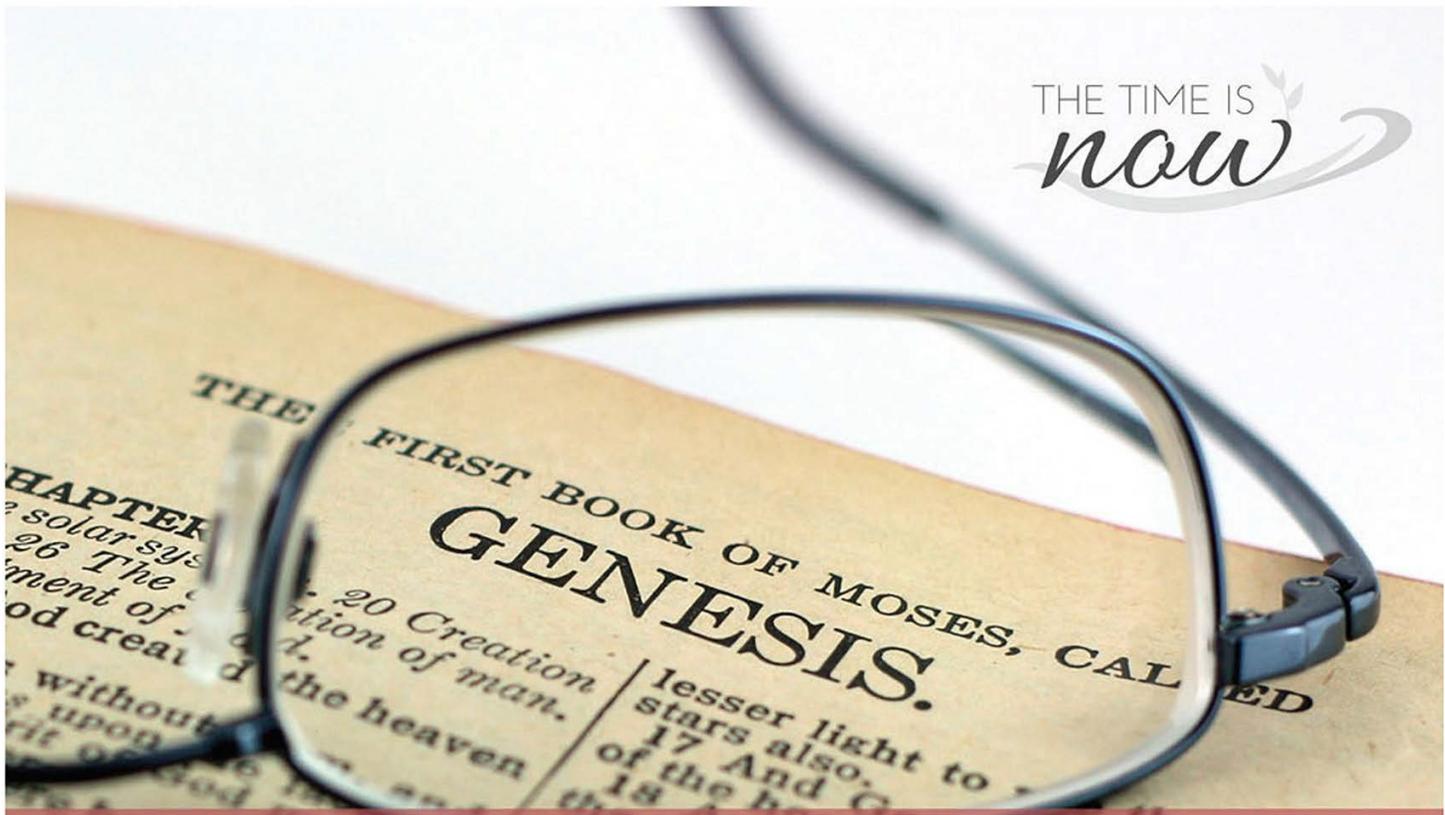


THE TIME IS
now



FOCUS

FOCUS
RESTORED

FOCUS LOST ... FOCUS RESTORED

A BIBLE STUDY

BY REV. JOHN HECKMANN



FOCUS LOST ... FOCUS RESTORED
A BIBLE STUDY

BY REV. JOHN HECKMANN

This Bible study authored by Rev. John Heckmann entitled, *Focus Lost ... Focus Restored*, deals with 14 biblical personalities and examples of times when they lost their focus and when their focus was restored by God. Each biblical personality could be studied in 30 to 45 minutes with discussion included. The study could be used as an ongoing lunchtime study or one or two sections as part of an LWML meeting. Each biblical personality could be studied by an individual who might desire to do one personality a day. Its uses are varied and can be easily adapted to fit the needs of an individual or group.



Table of Contents

Adam and Eve	6
Cain and Abel.....	9
Noah.....	11
Abram/Abraham	14
Saul	19
David.....	25
Solomon	32
Elijah.....	36
Jonah	41
John the Baptist	44
Peter	47
Saul/Paul	54
Family of Jesus/James	57
John Mark	59

Focus Lost ... Focus Restored by Rev. John Heckmann

Leader Guide

Possible prayer to begin with or offer one of your own:

Dear Heavenly Father,

As I spend this time in the study of Your Word, I pray that you would send Your Holy Spirit to focus my mind and my heart on You, as the time is now to consider how some of the heroes of the Bible lost their focus just as I so often do. Thank you for refocusing my eyes upon You and Your great love for me as is evidenced in the giving of Your Son, Jesus Christ, to be my Savior from sin and eternal death. It is in His Name that I pray, Amen.

Focus ...

What's your definition of focus? *Dictionary.com* defines focus as (1) a central point, as of attraction, attention, or activity, (2) a point at which rays of light, heat, or other radiation, meet after being refracted or reflected, (3) optics.

Three differing definitions, but each of them pointing to some sort of central point. Depending on the situation, focus may vary, but our challenge as a Christian who is “simul iustus et peccator” (simultaneously [at the same time] saint and sinner) is staying focused on the things which God our Heavenly Father would have us focus. We see this at various times throughout the Old and New Testament as God's children lose sight of the opportunities He gives them to serve, and then, in His grace, God restores their focus.

Let us begin in the beginning with God's first creation, **Adam and Eve ...**

Focus ... Adam and Eve

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father,

As I spend this time in the study of Your Word, I pray that you would send Your Holy Spirit to focus my mind and my heart on You, as the time is now to consider how some of the heroes of the Bible lost their focus just as I so often do. Thank you for refocusing my eyes upon You and Your great love for me as is evidenced in the giving of Your Son, Jesus Christ, to be my Savior from sin and eternal death. It is in His Name that I pray, Amen.

Read Genesis 1:24–31.

24 And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds — livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so.

25 And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 26 Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

*27 So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.*

28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” 29 And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. 30 And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. 31 And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

What was God’s desired focus for Adam and Eve? _____

Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moves on the earth. Live in a perfect relationship with God forever.

Read Genesis 3:1–6.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” 2 And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, 3 but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” 4 But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” 6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

How did Adam and Eve lose focus? _____

As Satan held out for them wonderful things, they saw the tree was good for food, a delight to the eyes, and was desired to make one wise.

What did their focus become? _____

Being like God; knowing not only good, but also evil.

Bonus question: Did Satan lie to Eve? _____

He didn't really lie. He took what God actually said and added a little to it to confuse Adam and Eve. This is the same way he so often tempts us as he gets us to change things just a little bit.

Read Genesis 3:7–24.

7 Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. 8 And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" 10 And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." 11 He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" 12 The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." 13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." 14 The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. 15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." 16 To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." 17 And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; 18 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. 19 By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return. 20 The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. 21 And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them. 22 Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever —" 23 therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. 24 He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

What was the result of their losing focus? _____

Adam and Eve lost their relationship with God; they were banished from the Garden; they received the punishment of temporal and eternal death.

Bonus Question: Why did God expel Adam and Eve from the garden? _____

So they wouldn't have to live in their sin and condemnation for eternity.

How did God restore their focus? _____

He met Adam and Eve where they were. Through the death of an innocent animal, blood was shed, and Adam and Eve were clothed physically with garments of skin and spiritually with the promise of a Savior who would shed His perfect, innocent blood for them and all humanity so we, too, can be clothed in His garments of righteousness. In love, He banished them from the Garden with the Tree of Life so they wouldn't have to live in their sin and condemnation for eternity. God promised a Savior.

How does God desire my focus to be like theirs? _____

How do I lose focus like Adam and Eve did? _____

How does this impact my life? _____

How does God restore my focus? _____

Bonus Question: How does this parallel my life? _____

In a first time event, God sacrificed an animal for atonement (payment) of man's sins when He provided Adam and Eve clothes to wear to cover their now embarrassing nakedness. He began the process to restore them to a right relationship with Him, even while they were trying to run and hide. What a beautiful word picture here of God's redemption of mankind, and His desire for us to be healed and made whole again! He wanted Adam and Eve to be in a restored and right relationship with Him and with one another. This demonstrates in a very powerful and convincing way God's amazing love for us, and how He desires for us to be reconciled in relationships.

Adam and Eve had it all. They lost focus as they listened to the wisdom of Satan. God called them to repentance and forgiveness, even though the consequences would follow. In His love He restores them and refocuses them as He removes them from the garden, but gives them the promise of the Messiah to lead them all their days.

Focus ... Cain and Abel

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father,

As I spend this time in the study of Your Word, I pray that you would send Your Holy Spirit to focus my mind and my heart on You, as the time is now to consider how some of the heroes of the Bible lost their focus just as I so often do. Thank you for refocusing my eyes upon You and Your great love for me as is evidenced in the giving of Your Son, Jesus Christ, to be my Savior from sin and eternal death. It is in His Name that I pray, Amen.

Read Genesis 4:1–4.

1 Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD." 2 And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. 3 In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, 4 and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering,

What was God's desired focus for Cain and Abel? _____

Live in relationship with God, with each other, and with their family. To care for and tend the ground, earth, and animals God created and had commanded their father and all subsequent generations to do. To be good stewards of what God gave to them.

Read Genesis 4:5–7.

5 but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. 6 The Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? 7 If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it."

How did Cain lose focus? _____

Cain was more concerned with his perceived physical well-being, so he didn't want to give all that he had been blessed with to God.

Read Genesis 4:8–14.

