

# How To Examine Your Focus

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[ 0 : 00 ] Right? Is that enough? I tell our congregation constantly because we need to be reminded of it. When God gave us Jesus, he didn't shortchange us. We got everything we need for life and godliness in this particular life, right?

Amen. Well, let me invite you to turn in your Bibles to Psalm 73.

You thought I was going to say Ecclesiastes, didn't you? I've got something else for you this morning. Psalm 73.

Few things that I want to say to you, more than a few, that I want to say to you before we'll actually read in this particular passage of Scripture.

The title of my message for this morning is How to Examine Your Focus. How to Examine Your Focus in Life. Now, since the fall of Adam and Eve into sin and consequently throughout human history, I told you last week that mankind has labored apart from God and his wisdom to try and understand the world and man's place in it.

[ 1 : 18 ] Now, I spoke quite extensively about that in last Sunday's message. I shared this particular insight as well from John Frame. If we can put that up on the screen for them, Josiah.

God does make knowledge available to human beings. He does. But to gain knowledge, we must begin by listening to him. That's Proverbs 1-7. We can come to know the world when our thinking is based on God's revelation, found in the creation, to be sure, but also in the Bible.

Then we must know our limits. That was the emphasis last Sunday. Know your limits of knowledge, your ability to understand the way God works in your life. He goes on to say, Our goal must be not to gain a divine knowledge of reality, but to obtain a human knowledge sufficient to carry out whatever calling God has given each of us.

That is what we're after. A divine understanding, not that takes us into the full measure of knowing everything about our lives the way God does, but sufficient enough to understand, God, how do I live faithfully in your will?

And he's making the comment and the emphasis that we have that knowledge contained in the scriptures. God has made himself known to us in the Bible.

[ 2 : 39 ] So Frame says that we can gain knowledge about the matters of life, but only when our thinking is based on what God has revealed to us in creation and in the Bible.

Now we believe that here at Grace Church. Frame correctly and wisely limits our understanding of the issues of life to what God has revealed.

So in other words, God decides. God has prescribed limits to what we can know about how life works.

And so try as we might, we will never be able to transgress those limits. And as Christians, why would we want to? If God has hedged us in and how much we can know about what and why he does what he does in our lives, why would we in his wisdom want to move outside of those boundaries?

Do you remember what happened in the Garden of Eden when human beings stepped outside of the boundary of God? Yeah, we're suffering for that right now. So we don't want that in our lives.

[ 3 : 47 ] Again, friends, last Sunday, Solomon had this to say about his own search to plumb the limits and the meaning of the matters of life. So if you'll hold your finger there in Psalm 73 and go to Ecclesiastes, the book of Ecclesiastes.

We are currently going verse by verse through the book of Ecclesiastes. I've just taken a little little hiatus here before we get to chapter eight, because I want to focus in on something with you.

No pun intended. The issue is the focus of life that we have. Here's what Solomon himself said about his own search to plumb the depths of the meaning of the matters of life.

It's chapter seven, beginning in verse 23. I tested this was last Sunday. I tested all this with wisdom and said, I will be wise, but it was far from me.

What has been is remote and exceedingly mysterious. Who can discover it? I directed my mind to know, to investigate and to seek wisdom and an explanation and to know the evil of folly and the foolishness of madness.

[ 5 : 03 ] And he goes on to say, I couldn't discover it. Down in verse 29, you'll see the summation. Behold, I have found only this. God made men upright, but they have sought out many devices.

So what Solomon is telling us is that in all of his effort over the course of his lifetime to search out the matters and meaning of life, he could not discover it.

Now, apart from Adam and Eve and Jesus, we're told that Solomon was the wisest man that ever walked the face of the earth. And he couldn't figure it out. In my sermon last week, I characterized this section as this.

Life is not about explanations. It's about focusing on God. Life is not about seeking explanations for everything God does in our lives.

That's a fool's errand, and it'll make you miserable. Life is about focus. It's about focusing on God himself or the Lord Jesus.

[ 6 : 10 ] So try as you might, friends. You cannot explain what you don't understand. And there's lots about the way God works in your life that you don't understand. That's okay.

We're all in that boat together, and that's the way it's supposed to be, according to Solomon. So when facing adversity, sorrow, suffering, limitations, the injustices of life, God has limited what we can know about these particular matters.

And I want you to get off the hook by knowing that. I don't want you to live under the pressure of every time you experience these mystical, weird things in your life that come in the way of sorrow and sufferings and limitations and death.

You never know what's around the corner. Constant change in your life and shifting. Just remember that we have a sovereign God behind all of that, and we can never understand it all.

