

# WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

HEAR - (ROMANS 10:17; MATTHEW 7:24-27).

BELIEVE - (HEBREWS 11:6; MARK 16:15-16).

REPENT - (ACTS 2:38; 17:30; LUKE 13:3).

CONFESS - (MATTHEW 10:32,33; ACTS 8:36).

BE BAPTIZED - (ACTS 2:38; GALATIANS 3:27).

LIVE FAITHFULLY UNTO DEATH - (REV. 2:10).

Upon The Rock  
Michael J. Gors, Editor  
6600 w. Kilgore Ave.  
Yorktown, IN 47396



# UPON THE ROCK

April—May 2013



Volume 16 Issue 2

## *13th Annual UTR Lectureship*

April 12-14, 2013

### *“Getting Focused”*

**The Danger of Losing Focus!** - Page 2

Stephen Rogers

**Focused on Jesus** -Page 5

Stephen Rogers

**Focused on Marriage** - Page 7

Brandon Britton

**Focused on Family** - Page 11

Mark Reynolds

**Focused on the church Family** - Page 14

Jim Harrison

**Focused on the Work of the church** - Page 18

Mark Reynolds

**Focused on the Future**- Page 23

Brandon Britton

**Focused to the End** - Page 27

Brandon Britton

UPON THE ROCK is published quarterly for the purpose of setting forth sound biblical material concerning first-principles and evangelism. We strive to print articles that are informative for Christians and non-Christians. For past issues and extra copies of this issue visit our website [www.westsidecoc.net](http://www.westsidecoc.net)

Michael Gors, Editor  
[michaelgors@yahoo.com](mailto:michaelgors@yahoo.com)

## The Danger of Losing Focus

Stephen Rogers

### Introduction:

“Being in focus” is a great blessing, whether in taking pictures, in using your eyesight, or in your spiritual life. “Being in focus” gives clarity, understanding, and sharpness. “Being out of focus” leaves us with distorted pictures, distorted eyesight, or distorted spiritual direction. Amazingly, in our personal eyesight, people often lose focus but it happens so subtly and gradually that we do not realize what is happening to us. And the same thing happens to us spiritually – whether individually or congregationally! We can lose focus gradually and not realize how far we are from what God wants for our lives.

God cautions us about “losing focus.” In II Pet. 1:9 He says, “For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.”

### How Can Christians Lose Focus In Their Personal Lives?

Christians with clarity of focus should be looking the Godhead and Their revealed Will for our lives. Our interest should be in the revealed Word! Our attention should be upon living lives that conform to the predestined life the Godhead planned for Christians – “that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.” Eph. 1:4. We should concentrate upon using our bodies as living sacrifices to God; this requires refusing to be conformed to the thinking and ways of the world; it requires transformation as we seek to harmonize our thinking to the Will of God! Rom. 12:1,2. Focused Christians seek to honor God with their words and deeds; they seek to glorify God through their life and example. Mt. 5:16. They challenge themselves to imitate Christ above everything else!!! 2 Peter 1:4

## Far East/ World Evangelism

Mark Reynolds

I recently began working with two outstanding works, Murmansk, Russia and Kakinada India respectively. I have seen some outstanding works in the brotherhood, but I can honestly say that I have never seen anything like I did on my recent trip to India. Not only were there several baptisms, but many Hindus have been converted to Christ at the risk of great persecution. Joshua Gootam, a Christian of forty years, leads this outstanding work and has literally converted thousands of souls. His greatest tool is the Bible Correspondence Course, written by Ira Y. Rice, and has been taken by over 3.2 million Indians. There are currently 35,000 souls enrolled in the course on an ongoing basis. Those who complete the course are promised a Bible for their efforts. As of this writing there is an \$1800 a month shortfall to fund all the necessities for this work. Joshua and his sons have been making this up themselves (two of Joshua's sons are working in the computer field here in the States, the other is working by his side in Kakinada). We need your help. I would love to talk to personally about the needs for this work, or would love to make a presentation to the congregation where you attend. Please feel free to contact me with any questions, or to set up an appointment. Towne Acres Church of Christ is overseeing my work.

Thank you,

Mark Reynolds

2411 E. Riggin Rd.

Muncie, IN. 47303

[mreyn8391@comcast.net](mailto:mreyn8391@comcast.net) 803-325-5532

and I doubt I ever will. The reason is because there is no celebration for almost finishing a half marathon or a marathon. You finish the race and rejoice or you stop early and regret.

You may have heard the story of John Stephen Akhwari, the marathon runner from Tanzania who finished last at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City. No last-place finisher in a marathon ever finished quite so last. Injured along the way, he hobbled into the stadium with his leg bloodied and bandaged. It was more than an hour after the rest of the runners had completed the race. Only a few spectators were left in the stands when Akhwari finally crossed the finish line. When asked why he continued to run despite the pain, Akhwari replied, "My country did not send me to Mexico City to start the race. They sent me here to finish."

