We may not even be able to conceive his God’s plans for us.** He isn’t just after obedience, but wants to transform our lives to enable us to follow his leadership in our lives. He does this, not by manipulating us, but by literally changing the way we think...
 - Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. (Rom 12:2 NLT-SE)

- THE WORLD’S PLAN TO CONFUSE YOU

- **The culture we live in has a loud voice.** It’s really hard to ignore. When we begin to take on the character and values of Jesus, the way we think will begin to contradict what we hear from the “world” confusion and fear. The is not from God, but is authored by the “ruler of this world,” the “Enemy of our souls” himself.
 - For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. (1 Cor 14:33 ESV)
 - We know that we are children of God and that the world around us is under the control of the evil one. (1 John 5:19 NLT-SE)
- The New Testament writers warned believers about false prophets both within the church and in the world as well. Prophets are those who speak on behalf of their leader. **“The world” is continually trying to prophesy to us through politics, fashion, the arts, and media to advance the agenda of their leader the devil.** We must operate in spiritual discernment and wisdom to successfully navigate those confusing waters...
 - Dear friends, do not believe everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit. You must test them to see if the spirit they have comes from God. For there are many false prophets in the world. (1 John 4:1 NLT-SE)
- **The truth is that we can’t hide anything from the Lord.** He is all-knowing. Yet, we live our lives as if He can only see and know what we want Him to. What are we thinking? When we operate in this kind of foolish understanding, we are walking in a deadly form of spiritual confusion...
 - ⁹ “The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is? ¹⁰ But I, the LORD, search all hearts and examine secret motives. I give all people their due rewards, according to what their actions deserve.” (Jer 17:9–10 NLT-SE)

- THE ENEMY'S PLAN TO DERAIL YOU

- **The plans and schemes of the enemy are real.** The Greek word for scheme is *noema*, which literally means, “the mind.” So, when the Bible talks about the schemes of the enemy, it is referring directly to what is in the mind of the enemy, or the way he thinks...
 - ¹⁰ When I forgive whatever needs to be forgiven, I do so with Christ’s authority for your benefit, ¹¹ so that Satan will not outsmart us. For we are familiar with his evil schemes. (2 Cor 2:10–11 NLT-SE)
 - I fear that somehow your pure and undivided devotion to Christ will be corrupted (“your thoughts will be led astray” ~ ESV), just as Eve was deceived by the cunning ways of the serpent. (2 Cor 11:3 NLT-SE)
- **Focus!** As we talked about last week, if you want to stay focused, fix your attention on God and his desires, not on the distraction. The enemy easily derails us when we fix our attention on what he is doing in our lives...
 - ⁸ Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. ⁹ Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith. Remember that your Christian brothers and sisters all over the world are going through the same kind of suffering you are. (1 Pet 5:8–9 NLT-SE)
- The enemy can really do a number on you through **comparison** and **selfishness**. Both
 - ¹³ If you are wise and understand God’s ways, prove it by living an honorable life, doing good works with the humility that comes from wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you are bitterly jealous and there is selfish ambition in your heart, don’t cover up the truth with boasting and lying. ¹⁵ For jealousy and selfishness are not God’s kind of wisdom. Such things are earthly, unspiritual, and demonic. ¹⁶ For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind. ¹⁷ But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere. ¹⁸ And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness. (James 3:13–18 NLT-SE)

- THE BRILLIANCE AND BEAUTY OF BECOMING A FRIEND OF GOD

- **Becoming a friend of God**
 - God’s friends **listen to what he has to say**
 - When God is your friend, you have a high value of what He thinks and what is on His heart. When He wants to talk, you are ready and listening. He wants to fill you in on what He is doing and plan’s to do in the future.
 - Indeed, the Sovereign LORD never does anything until he reveals his plans to his servants the prophets. (Amos 3:7 NLT-SE)
 - You are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. (John 15:15 NLT-SE)
 - As a friend of God, you love God for who He is, not just for what He can do for you. You desire to be someone with whom God can entrust His desires, His grievances and His intentions. You pay attention when He shares what causes Him pain and what brings Him joy.
 - God’s friends **communicate with him courageously**
 - **Friends are open and honest with each other.** There is a real freedom in their relationship, they can have open and courageous conversations that strengthen their friendship.

- ¹ The LORD spoke to Abram in a vision and said to him, “Do not be afraid, Abram, for I will protect you, and your reward will be great.” ² But Abram replied, “O Sovereign LORD, what good are all your blessings when I don’t even have a son? Since you’ve given me no children, Eliezer of Damascus, a servant in my household, will inherit all my wealth. ³ You have given me no descendants of my own, so one of my servants will be my heir.” ⁴ Then the LORD said to him, “No, your servant will not be your heir, for you will have a son of your own who will be your heir.” ⁵ Then the LORD took Abram outside and said to him, “Look up into the sky and count the stars if you can. That’s how many descendants you will have!” ⁶ And **Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD counted him as righteous because of his faith.** (Gen 15:1–6 NLT-SE)
- “I looked for someone who might rebuild the wall of righteousness that guards the land. I searched for someone to stand in the gap in the wall so I wouldn’t have to destroy the land, but I found no one. (Ezek 22:30 NLT-SE)
- “God is seeking friends who are willing to have honest conversations with Him and who will be champions for the people and issues that are on His heart.” ~ Helen Calder
- God’s friends **are obedient, even when it’s difficult**
 - God has something to say and He wants to say it to you! He’s not desperate for someone to talk to, but wants to develop a friendship with you. **He wants to confide in you.** He wants you to know what He’s thinking and doing.
 - ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵ I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn’t confide in his slaves. (John 15:14–15 NLT-SE)
 - **Believe it or not, the Lord is not obligated to share every detail about unfolding plans in our lives.** In many cases, we are operating on a need-to-know basis when it comes to details. The reason is simple. If we aren’t sure how things will play out as we look ahead, we are much more likely to position ourselves to trust the leadership of Jesus and depend upon the power of the Holy Spirit to stay on track. Again, **it takes not just obedience, but focus on our part.**
 - It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going. (Heb 11:8 NLT-SE)
 - Listen to God, but don’t stop there. **The true test of your friendship with God is what you do when you walk away from that conversation.** This is where focus becomes a way of life. This is the brilliant plan of God.
 - “Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. (John 15:5 NLT-SE)