Let's put this next slide up there, Josiah. Solomon says that we can know what we can know has been divinely revealed, and what we can't know has been divinely concealed.

[ 7 : 18 ] And so we just need to say, that's good with us, Lord. That's fine with us. So it's not about the search for you to discover, know, or even explain God's reasons and ways for his working in your life.

And it's really not even about you getting answers to all that. I know that we're in the midst of something really stressful, tumultuous, difficult, hard circumstances, situations of life.

Sometimes we want, Lord, why? Why? We want explanations. We want to know what's behind it. It's as if God, if he would just tell us that and help us see the purpose, we'd be all right.

But I wonder, friend, would we? Would we? So Solomon says no. Life lived in the wisdom of God is about focus.

It's I can say this and I'm not the first to say it. It's really not even about balance. You hear a lot of people talk about balance in the Christian life. Boy, I don't know. Sometimes all of my attention and focus needs to be on my wife.

[ 8 : 24 ] And there's nothing balanced about that. That's about focus. Because Suzanne's in a hard way. My congregation knows about her disease that she suffers with. So sometimes when that thing really flares up, it takes every bit of who I am and what I have in the way of my resources to serve her and minister to her and help her through it.

It can be like that. Well, that's not balance. That's focus. Because everything else gets put on a back burner. So I can minister to my wife, including you guys.

And I think that's scriptural. Right? So think focus. Focus is about keeping our hearts tuned to God's wisdom in his word so that we can know the wise and wonderful way of a heavenly hope.

A hope that takes us through suffering and sorrow and limitations and injustices and inconveniences and people abusing their authority and people sinning against us and dealing with our own sin and being heartbroken over it.

Now, this can be more challenging and difficult than you might think. I hope you're tracking with me. A couple of reasons for the difficulty involve self-favoring and deceitful desires.

[ 9 : 43 ] We are self-favoring people. We always want to come out in the best light. And deceitful desires. Our hearts are wicked beyond our understanding. We are oftentimes fooled by our own

wickedness.

Deceived by our own sinful hearts. We need the grace of God, don't we, brothers, sisters? So I want to take this message to help you do this. I want to help you biblically examine your focus in life.

This is on the heels of last week's message. I apologize to those who weren't here to hear that. I want to do this so that you can be increasingly defined and shaped by more of a biblical or maybe even an eternal perspective for your life.

I have been saying throughout Ecclesiastes, you're going to die. Now, you can be morbid about that. You can get all depressed about it. Everybody's going to attend their own funeral. It's just going to happen.

You may not like funerals, but I know one you're going to be at. Right? So we need to figure out how are we going to handle the reality that one day we're going to die and give an account.

[10:50] Death is coming. What legacy will you leave? More importantly, what will you then experience after death? Now, I've drawn some of the teaching I'm going to share with you today from Paul David Tripp and his material.

Now, let me just say this real quickly. What I'm sharing with you is just a sampling of what I'm doing in my coursework for my counseling degree. For those of you who are visiting for the last couple of years, two and a half years or so, I've been involved in a graduate program for biblical counseling. But I'm also providing you through this message with an example of what Suzanne and I are actually doing in our counseling ministry to date. We are involved in counseling right now, she and I. And we actually use some of this material this past time that we met with the people we're counseling. They're not part of our church. They're outside of our church. So I want you to see and experience some of the result of what you are making possible as a church family through your pastor and your pastor's wife.

Through our ministry. Through our ministry. Through what Greg is helping to make possible as he helps shepherd the flock and free me up to do these kinds of things as well.

[12:03] This is all part of how our family is reaching out beyond who we are. Right now, it's happening more through Suzanne and I. In the future, we hope that we will be able to begin to train and pass this on to others of you.

And that this will become commonplace in the life of our church family. That we'll breathe the air of discipleship. Because that's what counseling is. It's not just crisis work.

Counseling is all about helping people make wise decisions for faithful living. Every day, we need that. So we're all counselors. Whether we know it or not.

And whether we've received any formal training or not. If you're trying to help someone through life in a biblical way, you're doing counseling. I hope you're doing it well. Because you need to be doing it.

So that's one of the reasons that I want to share this with you. Is to show you. At the end of this, I hope you go. Well, shoot, I could do that. That's right. Exactly. So we want more people signing up to do it.

[13:07] So this isn't going to sound like a typical expository message that you hear from me. Maybe not. Probably not. But it's going to help us use scripture to do some important heart evaluation about our focus in life.

Particularly as it relates to suffering and sorrows and limitations. This idea that I've shared with you over the last few weeks of how God works prosperity and adversity in the lives of people.