After having accomplished so much during his lifetime, and having suffered so greatly for the cause of Christ, it is telling that Paul did not put his faith on cruise control in his final years. He pushed through to the end, when it would have been very tempting to stop early or at the very least coast, but he didn't. He had previously written the words, "*let us run with patience the race that is set before us. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith*" (Hebrews 12:1-2). Paul remained focused unto the end because he remained focused on the end, the finish line, where Jesus waited. He wasn't running from something, but toward something and he did not stop running until he reached it, "*forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 3:13-14). We cannot get distracted by setbacks or past accomplishments, but keep our focus trained on the finish line and put one foot in front of the other until we cross it.

Here are traits of Christians who have lost their focus:

- ~ They have lost their diligence for the Word.  
II Tim. 2:15; II Peter 1:5,10
- ~ They are swayed in their loyalty to God's Truths; they believe only those things that make sense to them; they become syncretic — they take part of what teaches and try to intermingle them with what men and false religions teach.
- ~ They stop growing spiritually.
- ~ They become enamored with sinful ways of the world; they envy sinners; they decide that sin is acceptable.
- ~ They build closer relationships with and become greater friends with people in the world than they do with those in God's family.
- ~ They become lax in worship; other opportunities take precedence over worship.
- ~ They put greater emphasis upon the educational and athletic participation and achievement of their children and less and less emphasis on their spiritual growth.
- ~ They lose their hunger for Heaven!

### How Can Congregations Lose Focus In Their Work?

Congregations are expected to respect the purpose of the Church – to be "the pillar and ground of the Truth!" I Tim. 3:15. They are to be loyal to Christ and the Truth. Focused congregations are to be at peace and help brethren feel loved and cared for as a part of God's Family. Congregations must understand that their mission is to promote the Gospel and to bring sinners to salvation in Christ. Focused congregations expect members to live holy lives; sinful living is not tolerated. I Cor. 5:7, 11. Leaders must be focused on showing genuine care for members, on dealing with problems immediately, and on expecting sinners to repent. Focused leaders must be visionaries who are inspiring men to be future leaders and women to be the wives of future leaders.

They must have future plans and encourage brethren to be actively involved in the work and in giving to support that work through contributions and estates.

Here are traits of congregations who have lost their focus:

- ~ They have lost their loyalty for the Word.
- ~ They allow men with charismatic personalities to teach error and to lead them away from Christ.
- ~ They tolerate sinful living.
- ~ They become focused almost exclusively upon members needs and end up keeping house.
- ~ They have very little, if any, evangelistic efforts.
- ~ They live with the status quo; they do not seriously prepare men for future leadership; their buildings decay; their membership declines; they are headed toward non-existence.

It is CRITICAL that individuals and congregations take time to seriously evaluate themselves. "How are we doing?" Have we lost our focus? How serious is it? Would God say that we have spiritual near-sightedness and Alzheimer's? If we have lost focus, it is absolutely necessary to repent, get our focus right, and get busy in the Lord's business!!!

### ABOUT

**Stephen Rogers** serves as the preacher and an Elder at the Washington Avenue church of Christ in Evansville, IN. He attended Freed Hardeman university 1970-1973 and David Lipscomb 1974 (B.A.). He has been a minister in Virginia, Michigan, and Indiana. He has been in Evansville, IN since 1985. He holds four or five gospel meetings a year and speaks on several Lectureships. He has written three books about evangelism

Mike Tyson gave you advice on how to box would you pay attention? Based on their success in the ring we would be foolish to ignore their advice. The same is true for Paul. He fought Satan to the end and although he may have taken a few punches, in the end he was still standing. Will you be?

**Keep The Faith** ~ To "keep" the faith is literally to "stand guard/watch over." In the case of Paul it is likely that he meant he had fulfilled the charge given to him. In order to have done that he had to take this charge very seriously. He had to know what was expected of him. He had to know how to do his job. He had to be committed to doing it. In short, it took great focus on his part. These are requirements for anyone entrusted with the job of standing guard.

Consider the seriousness of being a body guard. Your job is literally to be on the lookout constantly. You have to watch for potential threats and dangers and then act instantly. In the case of Paul there were constantly threats to derail his work. He had to guard the faith against Gnostics in Colosse, legalists in Galatia and Judaizers practically everywhere he went. He once said he was hard pressed on every side (2 Corinthians 4:8) and warned others to awake from sleep (Romans 13:11). A guard has to keep his eyes up, maybe even have eyes in the back of his head. However, it isn't enough to just be on guard and watchful, you must be willing to act when necessary. Consider the diligence and dedication of the Royal Guard at Buckingham palace, the Secret Service at the White House or the soldiers at Fort Knox. They recognize the seriousness of their charge and yet ours is far greater, which is why Jude pleads with us to, "*earnestly contend for the faith*" (Jude 3).

**Finish Your Course** ~ Periodically I will see stickers on the backs of vehicles that are numbered "13.1" or "26.2". These indicate that the owner has completed a half marathon or a marathon. I see these stickers everywhere, but I've yet to see a "12.6" or a "25.3" sticker,

**Fight The Good Fight** ~ What would you do if you knew you had to fight a professional boxer? If there was no way to avoid the fight, you would likely realize that you needed to begin training. You would need to begin preparing yourself mentally and physically if you were going to have any chance of, not just success, but survival. The last thing you would ever do is step into the ring without any training or preparation, yet spiritually Christians do this every single day. We are in a fight with Satan, whether we want to be or not. *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour”* (1 Peter 5:8). You don’t have to fight him, but he is going to come after you, and if you don’t fight, you will be devoured. What preparations have you made for this fight? It is worth noting that before Jesus went toe to toe with Satan it was His practice to fast and pray (Matthew 4:1-3; 26:36-44). He was strengthening His spirit and preparing Himself for a fight. Coincidentally He was never defeated by Satan, not even once. How much time do we spend in preparation? How many times have we been knocked down by Satan? Is there a connection between the two?