8 Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. 9 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" 10 And the LORD said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. 11 And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. 12 When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth." 13 Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear. 14 Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me."

What was the result of Cain losing focus? _____

Murdered Abel, mocked God, cursed from the ground, fugitive, and wanderer on the earth.

Read Genesis 4:15–16 and Genesis 4:25–26.

15 Then the LORD said to him, “Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.” And the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him.

16 Then Cain went away from the presence of the LORD and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

25 And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, “God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him.” 26 To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time people began to call upon the name of the Lord.

What opportunity did God give to Cain to restore his focus? _____

God protected Cain by giving him the chance to repent and receive His forgiveness.

How did God restore the focus of His fallen creation? _____

God blessed Adam and Eve with a third son, Seth. God gave Cain another brother, just as He has given us a perfect Brother in Jesus Christ. He refocuses the line through which the Savior of the world would come.

How does God desire my focus to be like theirs? _____

How do I lose focus like Cain did? _____

How does this impact my life? _____

How does God restore my focus? _____

Both Cain and Abel had it all, at least as good as it could be in this newly fallen world. Cain lost focus as he gave in to temptation. God called them to repentance and forgiveness, even though the consequences would follow. In His love, God gives Cain the opportunity to repent of his sins and have a right relationship restored with his Heavenly Father.

Focus ... Noah

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father,

As I spend this time in the study of Your Word, I pray that you would send Your Holy Spirit to focus my mind and my heart on You, as the time is now to consider how some of the heroes of the Bible lost their focus just as I so often do. Thank you for refocusing my eyes upon You and Your great love for me as is evidenced in the giving of Your Son, Jesus Christ, to be my Savior from sin and eternal death. It is in His Name that I pray, Amen.

Read Genesis 6:9a–22 and Genesis 8:20–9:1.

9 Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God. 10 And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. 11 Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. 12 And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. 13 And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth. 14 Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. 15 This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark 300 cubits, its breadth 50 cubits, and its height 30 cubits. 16 Make a roof for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above, and set the door of the ark in its side. Make it with lower, second, and third decks. 17 For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die. 18 But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. 19 And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark to keep them alive with you. They shall be male and female. 20 Of the birds according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground, according to its kind, two of every sort shall come in to you to keep them alive. 21 Also take with you every sort of food that is eaten, and store it up. It shall serve as food for you and for them." 22 Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.

20 Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. 21 And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. 22 While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease."

1 And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth."

What was God's desired focus for Noah? _____

To lead an upright life, to build the ark, to save his family — eight people in all — so that the line of the Messiah could continue, to repopulate the earth after the flood, to preserve the animals.

Read Genesis 9:20–25.

20 Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard. 21 He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent. 22 And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside. 23 Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned backward, and they did not see their father's nakedness. 24 When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, 25 he said, "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers."

How did Noah and his sons lose focus? _____

Planted a vineyard and abused God's gift of wine (which can make the heart glad according to Psalm 104:14–16). Noah's sons lost focus as they had been on the boat so long caring for the animals. They saw their father in his nakedness and made a sport out of him.

What was the result of Noah losing focus? _____

Getting drunk, bad witness to his children, gave Ham the opportunity to sin, abuse of God's gifts.

Read Genesis 9:25–29.

*26 He also said,
"Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem;
and let Canaan be his servant.
27 May God enlarge Japheth,
and let him dwell in the tents of Shem,
and let Canaan be his servant."
28 After the flood Noah lived 350 years. 29 All the days of Noah were 950 years, and he died.*

What opportunity did God give to Noah to restore his focus? _____

God restored him, blessed him with a long line and descendants in the line of the Savior.

How did God restore the focus of His fallen creation? _____

As the flood waters receded, through God's ongoing gift of creation, the earth was restored to how it was before the flood with everything being given to Noah and his family and their offspring to rule over, subdue, replenish, and enjoy.

How does God desire my focus to be like Noah's? _____

How do I lose focus like Noah did? _____

How does this impact my life? _____

How does God restore my focus? _____

Summary: Noah was blessed to be able to share the message of God's love with the world. Even though the world would not listen, God gave Noah the opportunity to continue the line of Jesus so that the world could ultimately hear of the Savior and His blood-bought gift of redemption offered once again to all the world. Just as Noah and his family, eight people in all, were preserved in the waters of the flood, Christ comes to us through water and the Word in the washing and rebirth of Holy Baptism lavishly washing away our sins.

Focus ... Abram/Abraham

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father,

As I spend this time in the study of Your Word, I pray that you would send Your Holy Spirit to focus my mind and my heart on You, as the time is now to consider how some of the heroes of the Bible lost their focus just as I so often do. Thank you for refocusing my eyes upon You and Your great love for me as is evidenced in the giving of Your Son, Jesus Christ, to be my Savior from sin and eternal death. It is in His Name that I pray, Amen.

Read Genesis 12:1–9.

1 Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. 2 And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." 4 So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. 5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, 6 Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. 7 Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. 8 From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD. 9 And Abram journeyed on, still going toward the Negeb.

What was God's desired focus for Abram? _____

To be obedient and to pick up and leave his pagan roots and family and move to the land God promised Him. From him, God would bring forth a great nation of people for Himself.

Read Genesis 12:10–20.

10 Now there was a famine in the land. So Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land. 11 When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife, "I know that you are a woman beautiful in appearance, 12 and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me, but they will let you live. 13 Say you are my sister, that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared for your sake." 14 When Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. 15 And when the princes of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. 16 And for her sake he dealt well with Abram; and he had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male servants, female servants, female donkeys, and camels. 17 But the LORD afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. 18 So Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? 19 Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife; take her, and go." 20 And Pharaoh gave men orders concerning him, and they sent him away with his wife and all that he had.

How did Abram lose focus? _____

He feared man more than God (Acts 5:29). He told Pharaoh that his wife was his sister. He was afraid for his life.

What was the result of Abram losing focus? _____

Trusted Pharaoh more than God. God afflicted Pharaoh and his household with plagues. A bad witness about what it is to be a child of God.

Read Genesis 13:2, 14–18.

2 Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold.

14 The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, "Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward, 15 for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever. 16 I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted. 17 Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you." 18 So Abram moved his tent and came and settled by the oaks of Mamre, which are at Hebron, and there he built an altar to the LORD.

What opportunity did God give to Abram to restore his focus? _____

When Pharaoh understood why he was experiencing the plagues, he confronted Abram with his sin.

How did God restore the focus of His fallen child? _____

Pharaoh gave Abram his wife and all that belonged to him.

Read Genesis 16:1–4.

1 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar. 2 And Sarai said to Abram, "Behold now, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. 3 So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her servant, and gave her to Abram her husband as a wife. 4 And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress.

How did Abram and Sarai lose focus? _____

He lost focus when God had promised Abram and Sarai an heir but in their impatience they came up with their own plan. Sarai thought it would be a good idea to give her handmaiden, Hagar, to Abram to bring forth that heir.

What was the result of Abram losing focus? _____

Had an illegitimate child, didn't follow God's plan, Ishmael created a whole new line that would always be in opposition to Abram's line.

Read Genesis 17:1–16.

1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, 2 that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly.” 3 Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, 4 “Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. 5 No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. 6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. 7 And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. 8 And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.” 9 And God said to Abraham, “As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. 10 This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. 11 You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. 12 He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, 13 both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. 14 Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.” 15 And God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. 16 I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.”

What opportunity did God give to Abraham to restore his focus? _____

To follow God and be the father of many nations, through one of which would come the Messiah.

How did God restore the focus of His fallen servant? _____

God took Abraham aside and shared with him the promise and the plan that He had for Abraham and Sarah as He blessed them with new names which showed their new identity in His family (Jeremiah 29:11). Abram means “noble father.” Abraham means “father of many.” Sarai means “princess.” Sarah means “mother of nations.” We too are given new names. In baptism we are given the new name Christian, child of God, son or daughter of the King.

Read Genesis 20:1–13.

1 From there Abraham journeyed toward the territory of the Negeb and lived between Kadesh and Shur; and he sojourned in Gerar. 2 And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, “She is my sister.” And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. 3 But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said to him, “Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man’s wife.” 4 Now Abimelech had not approached her. So he said, “Lord, will you kill an innocent people? 5 Did he not himself say to me, ‘She is my sister’? And she herself said, ‘He is my brother.’ In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this.” 6 Then God said to him in the dream, “Yes, I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart, and it was I who kept you from sinning against me. Therefore I did not let you touch her. 7 Now then, return the man’s wife, for he is a prophet, so that he will pray for you,

and you shall live. But if you do not return her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours.” 8 So Abimelech rose early in the morning and called all his servants and told them all these things. And the men were very much afraid. 9 Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, “What have you done to us? And how have I sinned against you, that you have brought on me and my kingdom a great sin? You have done to me things that ought not to be done.” 10 And Abimelech said to Abraham, “What did you see, that you did this thing?” 11 Abraham said, “I did it because I thought, ‘There is no fear of God at all in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.’ 12 Besides, she is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father though not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife. 13 And when God caused me to wander from my father’s house, I said to her, ‘This is the kindness you must do me: at every place to which we come, say of me, “He is my brother.”’”

How did Abraham lose focus? _____

Once again Abraham was more afraid of the king and his people, who in his eyes he saw as ungodly, fearing that the king would kill him and take his wife. He learned the lesson of Satan well because he didn’t really lie, he just didn’t tell the whole truth. He lied by omission.

What was the result of Abraham losing focus? _____

His poor witness again. Abimelech and his people are going to be killed.

Read Genesis 20:17–18.

17 Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, and also healed his wife and female slaves so that they bore children. 18 For the LORD had closed all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham’s wife.

Read Genesis 21:1–5.

1 The LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did to Sarah as he had promised. 2 And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him. 3 Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore him, Isaac. 4 And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. 5 Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

Read Genesis 22:1–19.

1 After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” 2 He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.” 3 So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. 4 On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. 5 Then Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy[a] will go over there and worship and come again to you.” 6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. 7 And Isaac said to his father Abraham, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” He said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” 8 Abraham said, “God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.” So they went both of them together.

9 When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10 Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. 11 But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 12 He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." 13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 So Abraham called the name of that place, "The LORD will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided."

15 And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven 16 and said, "By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, 18 and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice." 19 So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba. And Abraham lived at Beersheba.

