

Today we conclude our message series on Focus.

**Focus has to do with paying particular attention to something  
– making something the center of our attention.**

**Focus is essential for relationships, since the connection between two people requires, at least some of the time, exclusive attention to the other.**

This is also true in our spiritual lives.

The relationship between us and God needs our focus—our particular attention.

We heard about the importance of focus on God's Word.  
**Focus on God's Word is what establishes and cements our relationship with God.**

It is necessary that we focus our attention on God's Word whenever it is spoken, sung, prayed, preached, eaten, and shared.

We've heard about the importance of focus on prayer and contentment.

Today, our scriptures lead us to focus on faith.

Now when we hear the word faith in these scriptures, it is important to think of trust.

Sometimes, we use the word faith to mean a certain set of teachings and beliefs,

such as when we speak of the Christian Faith as differentiated from the Hindu faith, for example.

But when we hear God's Word speak of Abram's faith that is reckoned to him as righteousness,

it is not a set of beliefs but rather

**a relationship of utter trust in God.**

Take out a dollar bill, if you have one, or any amount. Look at it.

We know that somewhere on that bill, on the front or back, are the words "In God we trust".

It is important to remember that God is Lord over our everyday commerce as well as what we put in the offering plate.

**Everything comes from and belongs to God. We are simply stewards, caretakers for God.**

But there are others words on the bill that we also trust every time we use money to buy something.

Those words are "This note is legal tender for all debts, public and private."

Now maybe you never noticed those words or thought much about them,

but they mean that those bills have real purchasing power.  
They are worth something.

And every time we reach into our wallets and pull out those bills, we are trusting those words  
– **without even thinking about it.**

We just know they are true.

We know that if something costs \$5 and we hand over a \$5 bill, the transaction is valid.

**Faith is that kind of automatic trust in God to be God for us.**

**Faith hears what God says and trusts its truth.**

So when God tells Abram that he and Sarai will have descendants,

he trusts that God will make that happen because of his word.

With the same faith, the same trust in God, Noah built the ark and Samuel anointed David king.

With the same trust in God, Peter walked on water and Jesus went to the cross.

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So how do we develop such trust – such faith – in God?

Jesus invites us to one way – perhaps the most radical way of all – and I'll admit that I don't like it very much.

– **sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor.**

Jesus is not exalting poverty for its own sake here, or decrying wealth in and of itself.

**He is inviting us into a relationship of absolute trust in God.**

For if we get rid of everything, we must trust in God to provide for us.

We would get to see how trustworthy God is and how he leads us to people and resources that sustain our life.

There are some, like Francis of Assisi, who have done exactly as Jesus said, forsaking all earthly wealth.

There is blessing in it.

But Jesus is not simply talking about possessions here. It is not that possessions in and of themselves are bad.

What he is getting at is the way in which our possessions sometimes possess us.

**That is, they get in the way of our trust in God.**

They become the objects of our trust instead of God.

**They become the treasure to which our heart clings instead of God.**

And that is what Jesus wants us to recognize and break down.

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It is so easy to fall into the trap of idolatry – I struggle with it often.

--We worry about how a stock market downturn will affect our retirement savings

-- we find ourselves obsessing over the next big thing, as though life without it would be worthless

-- we spend our money on stuff as though it were true, as the bumper sticker says, “the one who dies with the most toys wins”

Jesus urges us to focus instead on trusting him – to put aside all those worries.

**Cultivate riches that have eternal value.**

I threw out a purse last week. The lining had holes and harbored lots of sticky cough drops, pieces of gum, stray tic tacs,

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Guys – you really don't want to know what else.

A Woman's purse is a scary place!

My purse had worn out. I needed to use another one.

Jesus urges us to focus on trusting him – making a purse that does not wear out, and putting in it things that don't go bad.

What does he say – **an unfailing treasure in heaven.**

So what is such a treasure? What is it that will never run out, wear out, go bad, or be vulnerable to thieves?

**Our loving relationship with God that is grounded in trust.**

And how do we make such a relationship?

- By daily spending time with God and his Word.
- By praying and placing our lives in his hands.
- By becoming familiar with how God has been faithful in the past.
- By putting his word into action.

**When we focus on Faith or trust, it always involves action on our part.**

God's promises are not magic.

When the Lord showed Abram the stars as numbering his descendants, those stars didn't turn into children for Abram.

No, he and Sarai had to do something together in faith.

God promised Noah salvation, and Noah's faith worked to build the ark.

So too, when we focus on faith, we find that we are busy – not only praying and setting aside the Sabbath to worship the Lord.

But also serving others – loving our neighbor –  
sharing the love of Jesus Christ with them.

To focus on faith is to keep God's commandments without  
looking over our shoulder or wondering what's in it for us.

What we get is everything God has to give us  
– **Jesus with his forgiveness,  
his love, and his eternal life.**

Faith places God front and center in our lives  
each and every day, so that our hearts are focused on  
that which gives us abundant life in Jesus Christ.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of  
the Holy Spirit. Amen