Although I have never competitively boxed, I feel confident in saying that I highly doubt that during a fight boxers are thinking about what they are going to watch on television when they get back to the hotel or where they are going for breakfast the next morning or if they are going to take a nap. If they were to think about these things while in the ring, they would get to take a nap sooner than expected. A fighter has to remain focused on the fight. He has to keep his guard up, look out for punches being thrown and watch for opportunities to fight back. For a boxer in a fight, distractions are devastating, and they very well may be for our faith. When we spend most of our time distracted by things that have no eternal significance, suddenly, we get blind sided and knocked down. In Ephesians 6 Paul tells Christians to prepare for battle with Satan by putting on the whole armor of Christ. He makes it clear that failure to do this will result in not being able to stand against Satan. If Muhammad Ali or

## Focused Upon Jesus !

Stephen Rogers

### Introduction:

Those who become Christians have a goal – to live faithfully to Christ the rest of their lives! This demands that Christians constantly be aware that they can “lose focus” and have grave spiritually problems. Peter described those who “lose focus” “For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.” II Pet. 1:9. Spiritual nearsightedness and spiritual Alzheimer’s take over; often it is subtle and gradual; the “out of focus Christian” is in much more serious condition than he realizes.

Now the question: “How does a Christian KEEP his focus?” “How does a Christian who has lost his focus rectify his situation?”

### Paul’s Advice To The Hebrew Christians:

Paul gave vulnerable Jewish Christians whose faith was being challenged by their family and friends this advice, “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup>looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Heb. 12:1,2.

What were these brethren to do to protect their faith and to keep their spiritual focus? First, remember that God’s people through the ages have cherished and protected their faith even though they lacked the sight of prophetic fulfillments during their lifetime, when they had no way of understanding how God would fulfill His promises, when worldly privilege and treasure were offered them, when they faced seeming insurmountable situations, and when they faced horrific persecutions and death! Heb. 11.

What kept these people from losing their focus? They knew God could be trusted! Heb. 11:11, 17-19, 22, 27. They knew that God had promised a coming Messiah! They knew He had promised them Heaven if they stayed faithful! Heb. 11:10; 12-16. The heroes of “The Hall of Faith” in Hebrews 11 attest loudly and with certainty that God’s people CAN stay faithful and can be victorious no matter what they face!

Second, Christians must keep their eyes sharply focused upon Jesus! They must not let ANYONE cause their faith in Him to waver for a second! Christians must acknowledge that He is THE Savior; there NEVER HAS BEEN and NEVER WILL BE another savior! Jn. 14:6; Ac. 4:12. Christians must see the tenacity that Jesus had in fulfilling His Mission! No threat, no mistreatment, no horrific act like scourging or crucifixion would deter Him from His Mission – He came to provide salvation for sinful man! He was obedient, no matter what the requirements! Heb. 5:8; 10:7,9; Jn. 19:30. Christians need to keep a laser-like focus upon Christ – His life, His commitment to His mission, His Blood, and His Promises!

#### **Peter’s Advice To Christians:**

The Apostle Peter gave a LIFE-LONG challenge to Christians about staying focused! “II Pet. 1:3-11 “as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, <sup>4</sup>by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust. <sup>5</sup>But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, <sup>6</sup>to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, <sup>7</sup>to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. <sup>8</sup>For if these things are yours and abound, *you will be* neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup>For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed

## **Focused To The End**

Brandon Britton

I do a lot of traveling with my job. It is not uncommon for me to spend six to twelve hours in a day driving all over the country. Due to all of the driving, I am especially thankful for cruise control. As soon as I get on the interstate I get my car up to speed and set the cruise control. This enables me to take my foot off the pedal and, as my grandfather the traveling salesman used to say, “Keep it between the lines.” As much of a convenience as it is, I’ve found that it tends to create a slight problem. Because I am able to relax a little, sometimes I become too relaxed and loose focus. When driving hundreds of miles, after a long day of being in the car your mind begins to dull. I begin to daydream or pay attention to the scenery more than the road or other cars. Whenever I make this mistake, I usually wind up with a close call like speeding, drifting off the road, missing an exit or getting too close to a car in front of me. Losing focus on the road is dangerous, but losing focus in our faith is even more so.