To include unbelievers. And Psalm 73 is all about Asaph looking at the unbelieving world and saying, God, why are they prospering?

Why are they doing so well and having so much fun? And then here's me over here trying to live for you. And it's a big pity party.

So let's see about that. Let's turn to Psalm 73. Psalm 73. No giggling. No giggling.

[14:08] All right. Psalm 73. We have Asaph writing in this particular psalm. Surely God is good to Israel.

To those who are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet came close to stumbling. My steps had almost slipped. And I'll stop right there and tell you everything he's going to share now are things that he was struggling with in his own heart and very tempted to give voice to.

Very. Very. He came right to the precipice of allowing his heart to overflow so that what was in his heart came out of his mouth so that he started spewing this out onto other people.

Very, very close. Verse three. For I was envious of the arrogant or the boastful. As I saw the prosperity of the wicked, for there are no pains in their death.

Their body is fat. They are not in trouble as other men, nor are they plagued like mankind.

Therefore, pride is their necklace.

[15:11] The garment of violence covers them. So, in other words, they wear and display this this life against God openly with great boasting and pride. It's like jewelry, like adornment for them.

They just strut around letting everybody know I don't need your God. I'm doing just fine. Look at my life. And it's driving him crazy to see this. Verse seven. Their eye bulges from fatness.

The imaginations of their heart run riot. See, no self-control. They mock and wickedly speak of oppression. They speak from on high. They have set their mouth against the heavens and their tongue parades through the earth.

Oh, this is horrible. Therefore, his people return to this place. Waters of abundance are drunk by them. And they say this. How does God know? And is their knowledge with the most high?

Very mocking. Behold, these are the wicked. In all ways at ease, they have increased in wealth.

Surely in vain, then I have kept my heart pure.

[16:17] Oh, really? And washed my hands in innocence. For I've been stricken all day long and chastened every morning. Wah. If I had said, I will speak thus.

Now, here's where we see that he's telling us, boy, I just came so close to all that pouring out of my mouth. He says in verse 15. If I had said, I will speak thus. Behold, I would have betrayed the generation of your children.

In other words, if I had let all of this come out of my heart through my mouth, I'd have discouraged a lot of God's people with this nonsense. He's sobering up. Verse 16.

When I pondered. See, he stopped to consider. There's our word in Ecclesiastes. Consider. When I pondered to understand this, it was troublesome in my sight.

Hallelujah. He was convicted. Until I came into the sanctuary of God. Then I perceived. See, I came to worship. And in worshiping the Lord and putting my eyes back on God, I began to see the reality.

[17:20] Surely you set them in slippery places. Oh, now that's a lot different than saying, oh, their body is fat. They have no pains. They're trouble. They don't even have any troubles. They're not plagued. Now, he says, you have set them in slippery places.

You cast them down to destruction. How they are destroyed in a moment. They are utterly swept away by sudden terrors. That's a lot different than what he was saying before, isn't it?

Oh, they don't suffer. They get away with murder. They wear all of this like they're just fat, happy and sassy and nothing happens to them. But God opened his eyes. Oh, really? Now, look at verse 20.

Like a dream when one awakes, O Lord, when aroused, you will despise their form. Now, that's terrifying, friends. We wouldn't wish that on anybody. When my heart was embittered and I was pierced within.

There's a candid confession. Then I was senseless and ignorant. I was like a beast before you. Nevertheless, I am continually with you.

[18:22] You've taken hold of my right hand with your counsel. You will guide me and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And beside you, I desire none on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

For behold, those who are far from you will perish. You have destroyed all those who are unfaithful to you. But as for me, the nearness of God is my good.

See, I have made the Lord God my refuge that I may tell of all your works. So the cat's out of the bag. I'll just tell you the point right off the bat. You won't have to wait to the end. The point is right here toward the end.

But as for me, the nearness of God is my good. The nearness of God is my good.

Did you notice that he didn't say this? What did he not say? What is his good? He did not say, and God explained everything to me and filled in all the blanks.

[19:20] And so now I'm good. Nope. Oh, God changed everything and made me rich. And now my eyes are bulging because I eat so much I can hardly get out of the chair.

And I have everything I want. And so now life is good. I'm not envious of them anymore because now I have more than they do. Nope. What did he say?

Everything's good in my life because now I've drawn near to God. I've made it about God and not about me. That was the difference in Asaph's life.

Now, I could probably just stop and say amen and we could all go have Mother's Day lunch. And I know that's no. You want to hear more. I know you do. You're on pins and needles.

Right? Nobody said amen, Jeremy. Amen. Come on. Help me out. The writer. The writer is Asaph.