What opportunity did God give to Abraham to restore his focus? _____

Through the testing of his faith, Abraham was able to see very clearly that the Lord keeps His promises and provides for His people as Isaac's life was spared and a ram was provided as a burnt offering. He was also able to give a powerful witness to his men, who went with him to sacrifice his son, on the meaning of faith.

How did God restore the focus of His fallen servant? _____

By giving Abraham the opportunity to serve God as he trusted that, no matter the outcome of Isaac on the mountaintop, the Lord would provide.

How does God desire my focus to be like Abraham's? _____

How do I lose focus like Abraham did? _____

How does this impact my life? _____

Summary: Even though, like us, Abraham often went his own way and did his own thing, God continued to call him back just as He does with us throughout the work He has planned for us (Ephesians 2:10).

Focus ... Saul

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father,

As I spend this time in the study of Your Word, I pray that you would send Your Holy Spirit to focus my mind and my heart on You, as the time is now to consider how some of the heroes of the Bible lost their focus just as I so often do. Thank you for refocusing my eyes upon You and Your great love for me as is evidenced in the giving of Your Son, Jesus Christ, to be my Savior from sin and eternal death. It is in His Name that I pray, Amen.

Read 1 Samuel 8:22; 9:17; 11:15.

22 And the LORD said to Samuel, "Obey their voice and make them a king." Samuel then said to the men of Israel, "Go every man to his city."

17 When Samuel saw Saul, the LORD told him, "Here is the man of whom I spoke to you! He it is who shall restrain my people."

15 So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal. There they sacrificed peace offerings before the LORD, and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

What was God's desired focus for Saul? _____

To be the king the children of Israel demanded and to serve His people.

Read 1 Samuel 13:9–14.

9 So Saul said, "Bring the burnt offering here to me, and the peace offerings." And he offered the burnt offering. 10 As soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came. And Saul went out to meet him and greet him. 11 Samuel said, "What have you done?" And Saul said, "When I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines had mustered at Michmash, 12 I said, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the favor of the LORD.' So I forced myself, and offered the burnt offering." 13 And Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the LORD your God, with which he commanded you. For then the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. 14 But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart, and the LORD has command-ed him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you."

How did Saul lose focus? _____

He took matters into his own hands and offered the burnt offering himself instead of waiting for Samuel. As we have been seeing, God's people become impatient, took matters into their own hands, and found themselves separated from God. We, too, try to take matters into our own hands even when the perfect sacrifice has been offered in Jesus Christ as He wins for us and gives us forgiveness for all of our sins.

What was the result of Saul losing focus? _____

Saul lost the opportunity to have his kingdom established forever.

Read 1 Samuel 14:31–35.

31 They struck down the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon. And the people were very faint. 32 The people pounced on the spoil and took sheep and oxen and calves and slaughtered them on the ground. And the people ate them with the blood. 33 Then they told Saul, “Behold, the people are sinning against the LORD by eating with the blood.” And he said, “You have dealt treacherously; roll a great stone to me here.” 34 And Saul said, “Disperse yourselves among the people and say to them, ‘Let every man bring his ox or his sheep and slaughter them here and eat, and do not sin against the LORD by eating with the blood.’” So every one of the people brought his ox with him that night and they slaughtered them there. 35 And Saul built an altar to the LORD; it was the first altar that he built to the LORD.

What opportunity did God give to Saul to restore his focus? _____

God continued to come to Saul even though he had gone astray. In His love, God called Saul back to a right relationship with Himself.

How did God restore the focus of His fallen servant? _____

By giving Saul the plan whereby the Israelites who were sinning against the Lord could repent and be restored by bringing their oxen to the great rock altar Saul had erected, to slaughter their beasts, drain their blood, and enjoy the spoils.

Read 1 Samuel 15:3–23.

3 Now go and strike Amalek and devote to destruction all that they have. Do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.”
4 So Saul summoned the people and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand men on foot, and ten thousand men of Judah. 5 And Saul came to the city of Amalek and lay in wait in the valley. 6 Then Saul said to the Kenites, “Go, depart; go down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them. For you showed kindness to all the people of Israel when they came up out of Egypt.” So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites. 7 And Saul defeated the Amalekites from Havilah as far as Shur, which is east of Egypt. 8 And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive and devoted to destruction all the people with the edge of the sword. 9 But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep and of the oxen and of the fattened calves and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them. All that was despised and worthless they devoted to destruction. 10 The word of the LORD came to Samuel: 11 “I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me and has not performed my commandments.” And Samuel was angry, and he cried to the LORD all night. 12 And Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning. And it was told Samuel, “Saul came to Carmel, and behold, he set up a monument for himself and turned and passed on and went down to Gilgal.” 13 And Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, “Blessed be you to the LORD. I have performed the commandment of the LORD.” 14 And Samuel said, “What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears and the lowing of the oxen that I hear?” 15 Saul said, “They have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen to sacrifice to the LORD your God, and the rest we have devoted to destruction.” 16 Then Samuel said to Saul, “Stop! I will tell you what the LORD said to me this night.” And he said to

him, "Speak." 17 And Samuel said, "Though you are little in your own eyes, are you not the head of the tribes of Israel? The LORD anointed you king over Israel. 18 And the LORD sent you on a mission and said, 'Go, devote to destruction the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.' 19 Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD? Why did you pounce on the spoil and do what was evil in the sight of the LORD?" 20 And Saul said to Samuel, "I have obeyed the voice of the LORD. I have gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me. I have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and I have devoted the Amalekites to destruction. 21 But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the best of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal." 22 And Samuel said, "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king."

How did Saul lose focus? _____

Once again Saul saw the riches that could be his. His selfishness and greed tempted him once again to his own way and to do his own thing rather than the plans God had for him.

What was the result of Saul losing focus? _____

Sinned against God; led the people to sin against God; won't be king.

Read 1 Samuel 15:24–36; 16:13.

24 Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. 25 Now therefore, please pardon my sin and return with me that I may bow before the LORD." 26 And Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you. For you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel." 27 As Samuel turned to go away, Saul seized the skirt of his robe, and it tore. 28 And Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you. 29 And also the Glory of Israel will not lie or have regret, for he is not a man, that he should have regret." 30 Then he said, "I have sinned; yet honor me now before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me, that I may bow before the LORD your God." 31 So Samuel turned back after Saul, and Saul bowed before the LORD. 32 Then Samuel said, "Bring here to me Agag the king of the Amalekites." And Agag came to him cheerfully. Agag said, "Surely the bitterness of death is past." 33 And Samuel said, "As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women." And Samuel hacked Agag to pieces before the LORD in Gilgal. 34 Then Samuel went to Ramah, and Saul went up to his house in Gibeah of Saul. 35 And Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death, but Samuel grieved over Saul. And the LORD regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel.

13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up and went to Ramah.

What opportunity did God give to Saul to restore his focus? _____

God sent Samuel to call Saul back.

Even though God regretted making Saul king, He continued to let Saul serve as king even after David had been anointed king.

Read 1 Samuel 26, 31:4.

1 Then the Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah, saying, "Is not David hiding himself on the hill of Hachilah, which is on the east of Jeshimon?" 2 So Saul arose and went down to the wilderness of Ziph with three thousand chosen men of Israel to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph. 3 And Saul encamped on the hill of Hachilah, which is beside the road on the east of Jeshimon. But David remained in the wilderness. When he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness, 4 David sent out spies and learned that Saul had indeed come. 5 Then David rose and came to the place where Saul had encamped. And David saw the place where Saul lay, with Abner the son of Ner, the commander of his army. Saul was lying within the encampment, while the army was encamped around him.

6 Then David said to Ahimelech the Hittite, and to Joab's brother Abishai the son of Zeruiah, "Who will go down with me into the camp to Saul?" And Abishai said, "I will go down with you." 7 So David and Abishai went to the army by night. And there lay Saul sleeping within the encampment, with his spear stuck in the ground at his head, and Abner and the army lay around him. 8 Then Abishai said to David, "God has given your enemy into your hand this day. Now please let me pin him to the earth with one stroke of the spear, and I will not strike him twice." 9 But David said to Abishai, "Do not destroy him, for who can put out his hand against the LORD's anointed and be guiltless?" 10 And David said, "As the LORD lives, the LORD will strike him, or his day will come to die, or he will go down into battle and perish. 11 The LORD forbid that I should put out my hand against the LORD's anointed. But take now the spear that is at his head and the jar of water, and let us go." 12 So David took the spear and the jar of water from Saul's head, and they went away. No man saw it or knew it, nor did any awake, for they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from the LORD had fallen upon them.

13 Then David went over to the other side and stood far off on the top of the hill, with a great space between them. 14 And David called to the army, and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, "Will you not answer, Abner?" Then Abner answered, "Who are you who calls to the king?" 15 And David said to Abner, "Are you not a man? Who is like you in Israel? Why then have you not kept watch over your lord the king? For one of the people came in to destroy the king your lord. 16 This thing that you have done is not good. As the LORD lives, you deserve to die, because you have not kept watch over your lord, the LORD's anointed. And now see where the king's spear is and the jar of water that was at his head."

17 Saul recognized David's voice and said, "Is this your voice, my son David?" And David said, "It is my voice, my lord, O king." 18 And he said, "Why does my lord pursue after his servant? For what have I done? What evil is on my hands? 19 Now therefore let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If it is the LORD who has stirred you up against me, may he accept an offering, but if it is men, may they be cursed before the LORD, for they have driven me out this day that I should have no share in the heritage of the LORD, saying, 'Go, serve other gods.' 20 Now therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth away from the presence of the LORD, for the king of Israel has come out to seek a single flea like one who hunts a partridge in the mountains." 21 Then Saul said, "I have sinned. Return, my son David, for I will no more do you harm, because my life was precious in your eyes this day. Behold, I have acted foolishly, and have made a great mistake." 22 And David answered and said, "Here is the spear, O king! Let one of the young men come over and take it. 23 The LORD rewards every man for his righteousness and his faithfulness, for the LORD gave you into my hand today, and I would not put out my hand against

the LORD's anointed. 24 Behold, as your life was precious this day in my sight, so may my life be precious in the sight of the LORD, and may he deliver me out of all tribulation." 25 Then Saul said to David, "Blessed be you, my son David! You will do many things and will succeed in them." So David went his way, and Saul returned to his place.