Have you put your faith on cruise control? Do you find yourself losing focus on what is really important in life? Do you look back at the end of the week and realize you have spent hours watching television and no time studying your Bible? It’s easy to happen to any of us. Our spiritual journey can be very long, Paul even compares it to running a marathon (Hebrews 12:1-3), and after awhile, we can let our minds begin to drift and we simply put our faith on cruise control. In the event your faith is on cruise control, or you realize that it has been in the past, what can you do to maintain the right focus all the way to the end? A good place to start is to look at someone who maintained their focus all the way to the end and see what you can learn from them. When the apostle Paul reached the end of his life and realized the finish line was within his reach, he took a brief moment to look back and reflect upon how he got there.

begin to see things that you did not realize were there originally. They were there all along but you had to allow your eyes to focus to see them. Is there a better way to describe the presence of God in our lives? He is always there, He has always been here and He will always be here. *"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee"* (Hebrews 13:5). Although He is always present, He is not always seen. Usually it is because we are not focusing on Him. Moses, like Abraham before him, *"died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them...but now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly"* (Hebrews 11:13-16). By contrast, too often we can only see what is right in front of our faces and like the soil with thorns and weeds, *"are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection"* (Luke 8:14). Are you willing to stand still long enough to see the presence of God in this world? Are you willing to focus, not on the pleasures of this life, but the unseen riches of His glory? You will see whatever you are looking for.

from his old sins. <sup>10</sup>Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; <sup>11</sup>for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

Peter's challenge – have a heart committed to this maxim, "I WANT TO BE LIKE CHRIST!" Give DILIGENCE to that goal! Adopt the Christian graces! When you are focused upon these traits, you are sure to be a productive, faithful Christian! If you continue doing these things, you will never stumble; by continuing to cultivate these traits, you will assure that God will take you home to the abundant glories of Heaven! One with this laser-like focus will NEVER become spiritually near-sighted or have spiritual Alzheimer's – he will stay focused and will be rewarded by the Lord he has faithfully served!

---

## Focused on Marriage

Brandon Britton

Michael Jordan, Tiger Woods, Joe Montana. Perhaps more than any others, these three names symbolize the pinnacle of greatness in their respective sports. A key ingredient in their greatness was their focus. When the game was on the line (Jordan at the free throw line with ten seconds to go in the finals, tiger sizing up a birdie putt, Montana facing third and eight with two minutes to go in the Super Bowl), they had a laser focus. The rest of the world disappeared and they only saw what mattered in that moment. The type of focus can result in tremendous success in the sports world, but it is also the secret to success in most areas of life, especially marriage.

Few of us would accurately be described as inherently bad spouses, and yet most of us could be characterized as distracted spouses. We lack focus. Gradually our jobs, friends

---

## DESERVING OF YOUR CONSIDERATION



[LAM.ForrestPark.org](http://LAM.ForrestPark.org)

"Visit us on the web and watch a video of what it looks like when YOU go on a mission trip!" And or if you have questions contact Brandon Britton at

[brandonbritton37@yahoo.com](mailto:brandonbritton37@yahoo.com)

Hobbies, schedules, and entertainment distract us from what is truly important, including our marriages. Next to our faith, our marriages are our most important relationships. In reality, anyone who is married knows that our marriage relationship has a profound impact on our spiritual lives, which makes it all the more important for us to maintain the right focus in our marriages. Before we can maintain the right focus in our marriages, we must first identify what is the right focus in our marriages.

Your spouse is your main focus. When we are dating all of our focus is on our boy/girlfriend. We seek to spend as much time as possible with them, even going out of our way, traveling long distances, being inconvenienced, just to be with them for even a brief time. When dating we make a commitment to communicating regularly. In the “old days” we wrote letters and passed notes or talked on the phone for hours, today we might email and text. Whether it is by writing or talking face to face, we want to learn everything we can about the other person. Think back to all of the gifts you bought when you were dating. Valentines Day, Christmas, Birthdays, one month anniversary, I thought of you today surprises. When dating we go to great lengths to impress the other person and show them how much we want them in our lives. Now fast forward to the fifth, tenth, or twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. Can you honestly say you have the same focus on your relationship now that you did when you were dating? To be fair, it is not as easy now as it was when you were in high school or college or in your early twenties. Now your time is spread out over forty or more hour work weeks, soccer practice, piano lessons, school functions, the Sunday school class you teach, laundry, dishes, yard work, etc, etc, etc. These are the realities of married life, but here is another reality: if we lose the focus in our marriages, we may not have a marriage left. Again, it's not the case that we are bad husbands or wives, we are just distracted, we have lost focus. So how do we regain our right focus?

Begin by asking yourself some questions. What does it really mean to love your spouse?

eternal, heavenly riches. Had Moses chosen to remain in Pharaoh's court would he even be remembered by history? Perhaps an archaeologist would one day unearth his tomb and a footnote would be made in some archive or museum, but his life would have been wasted on self gratification. Perhaps he would have risen to power and, like so many Pharaohs before him, erected monuments and statues to his own glory. And like them, his glory would fade and his monuments would crumble to dust. Other than King Tut, how many Pharaohs could you even name, despite their power and riches? Few if any I would imagine. But Moses did not focus on glory in the present, he focused on the future and instead of being forgotten he was exalted. Thousands of years after his death, in Washington D.C., thousand of miles from where he lived, his likeness is etched and placed as a centerpiece on one of our most important buildings: the U.S. Supreme Court. His name is synonymous with the great covenant God made with His people: the law of Moses. You would be hard pressed to find a place on earth where no one has heard of Moses the lawgiver. Contrast this type of focus with the easily distracted mind of adolescence. Ask a child if they would rather have a piece of candy now or an entire candy bar two hours from now and they will choose the former almost every time. So it is with the immature Christian. The eternal reward is often forfeited for the immediate pleasures of this life. The faithful child of God doesn't truly lose anything he sacrifices. *“Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting”* (Luke 18:28-30). Are you focusing on what you have to give up, or what you have to gain?