[ 20 : 20 ] We may not be familiar with Asaph. Not a lot to say. He was a gifted Levite from the tribe of Levi who led one of the choirs in the worship services of ancient Israel.

Twelve of the Psalms are associated with Asaph. That does not mean that he wrote every one of those Psalms. He sang them. He led in them. He might have written some of them.

We don't know for sure how many, which ones exactly. He's termed a seer. S-E-E-R. A seer, which could attest to him as a prophet.

And what we're talking about here is someone who speaks and interprets on behalf of God. You understand prophet. He's recounting a season from his life and he confesses his heart struggle with God's mysterious dealings when bad guys prosper and quote unquote good guys suffer.

That's what he's struggling with. We saw that in the Psalm. The MacArthur Study Bible, if you have that, many of you do. The MacArthur Study Bible titles these first 14 verses this way.

[ 21 : 29 ] I'm going to throw it up on the screen so it'll make sense to you. This is the overall title for the first 14 verses. Perplexity over the prosperity of the wicked. He's perplexed. He's confused.

He's upset. The outline is their prosperity, their pride, and their presumption. Now what we're going to do is use Asaph's candid confession to help us determine where we fixed our eyes so that we can gain a godly focus in responding then to our own difficult circumstances.

In the injustice of life because we all have to deal with this. It doesn't matter how young you are or how old you are. You're going to experience the sorrows and injustices of life. When you get on the playground and bullies bully you, it's not fun and it's not right and it's not fair, but it's real.

What do you do? It's not right when you get into your job and try to do your job right and keep your head down and do the right thing. And somebody decides they don't like you. And so they tell lies about you and spread malicious gossip about you and make the workplace miserable.

It's not fair. It's not fair when you have all the qualifications and somebody else who doesn't gets the promotion because they are kissing up to the boss. I don't know.

[ 22 : 39 ] You understand? Life's just not fair. What do Christians do with that injustice in life? Now we're going to examine all of this in three particular steps, three steps.

And here's step one. We'll put it up here for you. Step one. Understand the power of your interpretations. I have that in quotes because that is a direct quote from Tripp's material.

Understand the power of your interpretations. If you look again with me at verse one in Psalm 73. Surely God is good to Israel to those who are pure in heart.

Surely. Absolutely. This is true. He's saying Asaph begins then with sound foundational truth. God is indeed good to Israel especially. Now that means he's good to all of Israel.

That means even the wicked in Israel. I mean he sends the rain. He sends the sun. People have plenty to eat. There's protection. Right? They all enjoy the benefits of God blessing the nation of Israel.

[ 23 : 41 ] Even those who aren't following the Lord. But then he says this in verse one. To those who are pure in heart. To especially those. Who are seeking to be faithful to almighty God.

But then notice verse two. But as for me. Hmm. My feet came close to stumbling. My steps had almost slipped. So life happens.

And he tells us that he began a downward spiritual drift. You ever had that? A downward spiritual drift into himself.

Into his own interpretations of the matters of life. He started taking things into his own hands. And it all took. All of this took.

For this to happen. Was a subtle and all too easy shift. In his perspective. Now that's what I want you to notice. I want you to notice how this happened.

[ 24 : 38 ] I think all of us can sit here and go. Yeah. Yeah. That's happened to me too. Lord forbid. It'll probably happen again. Yeah. But how did this happen? We see his godly perspective in verse one.



And say hey come on. That's not literal. That's figurative. To help you through this. To help you gain some perspective. This is what counseling is.

This is what discipleship is. This is what it means to come alongside of one another and weep when we weep. Rejoice when we rejoice. It takes a lot of loving courage.

Courageous love. To come alongside of somebody like this. At this time in their life. They're not exactly pleasant to be around. Their opinion is winning the day.

While at the same time sin is winning in their heart. And we need to be sensitive to that. And realize what's going on. Here's what Charles Spurgeon said about this particular situation that Asaph is facing.

[ 30 : 43 ] Let's throw it up here. Asaph was a seer. But he could not see when reason left him in the dark. Even seers must have the sunlight of revealed truth.

To see by. That's the Bible. Or they grope like blind men. In the presence of temporal circumstances. The pure in heart may seem to have cleansed themselves altogether in vain.

But. We must not judge after the sight of the eyes. Isn't that good? Step two then. We'll put it up here for you.

Step two. Recognize. The four symptoms of a wrong focus. And the first one that we're going to put up on the screen for you.

The first symptom. Comes from verses three through five in verse twelve. And it's envy. Verse three. I was envious of the arrogant.

