

DEVELOP A SPIRITUAL FOCUS

It is easy to live in a way that is focused on all the physical things around us that appeal to our fleshly desires (1 John 2:15-17). However, when you embrace the reality that God created you in His image (Genesis 1:26-27), you must recognize that there is much more to your existence than physical things. In fact, the Bible clearly teaches that you will continue to exist after your physical life ends (Luke 16:19-31; Matthew 24:36-44), will be held accountable before God in judgment (2 Corinthians 5:10), and will either experience eternal life or punishment depending on how you have lived on this earth (Matthew 25:31-46; Revelation 21:1-4, 21-27; Mark 9:43-48). Therefore, as you recognize these things, you must diligently work to focus on spiritual things rather than making physical things the focus of your life.

ROMANS 8:5-8

People can either have their minds set on the things of the flesh or the Spirit (the spiritual things God's Spirit has revealed in the Bible). Where your mind is focused determines how you will live (Proverbs 4:23; Matthew 15:18-19). If you focus on the things of this life (things you can have or experience now), you will find yourself chasing after them. But God warns that living this way will result in spiritual death (separation from God; ultimately eternal separation from Him in Hell, Revelation 21:8). This is because the mind set on earthly things is hostile to God and cannot submit to God. This person simply is not focused on God and the spiritual things that please Him (Matthew 6:19-34). In contrast, the one who is focused on spiritual things will focus on the things of God and living to please Him above anything that relates to this earth! This is the way to experience spiritual life and peace with God. Therefore, you must learn to focus on spiritual things above fleshly things.

ECCLESIASTES 1:1-11

The book of Ecclesiastes reflects the life of King Solomon (son of David and king of Israel in Jerusalem). He had great wealth, many possessions, great fame, incredible wisdom and knowledge, many

achievements, and many relationships. These are described in 1 Kings 3-11. Yet, this book demonstrates the value of what was really gained during his physical life under the sun. Ultimately, he concludes that it was all futile (empty, meaningless). For he saw life's cycles constantly continuing. At that time, he was experiencing life under the sun, but he would soon be replaced by another generation and would largely be forgotten. Therefore, he concluded that nothing in this life truly provides satisfaction and meaning.

ECCLESIASTES 2:1-11

At one point, Solomon put his entire focus on the physical things of life. In fact, he may even have accumulated and experienced more than anyone else who has ever lived. Now, he reported what these things ultimately resulted in for him. Rather than boasting about how much enjoyment, satisfaction, and meaning he found through these things, he said it was all futile (empty, meaningless) and described it as trying to catch the wind (an impossible endeavor). Today, you should recognize that if this man failed to find true enjoyment, satisfaction, and meaning in physical things, you also will not succeed in these pursuits either – no matter what you accumulate or experience!

ECCLESIASTES 12:1-8, 13-14

One of the biggest reasons physical things fail to satisfy is because they are only temporary. This passage (vv. 1-8) poetically pictures the aging process (hands and arms become weak, legs and back bow, teeth break, eyesight fails, hearing dims, sleep becomes difficult, voice gets faint, fears are heightened, hair turns white, movement becomes challenging, desire is lost). Then, even if you make it through this aging process, death is experienced. At death, you are separated from everything you had or experienced on this earth while your spirit continues. Therefore, your purpose in life must not be about anything that is physical or earthly in nature. Instead, Solomon concluded that the only thing that really matters and that brings true satisfaction and meaning is to fear (respect plus fear) God and keep His commands! Only seeking God can fill your true need, since you are a spiritual being who needs a right relationship with God to be whole and satisfied!

LUKE 12:13-21

As Jesus encountered a situation where someone was focused on worldly treasures, He taught a parable about someone who did the same. Yet, when he died unexpectedly, none of those earthly things he had worked for were of any value to him (since they would be left to someone else). In this, Jesus warns each person today that earthly things will not last. Although you may get some pleasure and comfort out of them while you live on earth, they will not be of any benefit to you when you die! Therefore, if your treasures are things that exist on this earth (e.g., relationships, riches, possessions, pleasures, comforts, experiences), you will be greatly disappointed when you die and find yourself stripped of everything you had focused on (1 Timothy 6:7). Consequently, you must learn to store up riches in Heaven by doing the will of God during your time on earth rather than storing up riches on this earth (Matthew 6:19-21)!

GALATIANS 6:7-8

After Paul had previously described the battle between the flesh and spirit (Galatians 5:16-26), he now demonstrates that people must consider where each one leads. You are free to focus on the flesh if you choose to do so. However, he warns that this will end in destruction (in Hell, Revelation 21:8; Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10). In contrast, if you live focused on spiritual things by obeying what the Spirit of God reveals in the Bible, you will experience eternal life (in Heaven, 1 Peter 1:3-9). Therefore, you must honestly consider what you want to reap in eternity. Just like you must not plant a garden of beans if you want to reap corn, you cannot live a life focused on the flesh if you want to spend eternal life in Heaven. What you focus on today is determining what you will reap eternally. So, choose today which path you will walk on during your time on this earth (Matthew 7:13-14)!

CONCLUSION

When you live in darkness, you are focused on the physical things of this life in some way. Although these things often promise pleasure, comfort, meaning, satisfaction, etc., they fail to deliver in any real way. Therefore, you must shift your perspective of life from focusing on fleshly things to focusing on the spiritual things that last. Ultimately, true meaning, satisfaction, and fulfillment can only be found by using your earthly life to honor God and prepare for eternity!

DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

What does it mean to focus on the flesh, and where does this lead?

What does it mean to focus on the Spirit, and where does this lead?

What did Solomon conclude about all the physical pursuits of his life?

Why was this Solomon's conclusion?

What is your true purpose in life?

What does it mean to store up treasures in Heaven rather than on this earth?

What does it mean to sow to the flesh, and what is its result?

What does it mean to sow to the Spirit, and what is its result?