**He could see the unseen** ~ Have you ever looked at one of those pictures that changes the longer you stare at it? The most famous is the picture that looks like a skull, only to transform into a woman sitting in front of a mirror. After a while you

*By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible”* (Hebrews 11:24-26). Moses didn't focus on the riches, glory and honor that was right in front of him, but focused on the future, the distant future, which held eternal riches, honor and glory. His focus was such that he could see the future, not like a psychic or fortune teller claims, but by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7).

**He could see that earthly pleasure was temporary.** Moses was born into a life of luxury and ease. Well, technically he was born into slavery and suffering, but as an infant he was adopted by Pharaoh's daughter. Moses would have been exposed to the greatest education the world had to offer. His home would have been a palace and his meals would be plentiful and abundant. Moses was royalty, he had power, wealth, influence, ease, everything that we spend a lifetime seeking to obtain. And Moses walked away from all of it. The empire did not collapse, there was no invading army that overthrew the throne. Moses simply made a choice. He chose the eternal over the temporary. He knew what the future held for Egypt (the judgment of God) and he knew what the future held for Israel (the blessing of God) and he chose the better outcome. What choice have you made? Are you focused upon instant gratification, immediate pleasure? The alcoholic does not choose cirrhosis of the liver, blackouts, asphyxiation on vomit and death, he chooses to feel a buzz after a couple of drinks. The other things are future consequences and sufferings, long after the instant pleasure of intoxication. For Moses the choice was between instant pleasure and eternal suffering or temporary suffering and eternal reward. What will you choose, what is your focus, the present or the future?

**He could see that his reward would be repaid one day.** In reality Moses was not forsaking the riches, glory and honor he enjoyed in Egypt, he was simply delaying it. Moses endured the suffering for a season because he was focused on the future. A future in which His Father, not the king of Egypt, but the Creator of all things, would reward him with

Usually our first definition of love has to do with feelings, which are certainly a part of it, but should never be the whole of it. Paul wrote, *“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it”* (Ephesians 5:25); and *“the aged women...teach the young women to...love their husbands...obedient to their own husbands”* (Titus 2:3-5). The apostle seems to indicate that a key element for a husband to love his wife is his willingness to give himself for her. A tragic mistake husbands often make is to take without giving. Sacrificing for your wife means giving your time and your attention. When you are with her, be with her. Listen to what she has to say, whether it be about the children, her job, her dreams, disappointments, whatever. Remember, stay focused on what matters. She matters and showing her you love her means giving yourself to her, spend time with her. To wives, Paul explains that loving your husband is directly tied to respecting his God ordained leadership. In the same way that your husband may not understand certain needs you have in the relationship, yet he must focus on knowing and meeting those needs, you may not understand why your respecting him is so important to your husband, but it is. Whether you are the husband or the wife, it is essential that we focus on what it truly means to love our spouse.

Another vital question is, what would I want my spouse to do for me? This fits nicely with Jesus' *“Golden Rule.” “All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them”* (Matthew 7:12). Paul reaffirmed, *“Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others”* (Philippians 2:4). If Jesus expects us to treat strangers and enemies with this type of love and consideration, how much more should we do this for our spouses? We must focus on treating our spouses the way we would want them to treat us. Maintaining the proper focus means not focusing on my own needs, but those of my spouse. Selfishness will suffocate love from a marriage. Husbands, Paul advised, *“So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies...for no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it”* (Ephesians 5:28-29).

Next to God Himself, your spouse must be your main focus. Certainly more than your job, your friends or your hobbies and even more than your children. Too many marriages have crumbled after the kids leave home because the main focus was the children. The children will one day leave and then what? I have yet to encounter a husband and wife who focused on their relationship who were bad parents, or neglected their children as a consequence. The exact opposite is usually the result of focusing on your marriage. A strong marriage increases your ability to be a better parent because, *“Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up...and if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him”* (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12). Now consider how difficult it is to be a good parent when your marriage is struggling. By focusing on your relationship with your spouse you are not detracting from your children, but adding a healthy, happy, strong relationship with your partner. Everybody wins.

If you have lost focus in your marriage, stop right now and take a look at your relationship. Have you become distracted? Have you lost focus? No doubt you love your spouse, but what are you doing that demonstrates to them that you do? It may even be the case that you need to take a break from everything else and focus solely on your marriage. Pro athletes have conditioned and disciplined themselves to tune out the crowd, the noise, the cheers, the boos and just focus on their goal. If they can do this when trying to win something as trivial as a trophy, surely we can do this when it comes to something as important as our marriage.