[ 31 : 40 ] I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no pains in their death. Their body is fat. They're. They don't have any troubles like other men. They aren't plagued like other men and women.

Mankind. And then verse twelve. These are the wicked. Always at ease. Ever more increasing in wealth. So friends. What do we have? Well in his thinking.

In his thinking. It would be better for me. To have that. Than for them to have it. That's envy. I look at your life and I think.

You know what? It would be better for me to have that. Than for you to have that. That's envy. I'm not even happy you have it. I'm not even at the point where I'm saying. Well that's fine that you have it.

But I want it too. No. I'm saying I'd rather have that. Than you have it. Instead of you. And then at the level of desiring. Here's what envy is.

[ 32 : 38 ] It's wanting something at the expense of someone else not having it. Very similar. Wanting something. Desiring something so much. That you would want someone else deprived of it.

So that you could have it. And a lot of this behind envy is this. Right? It's the idea. That I deserve it more than they do. Yes? I deserve it more than they do.

So you envy. Well Asaph was on a path. Of becoming bitter. Cynical and resentful. Toward life. And toward the Lord.

He's on that path. His focus was on. And here it is. Created things. Asaph had put his focus. On the creation.

Rather than the creator. Now I want to help you with this. Because there is a way for you. To live in the world of creation. Without worshiping it. That's where he's getting in trouble.

[ 33 : 41 ] Tripp says. That this is where we can also come to define. Our lives. Listen. In terms of possessing. And experiencing. The things of this world.

He says. We come to define our lives. But what we can. What we can possess. And what we can experience. I want you to notice friends.

The issue is not. The things. Or. Of even possessing. And experiencing. The things. So what is the issue Jeff?

Here's the issue. It's. Defining. And measuring. And measuring. Your life. By earthly things. That's the issue. The earthly things. Are no longer something.

That you consider. A gift from the Lord. Grateful for. The things. Themselves. Become. The issue of life. And so.

[ 34 : 35 ] You begin. To define. More and more. Your life. By keeping. And experiencing. Or even getting more. Of the things. That's. That's the issue.

If you measure. Your life. By what you get. Or don't get. By what you have. Or what you don't have. Or by what you think. Your life. Should be like.

You will never. Ever be content. With God's work. In your life. You'll never. Cultivate. A heart. Of gratitude. Or thankfulness.

To the Lord. Because you're. Constantly. Looking at. What you don't have. What you want. What you wish. You had. What you think. You should have. Whatever. That's not. A grateful heart.

That's not. Humility. That's not. Contentment. The reason. Is that. You will not. See your life. You will not.

[ 35 : 30 ] See the things. The people. The situations. Of your life. As God's. Gifts. To you. And that's. Where Asaph. Was.

He was. No longer. Looking at. The situation. And thinking. In terms. Of a sovereign. Caring. Controlling. God. In all. Of the best. Ways. Highest. Ways. The good. Ways.

God is. Surely. Good to Israel. That's right. Better hang on. To that. No. He cast. His eyes. On to creation. On to things. On to people. On to situations. And circumstances.

That he decided. Now I'm going to be God. And I'm going to decide. Whether or not. What I'm seeing. Is right. And fair. And just. And good. And he came away with.

I don't think so. Now that's another way. Of really saying. You know what God. I just don't like the way. You're managing things. I think I'll try a hand at it.

[ 36 : 23 ] For a little while. I'll try it. The second. Symptom. Of a wrong focus.

Is confusion. This is the second symptom. Verse 16. Go outside of our. Main.

I wanted to do. One through 14. Primarily. But here we have 16. When I pondered. When I considered. To understand this. It was troublesome. In my sight. This is very interesting.

Does that sound familiar to you? Does that reflect. On Ecclesiastes. For those of you. Who've been here. When I pondered this. It was troubling to me. Isn't that what Solomon says?

I'm not going to. Trust your memory. I'm going to take you. And show you. So go to Ecclesiastes. 8. 17. Hold your finger there. And go to Ecclesiastes. Please brothers and sisters.

[ 37 : 19 ] 8. 17. Now we haven't. We haven't gotten to chapter 8 yet. God willing. That's next Sunday. I'll do chapter 8. But look what he says.

In verse 17. Solomon says. And I saw. Every work of God. In other words. I looked across. The matters of my life. I looked across. The issues of life.

And other people's. Existence. And daily expressions. I looked across. All of this. I saw. Every work of God. I concluded. That man.

Cannot. Discover. The work. Which has been done. Under the sun. That is the work of God. He cannot discover it. Now notice this. Even though man. Should seek.

