

Gathering

FOCUS

It's nice to have options. Our lives are generally like the cereal aisle at your local grocery store. We are overwhelmed with choices about every aspect of life, from what we will buy to what we will become. It can be a great thing to have lots of options; however, we have so many options at our disposal it is hard to stay committed to any one idea. Most of us are always looking for something different or better than what we have. If we're honest with ourselves, this can be as true about wanting to upgrade our phones as it is about wishing we could upgrade the people in our lives. When something goes wrong or if we find that it is broken in some way, we start looking for an alternative that will make us happy or meet our needs.

In a world with so many options, it's hard to stay focused on what we have and never turn our eyes (*or our hearts*) to something else. This reality is especially true when the thing we once thought was so great now isn't the easiest choice. But the Bible challenges this consumerist mindset of looking for the next best thing. Instead of "*keeping our options open*," Scripture tells us to close ourselves off to other opportunities and to realize that there is only ONE right focus - Jesus.

This is not an easy command. We have grown accustomed to being able to upgrade everything that isn't working for us anymore. We can unsubscribe or cancel our policies and commitments. Staying focused on one task, one goal, one objective, and letting that consume our minds and hearts is just not what we're used to. But in the verse below, we are commanded to look away from all of our other options, and to keep our eyes focused on Jesus.

"Now stay focused on Jesus, who designed and perfected our faith. He endured the cross and ignored the shame of that death because He focused on the joy that was set before Him; and now He is seated beside God on the throne, a place of honor." Hebrews 12:2

After sharing the Scripture, use at least three of the questions below with your group:

- What would you most like to "upgrade" right now?
- Is it difficult for you to maintain your focus on one thing?
- How does what we entertain in our minds and hearts affect our focus?
- What most often takes our focus away from Christ?

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In *Knowing God*, J.I. Packer describes meditation as “an activity of holy thought, consciously performed in the presence of God, under the eye of God, by the help of God, as a means of communication with God. Its purpose is to clear one’s mental and spiritual vision of God and let his truth make its full and proper impact on one’s mind and heart.”

The objective of Christian meditation is to bring our focus onto God, and to fill our mind with His truth. Try meditating on one of the following verses this week to bring your focus back to Jesus.

Psalms 139:7-12 1 Kings 8:27-30

1 John 4:13-18 1 Kings 8:56-61

Matthew 5:3-12 John 14:15-21

John 15:1-4

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