4 Then Saul said to his armor-bearer, "Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and mistreat me." But his armor-bearer would not, for he feared greatly. Therefore Saul took his own sword and fell upon it.

How did Saul lose focus? _____

Once again Saul took matters of the nation of God into his own hands, this time also taking his own life.

What was the result of Saul losing focus? _____

He died by suicide.

What opportunity did God give to Saul to restore his focus? _____

Throughout Saul's life God gave him many opportunities, but at the time of Saul's death God's time of grace was over. The judgment was made: eternal life in heaven or separation from God in hell for all eternity based solely on faith.

How did God restore the focus of His fallen wayward nation? _____

God appointed a man after His own heart in King David who would soon assume the mantle of kingship.

How does God desire my focus to be like Saul's? _____

How do I lose focus like Saul did? _____

How does this impact my life? _____

How does God restore my focus? _____

Summary: Saul was blessed to be chosen by God, even though God had strongly counseled the Israelites against having a king because of all the trouble and hardship it would cause, to be their first king. And yet, even though God chose him to be the first king and wanted to bless him with everything needed to be the finest king, Saul in his impatience and greed and lack of trust in God or his appointed messengers chose to take things into his own hands and do it his way, just like we so often do. Through it all God continued to pursue him, forgive him, and restore him to a right relationship with Himself. Sadly, Saul thought it wise to take his own life.

Focus ... David

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father,

As I spend this time in the study of Your Word, I pray that you would send Your Holy Spirit to focus my mind and my heart on You, as the time is now to consider how some of the heroes of the Bible lost their focus just as I so often do. Thank you for refocusing my eyes upon You and Your great love for me as is evidenced in the giving of Your Son, Jesus Christ, to be my Savior from sin and eternal death. It is in His Name that I pray, Amen.

Read 1 Samuel 16:1–17:51.

1 The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go. I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons." 2 And Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me." And the LORD said, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.' 3 And invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do. And you shall anoint for me him whom I declare to you." 4 Samuel did what the LORD commanded and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling and said, "Do you come peaceably?" 5 And he said, "Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice." And he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice. 6 When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed is before him." 7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart." 8 Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one." 9 Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one." 10 And Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen these." 11 Then Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but behold, he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and get him, for we will not sit down till he comes here." 12 And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. And the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he." 13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up and went to Ramah.

David in Saul's Service

14 Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a harmful spirit from the LORD tormented him. 15 And Saul's servants said to him, "Behold now, a harmful spirit from God is tormenting you. 16 Let our lord now command your servants who are before you to seek out a man who is skillful in playing the lyre, and when the harmful spirit from God is upon you, he will play it, and you will be well." 17 So Saul said to his servants, "Provide for me a man who can play well and bring him to me." 18 One of the young men answered, "Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who is skillful in playing, a man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a man of good presence, and the LORD is with him." 19 Therefore Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, "Send me David your son, who is with the sheep." 20 And Jesse took a donkey laden with bread and a skin of wine and a young goat and sent them by David his son to Saul. 21 And David came to Saul and entered his service. And Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armor-bearer. 22 And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, "Let David remain in my

service, for he has found favor in my sight.” 23 And whenever the harmful spirit from God was upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand. So Saul was refreshed and was well, and the harmful spirit departed from him.

David and Goliath

1 Now the Philistines gathered their armies for battle. And they were gathered at Socoh, which belongs to Judah, and encamped between Socoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammim. 2 And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered, and encamped in the Valley of Elah, and drew up in line of battle against the Philistines. 3 And the Philistines stood on the mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on the mountain on the other side, with a valley between them. 4 And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath of Gath, whose height was six[b] cubits[c] and a span. 5 He had a helmet of bronze on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail, and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze. 6 And he had bronze armor on his legs, and a javelin of bronze slung between his shoulders. 7 The shaft of his spear was like a weaver’s beam, and his spear’s head weighed six hundred shekels of iron. And his shield-bearer went before him. 8 He stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, “Why have you come out to draw up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. 9 If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants. But if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us.” 10 And the Philistine said, “I defy the ranks of Israel this day. Give me a man, that we may fight together.” 11 When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.

12 Now David was the son of an Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah, named Jesse, who had eight sons. In the days of Saul the man was already old and advanced in years. 13 The three oldest sons of Jesse had followed Saul to the battle. And the names of his three sons who went to the battle were Eliab the firstborn, and next to him Abinadab, and the third Shammah. 14 David was the youngest. The three eldest followed Saul, 15 but David went back and forth from Saul to feed his father’s sheep at Bethlehem. 16 For forty days the Philistine came forward and took his stand, morning and evening.

17 And Jesse said to David his son, “Take for your brothers an ephah of this parched grain, and these ten loaves, and carry them quickly to the camp to your brothers. 18 Also take these ten cheeses to the commander of their thousand. See if your brothers are well, and bring some token from them.”

19 Now Saul and they and all the men of Israel were in the Valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines. 20 And David rose early in the morning and left the sheep with a keeper and took the provisions and went, as Jesse had commanded him. And he came to the encampment as the host was going out to the battle line, shouting the war cry. 21 And Israel and the Philistines drew up for battle, army against army. 22 And David left the things in charge of the keeper of the baggage and ran to the ranks and went and greeted his brothers. 23 As he talked with them, behold, the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, came up out of the ranks of the Philistines and spoke the same words as before. And David heard him.

24 All the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were much afraid. 25 And the men of Israel said, “Have you seen this man who has come up? Surely he has come up to defy Israel. And the king will enrich the man who kills him with great riches and will give him his daughter and make his father’s house free in Israel.” 26 And David said to the men who stood by him, “What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?” 27 And the people answered him in the same way, “So shall it be done to the man who kills him.”

28 Now Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spoke to the men. And Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, "Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your presumption and the evil of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle." 29 And David said, "What have I done now? Was it not but a word?" 30 And he turned away from him toward another, and spoke in the same way, and the people answered him again as before.

31 When the words that David spoke were heard, they repeated them before Saul, and he sent for him. 32 And David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail because of him. Your servant will go and fight with this Philistine." 33 And Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for you are but a youth, and he has been a man of war from his youth." 34 But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep sheep for his father. And when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock, 35 I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth. And if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him. 36 Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God." 37 And David said, "The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." And Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you!" 38 Then Saul clothed David with his armor. He put a helmet of bronze on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail, 39 and David strapped his sword over his armor. And he tried in vain to go, for he had not tested them. Then David said to Saul, "I cannot go with these, for I have not tested them." So David put them off. 40 Then he took his staff in his hand and chose five smooth stones from the brook and put them in his shepherd's pouch. His sling was in his hand, and he approached the Philistine.

41 And the Philistine moved forward and came near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him. 42 And when the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him, for he was but a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. 43 And the Philistine said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. 44 The Philistine said to David, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the field." 45 Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. 46 This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, 47 and that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hand."

48 When the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. 49 And David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone and slung it and struck the Philistine on his forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the ground.

50 So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. There was no sword in the hand of David. 51 Then David ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him and cut off his head with it. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled.

Read 2 Samuel 2:1–4a.

1 After this David inquired of the LORD, "Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?" And the LORD said to him, "Go up." David said, "To which shall I go up?" And he said, "To Hebron." 2 So David went up there, and his two wives also, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel. 3 And David brought up his men who were with him, everyone with his

household, and they lived in the towns of Hebron. 4 And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah.

Read 2 Samuel 5:1–4.

1 Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, “Behold, we are your bone and flesh. 2 In times past, when Saul was king over us, it was you who led out and brought in Israel. And the LORD said to you, ‘You shall be shepherd of my people Israel, and you shall be prince over Israel.’” 3 So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the LORD, and they anointed David king over Israel. 4 David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years.

Read 2 Samuel 7:11–16.

11 From the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. 12 When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, 15 but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. 16 And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.’”

Read 2 Samuel 7:22-26.

22 Therefore you are great, O LORD God. For there is none like you, and there is no God besides you, according to all that we have heard with our ears. 23 And who is like your people Israel, the one nation on earth whom God went to redeem to be his people, making himself a name and doing for them great and awesome things by driving out before your people, whom you redeemed for yourself from Egypt, a nation and its gods? 24 And you established for yourself your people Israel to be your people forever. And you, O LORD, became their God. 25 And now, O LORD God, confirm forever the word that you have spoken concerning your servant and concerning his house, and do as you have spoken. 26 And your name will be magnified forever, saying, ‘The LORD of hosts is God over Israel,’ and the house of your servant David will be established before you.

Read 2 Samuel 8:14.

14 Then he put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom he put garrisons, and all the Edomites became David’s servants. And the LORD gave victory to David wherever he went.

What was God’s desired focus for David? _____

To be a man after God’s own heart and serve God by ruling His people Israel and Judah.

Read 2 Samuel 11–12:15.

1 In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel. And they ravaged the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.

2 It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king’s house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful. 3 And David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, “Is not this

Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" 4 So David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she had been purifying herself from her uncleanness.) Then she returned to her house. 5 And the woman conceived, and she sent and told David, "I am pregnant."

6 So David sent word to Joab, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David. 7 When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab was doing and how the people were doing and how the war was going. 8 Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." And Uriah went out of the king's house, and there followed him a present from the king. 9 But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. 10 When they told David, "Uriah did not go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "Have you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?" 11 Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah dwell in booths, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field. Shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing." 12 Then David said to Uriah, "Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. 13 And David invited him, and he ate in his presence and drank, so that he made him drunk. And in the evening he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house.

14 In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah. 15 In the letter he wrote, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, that he may be struck down, and die." 16 And as Joab was besieging the city, he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew there were valiant men. 17 And the men of the city came out and fought with Joab, and some of the servants of David among the people fell. Uriah the Hittite also died. 18 Then Joab sent and told David all the news about the fighting. 19 And he instructed the messenger, "When you have finished telling all the news about the fighting to the king, 20 then, if the king's anger rises, and if he says to you, 'Why did you go so near the city to fight? Did you not know that they would shoot from the wall? 21 Who killed Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? Did not a woman cast an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died at Thebez? Why did you go so near the wall?' then you shall say, 'Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.'" 22 So the messenger went and came and told David all that Joab had sent him to tell. 23 The messenger said to David, "The men gained an advantage over us and came out against us in the field, but we drove them back to the entrance of the gate. 24 Then the archers shot at your servants from the wall. Some of the king's servants are dead, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also." 25 David said to the messenger, "Thus shall you say to Joab, 'Do not let this matter displease you, for the sword devours now one and now another. Strengthen your attack against the city and overthrow it.' And encourage him."