Laboriously. That's what the NAS says. Another translation. Said toil. Even though man. May toil. Or seek laboriously. He.

[ 38 : 14 ] Will. Not. Discover. And though the wise man. Should say. I know. He cannot. Discover. Now this is very interesting. Solomon says.

That even though man. Should seek. Laboriously. Take great. Toil. Toward it. He will not. Discover. What? The depths. Of God's work. In the lives. Of people.

You can't. Look at all. Of the injustices. Of life. The inequities. And inequalities. Of life. You can't. Look at all. Of the different. Limitations. In life. The sorrows. And. Trepidations.

And troubles. And tribulations. Of life. And understand. The full work. Of God. As God. Works. He says. I tried. I gave it my best shot.

And I couldn't do it. Here's an interesting part. Solomon's laboriously. The word he uses in that. Verse. The word toil there. That is the same Hebrew root word.

[ 39 : 09 ] That Asaph uses for troublesome. Or wearisome. In Psalm 73. 16. Same one. It's the Hebrew word. Amal. Toil. It means.

It means. Trouble. Labor. Or toil. And the idea is. For all your trouble. To try and understand this. You will only serve. To confuse.

Yourself. In the issue. So don't do it. This is how I talk to. Counselee sometime. When we're at this place. In our relationship. Of counseling.

I say to them. And how did that work out. For you trying to. It didn't. It's just. It's made me miserable. I've spent so much money. I've spent so much time. I've been so angry. Trying to figure this out.

Trying to come to terms with it. You know. And it's just. It's just a dark hole. I said a dark hole. That's a good way to express it. You see. That's exactly what happens. When we walk in.

[ 40 : 05 ] Or wade in. Or rush into a place. That's dark. And there's no light. To help us. All we get. Is more dark. And the dark. Only serves to confuse. The issue.

Not help it. So why do that. Why run to the dark. See. Stay in the light. To do that. We have to know our limits.

We have to operate. Within the limits. Of what God allows us. To know about life. Not spend our lives. Trying to figure out life. It's fortunate for us.

That God tells us. Why we're here. Christian. Why did God make you. And why are you here. To glorify God. That's the bottom line.

Isn't it. And then to be taken into glory. To live forever. Without sin. In the presence of almighty God. Unimaginable.

[ 41 : 02 ] Treasures. Riches. And joy. In a pristine city. The city of almighty God. Well. Symptom number three.

Symptom number three. Of a wrong focus. We'll put it up here for you. Verse 13. Discouragement. Surely in vain. I've kept my heart pure.

And washed my hands. In innocence. Yep. That sounds like. Discouragement to me. You struggle. Or you just give in. To what I'm going to call. Spiritual withdrawal.

This is what happens. When you just get inside. Your own head. And get inside yourself. And start making it about you. And looking at life. Apart from the Lord. And all you. All you see is the bad. The negative. The hard. The difficult. And you start thinking. In terms of how. All of that. Just makes your life. So hard. And miserable. That's spiritual withdrawal. Here's what happens.

[ 42 : 00 ] Friends. Hear it carefully. You grow heart heavy. And worry. Weary. With earthly things. Heart heavy. And worry. Weary. With earthly things.

Because you're trying. To be God. And you just. Really aren't. Very good at it. Your own perspectives. Wear you down. So with your focus.

On earthly things. With the senselessness. And vanity. Of an earthly focus. Bearing on your soul. You lose interest. In obeying God. In the basic aspects. Of Christian living. This happens to all of us.

God help us. We need our brothers and sisters. To rally to us. In these moments. What we want to do. Is isolate. And protect our opinions. And maybe even protect.

Our pity party. What happens is. Personal holiness. And prayer. And even service to others. Self-denial. Church attendance.

[ 43 : 01 ] Enthusiasm. For the truth. All of that kind of stuff. Begins to suffer. Or even disappear. From your life. Because you're too distracted. With your agenda. That's depressing.

Isn't it? You see why discouragement happens? No wonder you're discouraged. The fourth symptom. Before we move on.

To the final point here. The fourth symptom. Of a wrong focus. Is anger. Now this is either expressed. From an internal perspective. Or an external.

Or both. Angered isn't always something. That you see in outbursts. And red face. And veins popping. And cussing. And throwing things. Okay. Anger can be something.

That is expressed. In a very calm. And passive way. But you're seething. With anger inside. Depression. A lot of depression. Stems from being angry. And things not going your way.

[ 43 : 59 ] It discourages you. To be like this. So don't. When you. When you. When you think anger. And you think. Yeah that's not me. Just because you're not out here. Pitching fits everywhere.

