TOPIC: FOCUS ON JESUS!

In all that I say and do, Jesus Christ will be the main focal point of my life, for my entire life.

KEY POINTS

- In 597BC, Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians. Jeremiah had warned Israel that this would happen because of their rebellion against God. Their best and brightest were taken as captives to Babylon, including a schoolboy by the name of Daniel.
- Nebuchadnezzar, the conquering king, used a very simple and powerful strategy to keep the captured Jews in line: turn them into Babylonians! He gave them Babylonian names, fed them Babylonian food and taught their children the Babylonian language and culture.
- The teenaged Daniel resisted. He refused to use his Babylonian name and he refused to eat Babylonian food. He continued to worship Yahweh in his heart and in his lifestyle.
- Daniel held fast to his faith. He could have protested and complained about any number of things in this strange land in which he was held captive, but he chose a different path.
- As we read the book of Daniel, we see that he chose to openly and deliberately worship the God of Israel, giving Him honour and glory in the court of a heathen king.
- He studied hard, had a great attitude and earned the respect of those around him. But he devoted his best efforts to maintaining his relationship with God and was totally available for His use whenever God chose to use him.
- All through his long life, he interpreted dreams for kings and ruled as a high government official with diligence and skill. Jealous detractors could not find the smallest argument to make against his character. When his enemies tricked the king into signing a law against prayer to Jehovah, Daniel continued to pray toward Jerusalem three times a day. As a result he was thrown into the lions' den, but God delivered him.
- Daniel was highly regarded and highly favoured in heaven also! Both the archangel Gabriel and Michael the warrior angel were involved in getting God's prophetic messages to him. He was an outstanding and exemplary man of God, faithful unto death.
- What about us?
- We have a host of talented people in our church with tremendous abilities to accomplish great things in this world. Some are skilled communicators, using the latest in social technologies to get their message out. Some use multiple platforms to reach their world. Some have thousands of followers/viewers on social media.
- What an incredible opportunity is in our hands!
- But personally consider the following questions:
  - What messages are you sending to your world?
  - Which battles are you fighting?
  - Which people, places and products are you promoting?
  - Which trends are you pushing?
  - Who are you taking selfies with to publish online?
  - What music are you hyping?
  - Which philosophy are you supporting?
  - What world view are you representing?
- And here's the big question:
  - Is your life and your communication actively and overtly promoting Jesus Christ, or do lesser causes take priority?

KEY SCRIPTURE:

2 Timothy 1:7-14,8,17; Daniel 2:24-28; 6:1-4,10,16-22; 8:15-17; 9:20-23; 10:10-14,18-21

- Daniel continued his walk with God into his late 80s (maybe his 90s) and maintained his godly witness.
- As a young man, Joseph kept his focus on God and served him faithfully. He continued until he was an old man and died a faithful worshiper of Yahweh.
- Nehemiah was another slave, who risked his life to represent the interests of God's people to a heathen king. Despite his situation, he honoured God.
- Esther was a beautiful young lady. Out of all the women in the land, she was chosen to be queen of Persia. However, she was also the descendant of captured Israelites. She could easily have left her people to their own devices and just tried to save her own skin, but she devoted herself to a higher calling and stood with the people of God.
- Today, who is standing for Christ? How many are pointing lost souls to the Cross? How many are consumed with the passion to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every man, woman, boy and girl?
- You are not insignificant! You have power. You have an audience. God created you on purpose, with purpose, but you must give yourself back to Him and let Him use you.
- Paul reminded Timothy that we have a holy calling from God (2 Timothy 1:9) and He has committed a good thing to us (v.14) – the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- There are many things we can do with our lives and many goals we can try to accomplish. There are many "good" activities we can be engaged in and many worthy projects we can undertake.
  But at the end of the day, we have to be focused.
- And our focal point needs to be Jesus Christ!

DISCUSSION/REFLECTION TOOLS

1. List ways in which you and others communicate to each other and to the general culture/society.
2. Take out your personal devices and scroll through some conversation threads (e-mails, texts, Twitter, Facebook, etc.). Personally take note of where your focus seems to be.
3. Discuss: i) are you generally pleased with what your regular communication reveals about your focus? ii) Do you see as much focus on Jesus as you would desire? iii) What explanations would you give for not seeing more that is focused on, or promotes, the gospel of Jesus?
4. Take time to create a new post/text/e-mail, etc. that reflects your faith in Jesus. Send it.
5. Pray together, continuing on from the prayer below.

Prayer Time

Lord, we know that some (parts) of our lives point to You more than others. Please help our lives to consistently show that our focus is on You.

L.G. ice-Breaker: Make a list to see how many languages and cultures are represented in the group and by people you personally interact with.

WEEK OF SUNDAY, MARCH 19, 2017

NOTES

Meditate as you read through/listen to this week's message. If it helps, use symbols for your notes.

(Reminds me/Confirms) (New idea) (Think about)

(Do this) (Speaks to my heart) (Must share)

PRAYER NEEDS/THANKSGIVINGS