26 When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she lamented over her husband. 27 And when the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.

1 And the LORD sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. 2 The rich man had very many flocks and herds, 3 but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children. It used to eat of his morsel and drink from his cup and lie in his arms, and it was like a daughter to him. 4 Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the guest who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him." 5 Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, 6 and he shall restore the lamb fourfold,

because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.”

7 Nathan said to David, “You are the man! Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. 8 And I gave you your master’s house and your master’s wives into your arms and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were too little, I would add to you as much more. 9 Why have you despised the word of the LORD, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. 10 Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.’ 11 Thus says the LORD, ‘Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. 12 For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.’”

13 David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.” And Nathan said to David, “The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die. 14 Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the LORD, the child who is born to you shall die.” 15 Then Nathan went to his house.

Read 1 Chronicles 22:7–8.

7 David said to Solomon, “My son, I had it in my heart to build a house to the name of the LORD my God. 8 But the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ‘You have shed much blood and have waged great wars. You shall not build a house to my name, because you have shed so much blood before me on the earth.’

How did David lose focus? _____

David stayed home instead of going off to war as the other kings were doing. He had idle hands. God gave him everything he needed but he wanted more.

What was the result of David losing focus? _____

Son died; friend murdered because of him; sixth commandment broken with Bathsheba.

What opportunity did God give to David to restore his focus? _____

To talk to his pastor Nathan and confess his sin; anticipation of hearing God’s beautiful words of forgiveness through his spokesperson Nathan.

How did God restore the focus of His fallen servant? _____

Nathan said to David his sins were forgiven and he would not die, but his son would die and he would not have the chance to build the temple.

How does God desire my focus to be like David’s? _____

How do I lose focus like David did? _____

How does this impact my life? _____

How does God restore my focus? _____

Summary: David sinned grievously breaking all 10 commandments as he lusted over gifts that God had chosen not to give to him. Yet God, in His love, sent David's pastor to hear his confession and announce to him the gift of forgiveness in the words of Holy Absolution.

Focus ... Solomon

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father,

As I spend this time in the study of Your Word, I pray that you would send Your Holy Spirit to focus my mind and my heart on You, as the time is now to consider how some of the heroes of the Bible lost their focus just as I so often do. Thank you for refocusing my eyes upon You and Your great love for me as is evidenced in the giving of Your Son, Jesus Christ, to be my Savior from sin and eternal death. It is in His Name that I pray, Amen.

Read 2 Samuel 12:24–25.

24 Then David comforted his wife, Bathsheba, and went in to her and lay with her, and she bore a son, and he called his name Solomon. And the LORD loved him 25 and sent a message by Nathan the prophet. So he called his name Jedidiah, because of the LORD.

Read 1 Kings 1:39–40.

39 There Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the tent and anointed Solomon. Then they blew the trumpet, and all the people said, “Long live King Solomon!” 40 And all the people went up after him, playing on pipes, and rejoicing with great joy, so that the earth was split by their noise.

Read 1 Kings 3:9.

9 “Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?”

Read 1 Kings 3:10–14.

10 It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. 11 And God said to him, “Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, 12 behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you. 13 I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that no other king shall compare with you, all your days. 14 And if you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days.”

Read 1 Kings 6.

1 In the four hundred and eightieth year after the people of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month, he began to build the house of the LORD. 2 The house that King Solomon built for the LORD was sixty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and thirty cubits high. 3 The vestibule in front of the nave of the house was twenty cubits long, equal to the width of the house, and ten cubits deep in front of the house. 4 And he made for the house windows with recessed frames. 5 He also built a structure against the wall of the house, running around the walls of the house, both the nave and the inner sanctuary. And he made side chambers all around. 6 The lowest story was five cubits broad, the middle one was six cubits broad, and the third was seven cubits broad. For around the outside of the house he made offsets on the wall in order that the supporting beams should not be inserted into the walls of the house.

When the house was built, it was with stone prepared at the quarry, so that neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron was heard in the house while it was being built. The entrance for the lowest story was on the south side of the house, and one went up by stairs to the middle story, and from the middle story to the third. 9 So he built the house and finished it, and he made the ceiling of the house of beams and planks of cedar. 10 He built the structure against the whole house, five cubits high, and it was joined to the house with timbers of cedar. 11 Now the word of the LORD came to Solomon, 12 “Concerning this house that you are building, if you will walk in my statutes and obey my rules and keep all my commandments and walk in them, then I will establish my word with you, which I spoke to David your father. 13 And I will dwell among the children of Israel and will not forsake my people Israel.”

14 So Solomon built the house and finished it. 15 He lined the walls of the house on the inside with boards of cedar. From the floor of the house to the walls of the ceiling, he covered them on the inside with wood, and he covered the floor of the house with boards of cypress. 16 He built twenty cubits of the rear of the house with boards of cedar from the floor to the walls, and he built this within as an inner sanctuary, as the Most Holy Place. 17 The house, that is, the nave in front of the inner sanctuary, was forty cubits long. 18 The cedar within the house was carved in the form of gourds and open flowers. All was cedar; no stone was seen. 19 The inner sanctuary he prepared in the innermost part of the house, to set there the ark of the covenant of the LORD. 20 The inner sanctuary was twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and twenty cubits high, and he overlaid it with pure gold. He also overlaid an altar of cedar. 21 And Solomon overlaid the inside of the house with pure gold, and he drew chains of gold across, in front of the inner sanctuary, and overlaid it with gold. 22 And he overlaid the whole house with gold, until all the house was finished. Also the whole altar that belonged to the inner sanctuary he overlaid with gold. 23 In the inner sanctuary he made two cherubim of olivewood, each ten cubits high. 24 Five cubits was the length of one wing of the cherub, and five cubits the length of the other wing of the cherub; it was ten cubits from the tip of one wing to the tip of the other. 25 The other cherub also measured ten cubits; both cherubim had the same measure and the same form. 26 The height of one cherub was ten cubits, and so was that of the other cherub. 27 He put the cherubim in the innermost part of the house. And the wings of the cherubim were spread out so that a wing of one touched the one wall, and a wing of the other cherub touched the other wall; their other wings touched each other in the middle of the house. 28 And he overlaid the cherubim with gold.

29 Around all the walls of the house he carved engraved figures of cherubim and palm trees and open flowers, in the inner and outer rooms. 30 The floor of the house he overlaid with gold in the inner and outer rooms.

31 For the entrance to the inner sanctuary he made doors of olivewood; the lintel and the doorposts were five-sided. 32 He covered the two doors of olivewood with carvings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers. He overlaid them with gold and spread gold on the cherubim and on the palm trees.

33 So also he made for the entrance to the nave doorposts of olivewood, in the form of a square, 34 and two doors of cypress wood. The two leaves of the one door were folding, and the two leaves of the other door were folding. 35 On them he carved cherubim and palm trees and open flowers, and he overlaid them with gold evenly applied on the carved work. 36 He built the inner court with three courses of cut stone and one course of cedar beams.

37 In the fourth year the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid, in the month of Ziv. 38 And in the eleventh year, in the month of Bul, which is the eighth month, the house was finished in all its parts, and according to all its specifications. He was seven years in building it.

What was God’s desired focus for Solomon? _____

Lead God’s people in the ways they should go, wisdom, give him everything he asked, blessed him with everything he needed to carry out the task.

Read 1 Kings 11:1–8.

1 Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, 2 from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the people of Israel, “You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods.” Solomon clung to these in love. 3 He had 700 wives, who were princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart. 4 For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. 5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. 6 So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and did not wholly follow the LORD, as David his father had done. 7 Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. 8 And so he did for all his foreign wives, who made offerings and sacrificed to their gods.

How did Solomon lose focus? _____

Once again, like his father, Solomon was more concerned about his own desires than about God’s desire for him. Like his father David, Solomon wanted gifts that God did not have in mind for him and lusted after women who followed foreign gods. The results were exactly as God said they would be. Solomon fell away from God.

What was the result of Solomon losing focus? _____

He strayed away from God because he chose to follow the pagan gods of his wives and concubines just as God had instructed him not to do.

Read 1 Kings 11:9–13.

9 And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice 10 and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods. But he did not keep what the LORD commanded. 11 Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, “Since this has been your practice and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant. 12 Yet for the sake of David your father I will not do it in your days, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. 13 However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son, for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem that I have chosen.”

What opportunity did God give to Solomon to restore his focus? _____

Time to repent and receive forgiveness and write the book of Ecclesiastes.

How did God restore the focus of His fallen servant? _____

Showed Solomon the error of his ways and the consequences for his actions and then gave him the opportunity by verbal inspiration to share the wisdom he obtained from the experiences God led him through. In the same way, we can experience the wisdom needed to help others as they face similar experiences. We can share the wisdom of God’s Word with others and they experience the same things we experience and have come through victoriously.

How does God desire my focus to be like Solomon's? _____

How do I lose focus like Solomon did? _____

How does this impact my life? _____

How does God restore my focus? _____

Summary: Solomon had received wisdom and many other blessing from God, and yet he strayed, just as we so often stray in spite of God's many blessings to us. And just like Solomon, God restores us and gives us the opportunity to minister to others. Note: God has not caused these hardships but at times He allows them to teach us, strengthen us, and give us opportunity to minister to others as they go through the same situation.

Focus ... Elijah

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father,

As I spend this time in the study of Your Word, I pray that you would send Your Holy Spirit to focus my mind and my heart on You, as the time is now to consider how some of the heroes of the Bible lost their focus just as I so often do. Thank you for refocusing my eyes upon You and Your great love for me as is evidenced in the giving of Your Son, Jesus Christ, to be my Savior from sin and eternal death. It is in His Name that I pray, Amen.

Read 1 Kings 17–18.

1 Now Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word." 2 And the word of the LORD came to him: 3 "Depart from here and turn eastward and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. 4 You shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there." 5 So he went and did according to the word of the LORD. He went and lived by the brook Cherith that is east of the Jordan. 6 And the ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook. 7 And after a while the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land.