## Focused On The Future

Brandon Britton

The Pre Frontal Cortex (PFC) is located at the front of the brain immediately behind the forehead. It is responsible for abstract thinking and thought analysis, and controls things like intense emotion, impulses, predicting probable outcomes of actions and is often referred to as the seat of good judgment. It is also the last section of the brain to mature, not reaching its potential until age twenty-five. This late growth is likely the reason otherwise intelligent and sensible teens engage in high-risk or excessive behaviors. Anyone who has been a teenager or has raised teenagers knows the reality of this fact first hand. Simply put, teenagers lack the mental ability to think long term, resulting in their focusing on what is right in front of them, rather than considering the future. Sadly, Christians who are spiritually immature seem to lack the same long term thinking ability. Teenagers will do something that truly surprises and thrills you one moment and then do something that completely surprises and disappoints you the next. I don't think most Christians are babes in Christ, but it seems an inordinate amount are teens in Christ. How many times have you witnessed a loving and giving act by a brother or sister in Christ one day, only to observe them doing something completely contrary to the will of God the next? Peter said it this way, *“But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins”* (2 Peter 1:9). The immature Christian, like the teenager, lacks focus on the future. He cannot see the future, he cannot think long term, he can only focus on what is right before him at that moment.

Contrast this with the spiritually mature like Moses, who, *“refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.*

### Conclusion

These three things: Saving the lost; keeping the saved safe; and doing good to all must always be the focus of the church. That is not to say that other things never need to be addressed, nor is it the case that the church cannot gather for other functions and enjoy times of entertainment and fellowship. However, when more time is spent planning social gatherings just for the sake of fun, or when more time is spent in business meetings discussing “parking lots and pews” rather than saving the lost, keeping the saved safe, and doing good, focus has been lost.

It is good for elders, deacons, preachers and each member of every congregation of the Lord’s church to continually ask themselves this question: Are our plans consistent with the true focus of what the Bible lays out as the work of the church. Again, please do not take from this article that members of the Lord’s church cannot get together just for fun. But far too many congregations have lost the true focus of the Lord’s church and have gone the way of social clubs. Our work is far too important to lose focus.

---

## LECTURES WILL BE RECORDED

Go to our website at  
[www.westsidecoc.net](http://www.westsidecoc.net)

Option 1: Just click on “Sermons”  
and listen.

OR

Option 2: email us and ask for a CD  
[lahuff62@att.net](mailto:lahuff62@att.net)

OR

Option 3: Call us and Ask for CD  
765. 759. 5984



## Focused On Family

Mark Reynolds

In describing the righteous man the Psalmist says, “But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night” (Psalm 1:2). There is no substitute for studying God’s Word, however, it does much good to meditate on the things one has studied. Studying the family of Noah and the flood certainly gives a Bible student plenty to ponder (Genesis 6 -9). What was it like when God told the family it was time to get into the ark? Did Noah say goodbye to his extended family and friends who refused to get into the ark? On and on could go the meditation. One of my favorite things to think about, however, is what it was like when the family was gathered in the ark as the deluge began? I have no doubt in my mind that Noah’s sons and daughters-in-law were never more thankful for their father than at the very moment.

Noah kept his family focused during the hundred plus years preparing the ark; he kept them focused when there was a busy schedule to keep; he kept them focused while the rest of the world rebelled against the Lord. That spiritual focus is what makes the flood account readable. Otherwise it is nothing but devastatingly tragic. Noah and his family are the only bright spot, and without them, there would be no future. Yes, Noah saved the future of the world, but equally important, he saved his household. “By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark **for the saving of his household...**” (Hebrews 11:7).

While we do not have a verse by verse account of how exactly Noah kept his family focused during his day, we do have a word for word command given to the Israelites that transcends time and covenants, and works today just as well as it did in the days of ancient Israel.

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. **You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up**” (Deuteronomy 6:4-7). This passage has been preached and written about throughout the years, but the power of it is in its simple application to godly parents. Simply put: **Spend more time on eternal matters and less on temporal.** Because of a lack of space in this article, may I suggest only a few ways this timeless teaching may be included in your family? **(1)** Be your child’s Bible teacher (*teach them diligently to your children*). It is not the duty of our Sunday school teachers to make sure our children receive all the Bible lessons they need; it is the job of the parents. We love our Bible class teachers who supplement our own teaching, but it was never God’s plan for them to have the sole responsibility of ensuring our children are well educated in the Bible. **(2)** Have nightly devotionals in your home before bedtime (*when you lie down*). Make time for prayer requests so that the father can lead his family in prayers that have his family in mind. Teach about things that your family is going through at the time. **(3)** Make time for a short morning devotional before the family separates for the day (*when you rise up*). This is often tricky when one parent has to leave well before the others get up for the day. Perhaps the mother can lead the devotion, or if there is an older son in the family he can do it. In my case, with three daughters, they could take turns being responsible for leading a five minute devotional at the beginning of the day. **(4)** Carry songbooks in your car so the family can sing on road trips (*when you walk by the way*). I can still vividly recall my family holding the old maroon copies of *Sacred Selections* and singing praises to God while traveling down the road as a child (thankfully, dad had most of the songs memorized as he did all the driving).

These are not euphoric ideals, but are commands from our God. When we focus on helping one another get to heaven we are obeying Christ’s command: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another” (John 13:34). He further states that this love will serve as a beacon guiding the lost to the safety of Christ (John 13:35).