Be careful. Listen a little. Little more to this. This is verses 21 and 22. When my heart. Was embittered. See he's. He's. Identifying a heart attitude.

An embitteredness. In his heart. When my heart. Was embittered. And I was pierced within. This went right down. Into the depths of my soul. I was senseless. And ignorant. And I was like a beast. Before you. That's pretty. Straightforward. Isn't it. Friends. It's a very. Very subtle. Very subtle. Very dangerous. Step to being embittered.

Embittered with God. And with life. When you think. It's all up to you. To make your life. Worth living. If my life's going to be. Worth living. Then it's on my shoulders.

[ 44 : 53 ] To make sure that happens. Oh man. You don't want to be there. Because I'll tell you. Straightforward. Because I love you. And I care about you. You will be a major.

Disappointment. To yourself. You will be a major. Disappointment. To yourself. Asaph. Looked to himself.

For the proper. Interpretations. Of what he was seeing. In his life. And the deceitfulness. Of sin. Led him into a swamp. Of self pity. And self favoring.

Instead of self denial. And a humble heart. Towards the Lord. We don't see humility here. Let me throw this up here for you. This next slide. The Christian life. Is not about you getting ahead.

The Christian life. Is about you getting a heart. A heart for Jesus. And for others. God is working. To change your heart. Beloved. He wants to do.

[ 45 : 47 ] A spiritual work. Within you. So. Asaph's strong. Descriptions. Of what was happening. To him. Warn us away. From anger. I mean.

Listen to this again. Listen to what he says. I was senseless. And ignorant. And I was like a beast. Before you. In other words. I was just living by instinct.

I was just following. My heart. Don't do that. Are you awake? Don't follow your heart. Follow the Lord. Working in your heart.

Being defined. By grief. And self pity. And remaining. Embittered. Senseless. Ignorant. Acting like a brute beast. Or ungodly characteristics. I tell you.

It's no way to go through life. Amen. We don't want that. And finally. Step three. Just quickly. Identify and confess. The true treasures. Of your heart.

[ 46 : 45 ] Identify and confess. The true treasures. Of your heart. I want to ask you. If you'd hold your finger here. And turn to Matthew six. With me. Just want you to see this.

With me. This is going to be. Matthew six. Nineteen through twenty. One. For those of you. Who will turn there. Jesus made it really clear.

Matthew six. Nineteen through twenty. One. Do not store up for yourselves. Treasures on earth. Where moth and rust destroy. And where thieves break in. And steal. Store up for yourselves.

Treasures in heaven. There's an eternal perspective. You see the focus here. Where neither moth nor rust destroys. Where thieves do not break in or steal. Now notice verse twenty one.

Where your treasure is. There your heart will be also. Let me say it this way. Where your focus is. There your heart will be also.

[ 47 : 39 ] What you treasure. What you fix your eyes and heart on. What you desire most in any given moment. That is what will shape. Your interpretations of life.

And determine. Your responses. To circumstances. Now I want to throw these up here for you. And we'll just do them one at a time. Josiah. The first one here. These are some questions you can ask.

To help you root out. What you're really living for. So this helps you get past. Some of the hear me now. This helps you get past. Some of the self favoring. And deceitfulness of sin.

That you and I struggle with. Because sin wants to deceive us. It wants to fool us. It wants to keep us thinking. We're just fine. It's everybody else. That's messed up. Not me.

This helps you get past. Some of that. What's this first question. When under. When or under what conditions. Do you tend to experience. Fear worry or anxiety. What kind of things happen in your life.

[ 48 : 41 ] That kind of freak you out. And cause you to kind of spin. Into a cycle of fear. Or anxiety. Or panic. Or stressed out. Or we have different ways of saying it. Man it just freaked me out.

Oh I get it. I get snakes freaking you out. Man. They're of the devil. Alright. The second question. How have you struggled with regret.

Saying something like this. If only. So you're looking back in the past. And you're just. Focusing there. And staying there. If only. And then it would be better.

If only. He had said this. Instead of that. I wouldn't be like I am now. If only my parents had. Instead of. I would be. If only I could make a million.

You know. Whatever. You don't want to live there. That's like trying to play God. Alright. The next question.

[ 49 : 36 ] When do you experience. Problems with prayer. And personal worship. Problems with faithfulness. In coming to church. Gathering with your brothers and sisters. And in your relationship with God.