The Widow of Zarephath

8 Then the word of the LORD came to him, 9 "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to feed you." 10 So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, "Bring me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink." 11 And as she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, "Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand." 12 And she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. And now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and pre-prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die." 13 And Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go and do as you have said. But first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterward make something for yourself and your son. 14 For thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'The jar of flour shall not be spent, and the jug of oil shall not be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain upon the earth.'" 15 And she went and did as Elijah said. And she and he and her household ate for many days. 16 The jar of flour was not spent, neither did the jug of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by Elijah.

Elijah Raises the Widow's Son

17 After this the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became ill. And his illness was so severe that there was no breath left in him. 18 And she said to Elijah, "What have you against me, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance and to cause the death of my son!" 19 And he said to her, "Give me your son." And he took him from her arms and carried him up into the upper chamber where he lodged, and laid him on his own bed. 20 And he cried to the LORD, "O LORD my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by killing her son?" 21 Then he stretched himself upon the child three times and cried to the LORD, "O LORD my God, let this child's life come into him again." 22 And the LORD listened to the voice of Elijah. And the life of the child came into him again, and he revived. 23 And Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper chamber into the house and delivered him to his mother. And Elijah said, "See, your son lives." 24 And the woman

said to Elijah, “Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth.”

Elijah Confronts Ahab

1 After many days the word of the LORD came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, “Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth.” 2 So Elijah went to show himself to Ahab. Now the famine was severe in Samaria. 3 And Ahab called Obadiah, who was over the household. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly, 4 and when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD, Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifties in a cave and fed them with bread and water.) 5 And Ahab said to Obadiah, “Go through the land to all the springs of water and to all the valleys. Perhaps we may find grass and save the horses and mules alive, and not lose some of the animals.” 6 So they divided the land between them to pass through it. Ahab went in one direction by himself, and Obadiah went in another direction by himself. 7 And as Obadiah was on the way, behold, Elijah met him. And Obadiah recognized him and fell on his face and said, “Is it you, my lord Elijah?” 8 And he answered him, “It is I. Go, tell your lord, ‘Behold, Elijah is here.’” 9 And he said, “How have I sinned, that you would give your servant into the hand of Ahab, to kill me? 10 As the LORD your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my lord has not sent to seek you. And when they would say, ‘He is not here,’ he would take an oath of the kingdom or nation, that they had not found you. 11 And now you say, ‘Go, tell your lord, “Behold, Elijah is here.”’ 12 And as soon as I have gone from you, the Spirit of the LORD will carry you I know not where. And so, when I come and tell Ahab and he cannot find you, he will kill me, although I your servant have feared the LORD from my youth. 13 Has it not been told my lord what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the LORD, how I hid a hundred men of the LORD’s prophets by fifties in a cave and fed them with bread and water? 14 And now you say, ‘Go, tell your lord, “Behold, Elijah is here”’; and he will kill me.” 15 And Elijah said, “As the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself to him today.” 16 So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him. And Ahab went to meet Elijah. 17 When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, “Is it you, you troubler of Israel?” 18 And he answered, “I have not troubled Israel, but you have, and your father’s house, because you have abandoned the commandments of the LORD and followed the Baals. 19 Now therefore send and gather all Israel to me at Mount Carmel, and the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table.”

The Prophets of Baal Defeated

20 So Ahab sent to all the people of Israel and gathered the prophets together at Mount Carmel. 21 And Elijah came near to all the people and said, “How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.” And the people did not answer him a word. 22 Then Elijah said to the people, “I, even I only, am left a prophet of the LORD, but Baal’s prophets are 450 men. 23 Let two bulls be given to us, and let them choose one bull for themselves and cut it in pieces and lay it on the wood, but put no fire to it. And I will prepare the other bull and lay it on the wood and put no fire to it. 24 And you call upon the name of your god, and I will call upon the name of the LORD, and the God who answers by fire, he is God.” And all the people answered, “It is well spoken.” 25 Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose for yourselves one bull and prepare it first, for you are many, and call upon the name of your god, but put no fire to it.” 26 And they took the bull that was given them, and they prepared it and called upon the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, “O Baal, answer us!” But there was no voice, and no one answered. And they limped around the altar that they had made. 27 And at noon Elijah mocked them, saying, “Cry aloud, for he is a god. Either he is musing, or he is relieving himself, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened.” 28 And they cried aloud and cut themselves after

their custom with swords and lances, until the blood gushed out upon them. 29 And as midday passed, they raved on until the time of the offering of the oblation, but there was no voice. No one answered; no one paid attention.

30 Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come near to me." And all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that had been thrown down. 31 Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD came, saying, "Israel shall be your name," 32 and with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD. And he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two seahs of seed. 33 And he put the wood in order and cut the bull in pieces and laid it on the wood. And he said, "Fill four jars with water and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood." 34 And he said, "Do it a second time." And they did it a second time. And he said, "Do it a third time." And they did it a third time. 35 And the water ran around the altar and filled the trench also with water.

36 And at the time of the offering of the oblation, Elijah the prophet came near and said, "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word.

37 Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back." 38 Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. 39 And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, "The LORD, he is God; the LORD, he is God." 40 And Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape." And they seized them. And Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon and slaughtered them there.

The LORD Sends Rain

41 And Elijah said to Ahab, "Go up, eat and drink, for there is a sound of the rushing of rain."

42 So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Mount Carmel. And he bowed himself down on the earth and put his face between his knees. 43 And he said to his servant, "Go up now, look toward the sea." And he went up and looked and said, "There is nothing." And he said, "Go again," seven times. 44 And at the seventh time he said, "Behold, a little cloud like a man's hand is rising from the sea." And he said, "Go up, say to Ahab, 'Prepare your chariot and go down, lest the rain stop you.'" 45 And in a little while the heavens grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel. 46 And the hand of the LORD was on Elijah, and he gathered up his garment and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

What was God's desired focus for Elijah? _____

To be God's prophet and messenger to the king.

Read 1 Kings 19:1–4.

1 Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. 2 Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow." 3 Then he was afraid, and he arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there.

4 But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he asked that he might die, saying, "It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers."

How did Elijah lose focus? _____

He was afraid of Jezebel; he felt sorry for himself when he considered the hard life he thought that God gave him.

What was the result of Elijah losing focus? _____

He crawled up under a shade tree and wanted to die. Didn't do the things God asked him to do.

Read 1 Kings 19:5–16.

5 And he lay down and slept under a broom tree. And behold, an angel touched him and said to him, "Arise and eat." 6 And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. And he ate and drank and lay down again. 7 And the angel of the LORD came again a second time and touched him and said, "Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you." 8 And he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God.

The LORD Speaks to Elijah

9 There he came to a cave and lodged in it. And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" 10 He said, "I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away." 11 And he said, "Go out and stand on the mount before the LORD." And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. 12 And after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper. 13 And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" 14 He said, "I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away." 15 And the LORD said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus. And when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael to be king over Syria. 16 And Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint to be king over Israel, and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint to be prophet in your place.

Read 2 Kings 2:1–11.

1 Now when the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. 2 And Elijah said to Elisha, "Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me as far as Bethel." But Elisha said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel. 3 And the sons of the prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that today the LORD will take away your master from over you?" And he said, "Yes, I know it; keep quiet."

4 Elijah said to him, "Elisha, please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to Jericho." But he said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they came to Jericho. 5 The sons of the prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that today the LORD will take away your master from over you?" And he answered, "Yes, I know it; keep quiet."

6 Then Elijah said to him, "Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan." But he

said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on. 7 Fifty men of the sons of the prophets also went and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. 8 Then Elijah took his cloak and rolled it up and struck the water, and the water was parted to the one side and to the other, till the two of them could go over on dry ground.

9 When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you." And Elisha said, "Please let there be a double portion of your spirit on me." 10 And he said, "You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it shall be so for you, but if you do not see me, it shall not be so." 11 And as they still went on and talked, behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

What opportunity did God give to Elijah to restore his focus? _____

God came to Elijah and give him a job to do. He also comes to us through the Means of Grace to nourish us and nurture us to carry out the work He so lovingly gives us to do in His Kingdom.

How did God restore the focus of His fallen servant? _____

God allowed Elijah to carry on the task as He prepared Elisha to receive the mantel that would fall upon his shoulders. God graciously took his servant to heaven, not in a fiery chariot or on fiery horses as many believe, but in a whirlwind allowing him not to taste of death.

How does God desire my focus to be like Elijah's? _____

How do I lose focus like Elijah did? _____

How does this impact my life? _____

How does God restore my focus? _____

Summary: Elijah, even though he, like us, often wondered if he was the only one left who believed in God or if it was even worth the trouble, was still used mightily by God as He comforted him, fed him, provided for his needs, blessed him to teach the next generation, and ultimately took him to heaven, without having to taste death.

Focus ... Jonah

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father,

As I spend this time in the study of Your Word, I pray that you would send Your Holy Spirit to focus my mind and my heart on You, as the time is now to consider how some of the heroes of the Bible lost their focus just as I so often do. Thank you for refocusing my eyes upon You and Your great love for me as is evidenced in the giving of Your Son, Jesus Christ, to be my Savior from sin and eternal death. It is in His Name that I pray, Amen.

Read 2 Kings 14:25.

25 He restored the border of Israel from Lebo-hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the LORD, the God of Israel, which he spoke by his servant Jonah the son of Amit-tai, the prophet, who was from Gath-hepher.

Read Jonah 1:1–2.

Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 2 “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.”

What was God’s desired focus for Jonah? _____

Go to Nineveh; speak as a servant; call them out on their evil ways.

Read Jonah 1:3–16.

1 But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD. 4 But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. 5 Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. 6 So the captain came and said to him, “What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish.”

Jonah Is Thrown into the Sea

7 And they said to one another, “Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us.” So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. 8 Then they said to him, “Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?” 9 And he said to them, “I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.” 10 Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, “What is this that you have done!” For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them. 11 Then they said to him, “What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?” For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. 12 He said to them, “Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you.” 13 Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. 14 Therefore they called out to the LORD, “O LORD, let us not perish for this man’s life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O LORD, have done as it pleased you.” 15 So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the

sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. 16 Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.

How did Jonah lose focus? _____

He didn't go to Nineveh.

What was the result of Jonah losing focus? _____

Boarded a ship going to Tarsus. Thrown into the sea by the crew to stop the storm.

Read Jonah 1:15–16.

15 So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. 16 Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.

Read Jonah 2:1–10.

Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish, 2 saying,

*“I called out to the LORD, out of my distress,
and he answered me;*

out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice.