### **Focus on Helping those in Need**

The direct commands and approved examples of the need for this focus are seen throughout the New Testament. “Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need” (Acts 2:44-45). “Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles’ feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need” (Acts 4:35). “And one of you says to them, Depart in peace, be warmed and filled, but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?” (James 2:16). “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10).

A reading of Matthew twenty-five serves as a great reminder of the necessity for the church to remain focused on helping those in need in order to obey the commands of God. It is also important to remember, however, that helping those in need can also help us focus on the first two points of this article. Benevolent work is a good opportunity to show the lost the love of the church, and can help encourage those within the church when their family helps in times of need (Galatians 6:10).

Did you catch it? Everyone, except the apostles (preachers) were scattered abroad. What did those scattered people do? They went everywhere preaching the word! Imagine that, the preachers stayed home, and the church went out to preach the gospel to the lost! It is not **only** the preacher's job to teach the lost, it is the responsibility of every single Christian.

Every Christian can tell the lost what they did to be saved. "It is written in the prophets, and they shall all be taught by God. Therefore, everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me" (John 6:45). If we want people to come to the Father, then we must teach them. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

#### **Focus on Keeping the Saved Safe**

Another command of those who make up the church is to edify one another so that all will be encouraged to keep on keeping on. The way to do this is spelled out clearly in Scripture. First, we are commanded to submit to one another. "For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another submitting to one another in the fear of God" (Galatians 5:13). Imagine a congregation where the members do not demand that their own desires be fulfilled, but submit to the needs and desires of others in matters that are not sinful. A congregation (like a good husband does for his wife and the wife for the husband) where people try to please one another. Second, the church is commanded to love one another. "And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you" (1 Thessalonians 3:12). Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, **love one another fervently with a pure heart**" (1 Peter 1:22). Third, the church is commanded to forgive one another: "And be kind to one another, tender hearted, **forgiving one another**, even as God in Christ forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32). Fourth, the church is commanded to pray for one another as confessions are made (James 5:16).

Obviously this is not an all-inclusive list of things that can be done to help our families refocus, but they are a great start! Implement these simple things into your regular daily life, and watch the results. It might be that it is difficult at first because everyone may need to adjust their schedules to ensure everyone is present for the nightly devotionals. Parents and children may need to get up a few minutes earlier for the morning lesson. Some less important events may have to be eliminated to make time for these things, but we **MUST** make sure we have the right focus on the family! We will never have to build an ark for the saving of our household, but we are preparing our family for eternity. As a parent of an eighteen year old I can speak to how quickly the time goes. It seems like we bring them home from the hospital one day, and they are leaving for college the next. Time is of the essence! "Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one's youth" (Psalm 127:4). As a warrior carefully aims his arrow at the target, parents are aiming their children in one of two places. Let us all refocus on the target and let them go in the proper direction. May God bless your efforts.

---

## WORTHY WORKS

**We strongly recommend these works:**



**Mark Reynolds**

**Far East / World Evangelism**

More info found on page 31

**Brandon Britton**

**Latin American Missions**

More info page 26

## Focused On The Church Family

Jim Harrison

What a heart-warming honor to be part of this year's lectureship! To attend these very important and timely sessions is such a privilege. To be asked to speak on the program is one of the most wonderful opportunities ever extended our way! This article will hopefully serve as an introduction to the thoughts to be presented in the lesson, Lord willing.

There are scarce few more vital and needful topics for us to study and grow from than the topic assigned to me. The *RIGHT* focus on the church family has been, is, always will be a priority-subject for God's people! Think for a moment of the people of God in the days of the patriarchs; under the leadership of Moses & Joshua; the period of the Kings of Judah & Israel and the prophets. Is there any doubt or wonder, when one gives even the most cursory reading of those times/people, of how wonderful & sweet the fellowship with the Lord can be when our focus is *RIGHT* ? But also remember, good reader, there are far more recorded events from Inspiration of how sad and pitiful things were in those days when their focus was misdirected!

So when dealing with this subject, what IS the *RIGHT FOCUS* for us to have on the church family? Where does it begin or originate? Where is it aimed? That causes us to look at motive, agenda and intent. That's always part of the term "FOCUS". Whenever you take a photograph, what are you trying to capture in the picture? A heart-warming treasured memory or an embarrassing moment in time to relive over & over? Of necessity, it needs repeated and reaffirmed, the first.....last..... and only, true and totally *RIGHT* focus on the church family needs to be rooted, promoted and encouraged from Holy Writ, the inspired Word of God! Any other source could/might well lead to distraction from His word, His focus on the church family.No right thinking, faithful child of God would ever want to promote or endorse something that would encourage their own stumbling or a brother or sister-in-Christ's stumbling and falling away, Matt. 22:39; Rom. 14:19-21; I Co. 10:31-33.

The church is, then, an essential institution in God's plan for which the blood of Christ was shed, and is made up of all of the saved who have been called out of the world. The question now is: "Does the church of Christ have a purpose?" The question, in light of what is shown above, is ridiculous! Does anyone truly believe that Christ would die for her, and that the most special people in the world would be called into her, if the church had no purpose? What then is the purpose of the church on which we must focus?