When does that happen? What kind of things are going on in your life? These are just. Windows. That will help you begin to think about and discern. And then finally this last question. What situations. Do you typically struggle with? Anger. Now there are lots more questions. That we could ask. But they'll help you. These are going to help you. Begin to identify. What you're focusing your heart on. They can help you see. What you're treasuring in your life. And some of these things are so subtle. You wouldn't. You wouldn't think I'm treasuring this. Things like. Let me just give you a couple. Security. Apply the idea of security to these questions. [ 50 : 37 ] Or avoidance. You've made avoidance. An idol in your life. So that whenever you're in a situation.

You want to avoid at all costs. Or around certain people at all costs. And you have to be involved in that. You get angry. You get fearful. You get anxious. So I'm not talking about like things like. Well it makes me anxious to get on an airplane. We can talk about that. We can talk about phobias. Whatever. I'm talking about the way you live your life every day. Around people. Privacy. Apply privacy to these questions. Alright. I want to close with. This particular passage. We're going to put it up here on the screen. You can turn there if you want to. If you have the New American Standard Bible. It'll be easy. To follow along with me.

[ 51 : 34 ] It's from 2nd Corinthians chapter 4. I'm going to close with the Apostle Paul. In 2nd Corinthians chapter 4. Beginning in verse 6.

Paul saying this. For God. Who said that light shall shine out of darkness. Is the one who has shown in our hearts. To give us what? The light of the knowledge. Of the glory of God. In the face of Jesus Christ. That's the knowledge. That we need to go through life with. Brothers and sisters. Now verse 7. But we have this treasure. And it is a treasure. In earthen vessels. So he's saying. But we understand. That we have this wonderful. Wonderful wisdom from heaven. In the face of the Lord Jesus Christ. In this work of grace in our lives. We have it in weak vessels. Right? Notice next. So that the surpassing greatness of the power. Will be of God. And not of ourselves. [ 52 : 31 ] So friend. Living in weakness. Is all about God. Showcasing his power through your life. We are then. Afflicted in every way.

Now tell me if you think this sounds like a pity party. Does this sound like Asaph? We are afflicted in every way. But not crushed. Perplexed. See that's perplexed. That's Asaph. But not despairing. Right? Persecuted. But not forsaken. Struck down. But not destroyed. Always caring about in the body. The dying of Jesus. So that the life of Jesus. Also may be manifested in our body. For we. Who live. Are constantly being delivered over to death. For Jesus sake. So that the life of Jesus. Also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death works in us. But life. In you. Verse 14.

[ 53 : 27 ] Knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus. Will raise us also with Jesus. And will present us with you. That's the eternal perspective. Folks. Look at it again. He who raised the Lord Jesus.

Will raise us also. With Jesus. And will present us with you. And then look at verse 16. Therefore. Because of all of that. We do not lose heart. But. Though our outer man is decaying. We're decaying. We're getting weaker. We're getting grayer. We're getting more lines. We're getting more lines. Yet. Our inner man is being renewed. Day by day. Yes. That's exactly what's supposed to happen. You're supposed to decay. You're going to get stinkier and stinkier. As you decay. And one day they're going to put you in the ground. [ 54 : 21 ] And then you're going to be taken to glory. Because your inner man. Is being renewed and strengthened. Day after day. After day. You get weaker and weaker and weaker physically. Until you die. And then God brings you to glory. Well you will know nothing but all the time strength. With Jesus. But it's not done. For momentary. Look. Verse 17. Perspective. Focus. For momentary light affliction. Is producing for us. An eternal weight of glory.

Far beyond all comparison. That make you weep. That's what persecution is doing for you friend. That's what trials and troubles and limitations.

That's what they're doing for you. Verse 18. While we look not at the things which are seen. But at the things which are not seen.

[ 55 : 17 ] For the things which are seen are temporal. Of the earth. But the things which are not seen are eternal. Hallelujah. I'm closing the book for now.

Thank you for your attention. And your kind. Attention as it is. It's a blessing to your pastors. That you want to learn the word. Folks.

I hope you're encouraged. Now again. Let me remind you. Before we stand to sing. Just about everything. That I've shared with you today. Is in. One.

Form. Or another. What. Suzanne and I. Have shared very recently. In a counseling session. Now let me ask you this. Is what I just shared with you. Something that you think.

All Christians. Should be exposed to. And encounter. And be encouraged in. See. So you don't have to be. Falling apart. To get counseling.

[ 56 : 22 ] You see. You just need to be a Christian. Who's still breathing. The air of Jesus. On this planet. This is what we need. To be about. Every day.

That we come in here. On the Lord's day. And share the word of God. That is the model. And the air. That we breathe. As Christians. Encouraging one another. To be faithful. Until we're taken.

To glory. And a lot of that. Revolves around. What. We understand. Discipleship. To be. Coming alongside. One another.

To encourage one another. In godly living.