*For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas,
and the flood surrounded me; all your waves and your billows
passed over me.*

*Then I said, ‘I am driven away from your sight;
yet I shall again look upon your holy temple.’*

*The waters closed in over me to take my life; the deep surrounded me;
weeds were wrapped about my head
at the roots of the mountains.*

I went down to the land

*whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the pit,
O LORD my God.*

*When my life was fainting away, I remembered the LORD,
and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple.*

Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love.

*But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you;
what I have vowed I will pay.*

Salvation belongs to the LORD!”

3 And the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land.

Read Jonah 3:1–5.

1 Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, 2 “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.” 3 So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days’ journey in breadth. 4 Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s journey. And he called out, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” 5 And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.

What opportunity did God give to Jonah to restore his focus? _____

Swallowed by fish to save from drowning, prayed to God, repented of sin. After being vomited up, God told Jonah to go to Nineveh and Jonah did, preaching the message God had given him.

How did God restore the focus of His fallen servant? _____

Gave Jonah another opportunity to do what God had commissioned him to do in the first place, forgiving his sins, restoring him to a right relationship with his heavenly Father and empowering him, through the Holy Spirit, to proclaim the Word to the lost souls of Nineveh.

How does God desire my focus to be like Jonah's? _____

How do I lose focus like Jonah did? _____

How does this impact my life? _____

How does God restore my focus? _____

Summary: Jonah, like us, found himself not wanting to do the work God gave him to do. He found many of the same excuses we do. Possible excuses why he didn't want to go include: the people were so wicked; he feared for his safety; the job was so big; how could one man do it all, so why even bother; they didn't deserve to hear the Good News because they weren't like him. Our excuses are much the same, like how can we reach the whole world when we are so few in number. But like the old, well-known story of the starfish, the ones that were thrown back into the sea were given life. Sometimes we, fearing for our safety, or not wanting to be ridiculed, choose to say nothing about our Triune God. Sometimes we decide who it is we will tell about Jesus based on whether they are like us. The excuses are numerous. And yet, God gave Jonah the opportunity to see the error of his thinking and respond by doing what God asked him to do, of going to the lost saints of Nineveh, to share with them the message of salvation through faith in the promised Messiah. God gives us the same gifts and opportunities He gave to Jonah through faith in His Son Jesus Christ who, like Jonah, spent three days in the belly of the earth, rising again to give to us forgiveness, life, and salvation, assuring us the time is now to go to our modern-day Ninevehs with the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Focus ... John the Baptist

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father,

As I spend this time in the study of Your Word, I pray that you would send Your Holy Spirit to focus my mind and my heart on You, as the time is now to consider how some of the heroes of the Bible lost their focus just as I so often do. Thank you for refocusing my eyes upon You and Your great love for me as is evidenced in the giving of Your Son, Jesus Christ, to be my Savior from sin and eternal death. It is in His Name that I pray, Amen.

41 And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, 42 and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! 43 And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.

Read Luke 1:57–66.

57 Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. 58 And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. 59 And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child. And they would have called him Zechariah after his father, 60 but his mother answered, "No; he shall be called John." 61 And they said to her, "None of your relatives is called by this name." 62 And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he wanted him to be called. 63 And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And they all wondered. 64 And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God. 65 And fear came on all their neighbors. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea, 66 and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, "What then will this child be?" For the hand of the Lord was with him.

Read Mark 1:1–7.

1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'"

2 John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. 6 Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. 7 And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie.

What was God's desired focus for John? _____

God's messenger to prepare the way for Jesus and to proclaim a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Read Matthew 11:1–3.

1 When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in their cities.

*2 Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples
3 and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?”*

How did John lose focus? _____

Sent his disciples to ask Jesus if He was the one for which they had been waiting.

What was the result of John losing focus? _____

Both positive and negative. John may have been wanting the disciples to hear it from God’s own mouth. As he seemed to be losing focus, the disciples were able to hear it from God. If he was losing faith, it gave him the chance to be restored before he got older and had doubts.

Read Matthew 11:4–11.

*4 And Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: 5 the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. 6 And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.”
7 As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? 8 What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings’ houses.
9 What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 10 This is he of whom it is written,*

*“Behold, I send my messenger before your face,
who will prepare your way before you.”*

11 Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Read Mark 6:18–29.

*18 For John had been saying to Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.”
19 And Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death. But she could not,
20 for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed, and yet he heard him gladly.
21 But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his nobles and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. 22 For when Herodias’s daughter came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests. And the king said to the girl, “Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it to you.” 23 And he vowed to her, “Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half of my kingdom.” 24 And she went out and said to her mother, “For what should I ask?” And she said, “The head of John the Baptist.” 25 And she came in immediately with haste to the king and asked, saying, “I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.” 26 And the king was exceedingly sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he did not want to break his word to her. 27 And immediately the king sent an executioner with orders to bring John’s head. He went and beheaded him in the prison 28 and brought his head on a platter and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother. 29 When his disciples heard of it, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.*

What opportunity did God give to John to restore his focus? _____

Jesus answered the disciples and sent them back to John.

How did God restore the focus of His fallen servant? _____

God sent His disciples back to John with the assurance that Jesus is indeed who He says He is as He had them report to John how the blind received their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. Jesus now sends us with that same Good News as we share the inspired Word of our Triune God with everyone our lives touch.

How does God desire my focus to be like theirs? _____

How do I lose focus like John did? _____

How does this impact my life? _____

How does God restore my focus? _____

Summary: Like John the Baptist, sometimes we wonder if God is really who He says He is, if God is really in control, and if He is in control, why do these seemingly bad things happen to us. Like He did with John, our heavenly Father, through His Word, assures us of who Christ is, what He has done for us through His death and resurrection, and how we can have the assurance, no matter what our situation in life, that He is our Savior from sin, death, and the devil, and we can confidently press on, no matter what God may allow to come our way, confident that our eternal home is in heaven where there will be no more pain, sorrow, hardship, weeping, or gnashing of teeth.

Focus ... Peter

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father,

As I spend this time in the study of Your Word, I pray that you would send Your Holy Spirit to focus my mind and my heart on You, as the time is now to consider how some of the heroes of the Bible lost their focus just as I so often do. Thank you for refocusing my eyes upon You and Your great love for me as is evidenced in the giving of Your Son, Jesus Christ, to be my Savior from sin and eternal death. It is in His Name that I pray, Amen.

Read Matthew 4:18–20.

18 While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. 19 And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." 20 Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

What was God's desired focus for Peter? _____

To be a fisher of men.

Read Matthew 14:28–29.

29 He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me."

How did Peter lose focus? _____

Took his eyes off Jesus and saw the wind and became afraid.

What was the result of Peter losing focus? _____

Began to sink, cried out for Jesus to save him.

Read Matthew 16:13–20.

13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" 14 And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." 15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. 18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." 20 Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

What opportunity did God give to Peter to restore his focus? _____

Jesus asked Peter who He (Jesus) was and Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Read Matthew 16:21–23.

21 From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. 22 And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” 23 But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

How did Peter lose focus? _____

Even though Peter made the proper confession of who Christ is, he turned right around and relied on his own understanding deciding that the best plan would be that Jesus not die for the sins of the world.

What was the result of Peter losing focus? _____

He was rebuked by his Savior and friend and equated with Satan, who would have us renounce our confession of who Jesus Christ is.

Read Matthew 17:1–13.

1 And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. 2 And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. 3 And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. 4 And Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” 5 He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.” 6 When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. 7 But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Rise, and have no fear.” 8 And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

9 And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, “Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.” 10 And the disciples asked him, “Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?” 11 He answered, “Elijah does come, and he will restore all things. 12 But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands.” 13 Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.

What opportunity did God give to Peter to restore his focus? _____

Jesus invited Peter to join James and John and Himself along with Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration to behold His glory and hear the affirmation of His heavenly Father.

Read Matthew 26:33–35.

33 Peter answered him, “Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.” 34 Jesus said to him, “Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.” 35 Peter said to him, “Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!” And all the disciples said the same.

Read Matthew 26:69–75.

69 Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came up to him and said, “You also were with Jesus the Galilean.” 70 But he denied it before them all, saying, “I do not know what you mean.” 71 And when he went out to the entrance, another servant girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, “This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.” 72 And again he denied it with an oath: “I do not know the man.” 73 After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, “Certainly you too are one of them, for your accent betrays you.” 74 Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, “I do not know the man.” And immediately the rooster crowed. 75 And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, “Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly.

How did Peter lose focus? _____

Peter bragged to Jesus that he would not fall away or deny Jesus.

What was the result of Peter losing focus? _____

Peter denied Jesus three times and wept bitterly.

Read Luke 24:12.

12 But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.

Read John 21:7.

7 That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea.

Read John 21:15–19.

15 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” 16 He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” 17 He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep. 18 Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.” 19 (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, “Follow me.”

Read Acts 2:14–41.

14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. 15 For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. 16 But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:

*“And in the last days it shall be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,*

*and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams;
even on my male servants and female servants
in those days I will pour out my Spirit,
and they shall prophesy.*

*And I will show wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;*

*20 the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood,
before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.*

21 And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’

*22 “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty
works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—*

*23 this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified
and killed by the hands of lawless men. 24 God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because
it was not possible for him to be held by it. 25 For David says concerning him,*

*“I saw the Lord always before me,
for he is at my right hand that*

I may not be shaken;

26 therefore my heart was glad,

and my tongue rejoiced;

my flesh also will dwell in hope.

For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,

or let your Holy One see corruption.

You have made known to me the paths of life;

you will make me full of gladness with your presence.’

*27 “Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and
was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that
God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne,*

*31 he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to
Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. 32 This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.*

*33 Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of
the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. 34 For David did not
ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,*

“The Lord said to my Lord,

“Sit at my right hand,

35 until I make your enemies your footstool.”’

*36 Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord
and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”*

*37 Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the
apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” 38 And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized*

*every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will
receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you and for your children and for
all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” 40 And with many other*

*words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this
crooked generation.” 41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added
that day about three thousand souls.*

Read Acts 3:1–10.

1 Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. [a] 2 And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple. 3 Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. 4 And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." 5 And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. 6 But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" 7 And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. 8 And leaping up he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. 9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God, 10 and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

Read Acts 3:11–26.

11 While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's. 12 And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: "Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk? 13 The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. 14 But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, 15 and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. 16 And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.