### The Focus of the Saved is to Save

"Jesus came and spoke to them saying, All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to **observe all things that I have commanded you**; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20). Since Jesus commanded the eleven remaining apostles to go into all the world and teach others what they must do to be saved, and followed that up with the command to teach the people to do all the things Jesus commanded the apostles (including the command to teach the lost; it is imperative for all who have been saved to teach others what to do to be saved. It is a chain that must not be broken! "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2). A powerful passage that shows these commands in action is Acts 8:1-4. Follow the passage to see the power: "Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and **they were all scattered** throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, **except the apostles**. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison. **Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.**"

## Focused on the Work of the Church

Mark Reynolds

The fact that the church is essential to the eternal plan of Almighty God cannot successfully be denied. Consider just a few passages that show the importance of the church of Christ. “Husbands, love your wives, **just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for her**, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a **glorious church**, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:25-27). “...shepherd the church of God which **He purchased with His own blood**” (Acts 20:28). “Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but **with the precious blood of Christ**, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18-19). Notice from these passages that the church clearly belongs to Jesus, because He was her purchase price. It is no wonder then that the church must be subject to Christ, “Therefore, **just as the church is subject to Christ**, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything” (Ephesians 5:24).

Notice further, by way of introduction, that the church is not some mystical concept, but is literally a tangible group of special people. “As for Saul, he made **havoc of the church**, entering every house, and dragging off **men and women**, committing them to prison” (Acts 8:3). The Greek word for church literally means, “called out.” Who are these people who have been called out from the rest of the world? “To the general assembly and **church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven**, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect” (Hebrews 12:23). They are a group of people, who after hearing the gospel, submitted their lives to the gospel’s teaching and were saved as a result, and then added to the Lord’s group of saved individuals called out of the world (Acts 2:41-47).

If I understand those passages, and scores like them, correctly, our focus on the church family is right when we do all we can to help each other remain strong and faithful in the Lord. It’s my privilege and duty as your brother in to Christ help you and everyone else get from here to Heaven! Any other focus or aim is indescribably hurtful. The question comes, what are some RIGHT ways to have the RIGHT focus on the church family?

If I have the right motives, aims and intentions for everyone around me (and for myself), I’ll search out God’s word for His insight. Anything other than what the Father, through His word declares, is either “too little or too much” information. We know we cannot go wrong by following divine inspiration! I John 3:16-18 reminds us of that very clearly: “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in **DEED** and in **TRUTH**” (emphasis mine, JEH). So, having the right focus for the church family begins and abides with encouraging a living, active appreciation and love for the Word of God. The 19<sup>th</sup> & 119<sup>th</sup> Psalms declare with great enthusiasm that connection we should want everyone to share with God’s word. James 1:21 adds to this, saying, “.....receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls.”

Also included in the right focus on the church family is our individual influence on the body, the kingdom, the building, the Bride of Christ, (all Biblically accurate references to) the church family. The ways you & I interact when we’re together is a strong component here, but that’s certainly not all of it. When you & I are apart from one another, aren’t we still “the church family”? When you and I are at home, we are still part of/representing the “church family”. Some of us are blessed to live in the physical family unit with fellow saints. However, there are many, many more who do not. No matter what the make up of our earthly homes may be, what’s the

focus we bring to bear anywhere and everywhere we go? Is it not the salvation of every soul, Matthew 28:18-20? Mark 16:15, 16? Luke 19:10? Is that not Paul's point in Phil. 2:15: "that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world"? Isn't that the Lord's meaning in Matt. 10:16: "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves"?

Lastly, there is the day-to-day, loads-of-life, 24/7 view point of the right focus on the church family. For too long, I've dismissed the passages in Acts that spoke of the church's dealings with one another. The more & longer I live, the more & more I've come to appreciate those "meaty verses". We'll have more to say in the lesson about this, but please consider one exercise: Take your Bible, hold between your thumb and forefinger the book of Acts. Pretty slender in thickness, isn't it? Now, take Romans through Revelation and do the same. Substantially more material, yes? Acts tells us how people became Christians. Romans through Revelation teach us how to live like/be RIGHTLY FOCUSED Christians. Seems like the Lord knows we need all the help we can get to do just that, don't you think?

Consider lastly the words of II Co. 5:9: "Therefore, we make it our AIM (*focus*—JEH), whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him." NKJV. May it EVER be ours! AMEN!

**FREE**  
**BIBLE STUDY COURSE**

Send your request to:  
Bible Study  
6600 W. Kilgore Ave.  
Yorktown, IN. 47396

This issue of *Upon the Rock* has been made available to you courtesy of the:

West Side Church of Christ  
6600 W. Kilgore Ave.  
Yorktown, IN 47396

**SERVICES**

Sunday Bible Study 9:30 am  
Sunday Worship 10:30 am and 6:00 pm  
Wednesday Bible Study 7:00 pm

**ELDERS**

Larry Taylor  
Brian Huffman  
Herb Smith

**PREACHER**

Michael J. Gors

**[www.westsidecoc.net](http://www.westsidecoc.net)**

---

**Join Us at the**  
**WEST SIDE CHURCH OF CHRIST**



**Friday**  
**April 12, 2013**  
**Singing**  
**@**  
**7 pm**