17 "And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. 18 But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. 19 Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, 20 that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, 21 whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. 22 Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. 23 And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.' 24 And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. 25 You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' 26 God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness."

Read Acts 4:8–20.

8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, 9 if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, 10 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. 11 This Jesus[a] is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. 12 And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men[c] by which we must be saved."

13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. 14 But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition.

15 But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, 16 saying, "What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. 17 But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name." 18 So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, 20 for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard."

Read Acts 5:29–33.

29 But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. 30 The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. 31 God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. 32 And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him." 33 When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them.

Read Acts 5:40–42.

40 and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 41 Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. 42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.

What opportunity did God give to Peter to restore his focus? _____

Jesus came to the shore to feed the disciples and asked Peter three times if he loved Jesus and each time Peter confessed his love for Jesus. Jesus then tells Peter to feed His sheep. On Pentecost, Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit and preached to the people about Jesus. Spent his life proclaiming Jesus' message.

How did God restore the focus of His fallen servant? _____

By asking Peter three times if he loved Jesus and each time assuring him that he still had work to do as the Lord told him to feed His lambs and feed His sheep. Ultimately giving him the opportunity on Pentecost and the years that followed to boldly profess the name and the message of the One he had denied many times. So, too, by the grace of God we have been restored as Jesus reaches down and pulls us from our sea of guilt and shame restoring us to a right relationship with Him and sending us to share this Good News with our world.

How does God desire my focus to be like Peter's? _____

How do I lose focus like Peter did? _____

How does this impact my life? _____

How does God restore my focus? _____

Summary: Like Saint Peter there are times, especially on those mountaintop-experience days, when we are bold to confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, only to have those days when we like Saint Peter are a hindrance to the ministry of our Savior and deserve the title Satan. But like Saint Peter, our Savior comes to us to restore us to a right relationship with our heavenly Father, refocusing our eyes on the task He gives us of feeding His lambs and sheep on the green grass and still waters of His holy inspired Word.

Focus ... Saul/Paul

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father,

As I spend this time in the study of Your Word, I pray that you would send Your Holy Spirit to focus my mind and my heart on You, as the time is now to consider how some of the heroes of the Bible lost their focus just as I so often do. Thank you for refocusing my eyes upon You and Your great love for me as is evidenced in the giving of Your Son, Jesus Christ, to be my Savior from sin and eternal death. It is in His Name that I pray, Amen.

Read Acts 8:1–3.

1 And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. 2 Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. 3 But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.

Read Acts 9:1–2.

1 But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest 2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

What was God's desired focus for Saul? _____

To study the Holy Scriptures, to be a follower, to know Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.

How did Saul lose focus? _____

Not following Christ, focusing only on the Old Testament, striving to do away with those who followed Christ.

What was the result of Saul losing focus? _____

He persecuted men and women he found who belonged to the Way causing many of them to suffer because of their faith in Jesus Christ.

Read Acts 9:3–18.

3 Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. 4 And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" 5 And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. 6 But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." 7 The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. 8 Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. 9 And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

10 Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." 11 And the Lord said to him, "Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, 12 and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his

hands on him so that he might regain his sight.” 13 But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. 14 And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name.” 15 But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. 16 For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.” 17 So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” 18 And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; 19 and taking food, he was strengthened.

Read Acts 9:20–31.

20 For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus. 20 And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God.” 21 And all who heard him were amazed and said, “Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name? And has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests?” 22 But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.

Saul Escapes from Damascus

23 When many days had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him, 24 but their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night in order to kill him, 25 but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket.

Saul in Jerusalem

26 And when he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples. And they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple. 27 But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus. 28 So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. 29 And he spoke and disputed against the Hellenists. But they were seeking to kill him. 30 And when the brothers learned this, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.

31 So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

Read Acts 13:2–3.

2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” 3 Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

What opportunity did God give to Saul to restore his focus? _____

God, in His love, sent Jesus to appear to him on the road to Damascus, physically blinding Saul so that he no longer was able to rely on himself. As Jesus spoke with him, He shared with him the plans God had for him to go to the Gentiles and share with them the Good News of the Savior.

How did God restore the focus of His fallen servant? _____

God sent Saul to Ananias who shared with him the work God had in mind for him to do

making disciples of all nations. Jesus comes to us in, with, and under the bread and wine of Holy Communion and His holy inspired Word to change us, like Paul, from persecutor to witness.

How does God desire my focus to be like Paul's? _____

How do I lose focus like Paul did? _____

How does this impact my life? _____

How does God restore my focus? _____

Summary: Sometimes we think we are very educated in the things of God and His Word. We look at how involved we are in worship, Bible studies, service to others, and in short consider ourselves far better than most other people while we in effect persecute those who we deem less involved than we are, failing to share with them those things with which God has blessed us. Thankfully our heavenly Father comes to us to restore our focus taking the scales from our eyes as He uses, at times, other Christians to show us the error of our ways and the plans He has in mind for us as we, like Saint Paul, are sent to share God's Word with those He places in our lives.

Focus ... Family of Jesus/James

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father,

As I spend this time in the study of Your Word, I pray that you would send Your Holy Spirit to focus my mind and my heart on You, as the time is now to consider how some of the heroes of the Bible lost their focus just as I so often do. Thank you for refocusing my eyes upon You and Your great love for me as is evidenced in the giving of Your Son, Jesus Christ, to be my Savior from sin and eternal death. It is in His Name that I pray, Amen.

Read Mark 3:20–21.

20 Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. 21 And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, “He is out of his mind.”

Read John 7:3–5.

3 So his brothers said to him, “Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. 4 For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.” 5 For not even his brothers believed in him.

Read Mark 6:3.

3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?”

Read Galatians 1:19.

19 But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord’s brother.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:7.

7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

Read Acts 15:12–21

12 And all the assembly fell silent, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul as they related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles. 13 After they finished speaking, James replied, “Brothers, listen to me. 14 Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name. 15 And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written,

*“After this I will return,
and I will rebuild the tent
of David that has fallen;
I will rebuild its ruins,
and I will restore it,
that the remnant of mankind
may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles
who are called by my name,
says the Lord, who makes these things 18 known from of old.’*

19 Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, 20 but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood. 21 For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues.”

Read Acts 21:18.

18 On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present.

Read Galatians 2:9.

9 and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

What was God’s desired focus for James? _____

To be a follower and to know Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior, and proclaimer of the Savior’s dying love and His blood-bought gift of redemption shared with us now through the Means of Grace.

How did James lose focus? _____

James went along with the crowd thinking that his brother, Jesus, was out of His mind.

What was the result of James losing focus? _____

Did not see his brother, Jesus, as his Lord and Savior.

What opportunity did God give to James to restore his focus? _____

The resurrected Jesus appeared to James; he was a pillar among the elders and believers; and he preached the Word.

How did God restore the focus of His fallen servant? _____

Jesus appeared to James after the resurrection and gave him work to do among the Gentiles as Jesus allowed him to become a pillar in the early church.

How does God desire my focus to be like theirs? _____

How do I lose focus like James did? _____

How does this impact my life? _____

How does God restore my focus? _____

Summary: Even though we are sometimes like James and wonder if Jesus has lost His mind as we experience various trials, yet as our big Brother, He is always with us to restore (as we remember our Baptism and are nourished in His Word and Holy Supper) and gives us work to do in His Church as we, like James, tell the story of our Brother, Jesus Christ.

Focus ... John Mark

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father,

As I spend this time in the study of Your Word, I pray that you would send Your Holy Spirit to focus my mind and my heart on You, as the time is now to consider how some of the heroes of the Bible lost their focus just as I so often do. Thank you for refocusing my eyes upon You and Your great love for me as is evidenced in the giving of Your Son, Jesus Christ, to be my Savior from sin and eternal death. It is in His Name that I pray, Amen.

Read Acts 12:11–12.

11 When Peter came to himself, he said, “Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.”

12 When he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying.

Read Acts 13:2–5.

2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” 3 Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

Barnabas and Saul on Cyprus

4 So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. 5 When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John to assist them.

Read Acts 13:13.

13 Now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. And John left them and returned to Jerusalem.

Read Acts 15:36–41.

36 And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.” 37 Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. 38 But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. 39 And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, 40 but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. 41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

What was God’s desired focus for John Mark? _____

To proclaim the Word of God in the synagogues of the Jews.

How did John Mark lose focus? _____

John left the missionary journey and returned home.

What was the result of John Mark losing focus? _____

Caused a disagreement between Barnabas and Paul.

What opportunity did God give to John Mark to restore his focus? _____

Rejoined Barnabas on missionary journey to Cyprus.

How did God restore the focus of His fallen servant? _____

God gave John Mark another opportunity to proclaim the Word even though he had chosen to go back home and leave Paul and Barnabas to do the work of evangelists.

How does God desire my focus to be like theirs? _____

How do I lose focus like John Mark did? _____

How does this impact my life? _____

How does God restore my focus? _____

Summary: How often am I like John Mark, as my heavenly Father calls upon me to work with others in sharing the Good News of my Savior with the world only to find myself wanting to leave that work behind and return home to more comfortable surroundings? And yet God in His love restores me through the Means of Grace and the forgiveness of sins that only He can give, giving me the opportunity once again to work with fellow members of His family as the time is now to make disciples of all nations.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

Focus Lost ... Focus Restored by Rev. John Heckmann, Gatesville, Texas
LWML Pastoral Counselor 2010-2014
Published by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 2015, Revised 2021
lwml.org

Biography

Rev. John Heckmann, husband of Debra and father of Michelle, a Lutheran school teacher at Trinity, Klein, Texas; Michael, a Lutheran pastor at Zion in Grant, Nebraska; and Mikayla, a veterinary medicine student at the Texas A&M Veterinary College; is the past National LWML Pastoral Counselor as well as past District Pastoral Counselor for Nebraska South and the Texas Districts of the LWML. Pastor Heckmann serves the members of St. Paul Lutheran Church in The Grove, Texas, as their pastor, the ladies of the Sunshine Zone as their Pastoral Counselor, and Donna Snow as a member of the Board of Directors for her Artesian Ministries, Inc.



©Copyright Lutheran Women's Missionary League 2015.
Revised 2021. All rights reserved.
801 Seminary Place, Suite L010
St. Louis, MO 63105

800-252-LWML (5965)
lwml.org