

What Radical Devotion to God Looks Like in Your Life

Do you really think life can be about one thing? In a world of so many options, how do we focus on what's really important? How can we know if our lives line up with what God says is valuable, eternal, and true?

The Apostle Paul, who wrote much of the New Testament, addresses these issues.

The Word

In the third chapter of the letter to the Philippians, Paul says that although he had many reasons to have “confidence in the flesh,” he counted everything as loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:4, 8).

Each one of us can choose what we build our lives around.

For the first part of his life, Paul (originally called Saul) based everything on how religious he was. His list of credentials would be impressive for any Jew:

... circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, and a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; and concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless (Phil. 3:5, 6).

Paul makes some strong claims, but then he met Jesus—and everything changed (see Acts 9). Instead of trying to make his own name great, he became consumed with the glory and worth of Christ, giving up everything to know Him and make Him known:

But what things were gain to me, I have counted these things to be loss for the sake of Christ. Yes, certainly, I count

everything as loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have forfeited the loss of all things and count them as rubbish that I may gain Christ, and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God on the basis of faith (Phil. 3:7-9).

Paul was even willing to suffer and die, as Christ did, if it meant being raised to life with Him forever (Phil. 3:10–11).

Going Deeper

When Paul met Jesus, life came into focus. Instead of striving against Jesus and the church, he now gave all of his energy to building it.

Through the revelation of Christ, the apostle was transformed and empowered to live a life of radical devotion. Paul's life of radical devotion still matters nearly 2,000 years later—because he honored Christ.

Paul concludes this passage with a strong exhortation for believers to “follow after it” to “lay hold of that for which I was seized by Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:12b).

With this specific goal in mind, Paul says doing “one thing . . . forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal” of knowing Christ and being united with Him” (Phil. 3:13b-14).

That looked like complete abandonment to Jesus—radical obedience and a willingness to give everything to Him—absolutely complete lordship over our lives.

Paul's message is for us today. The Lord is still calling forth worshipers “in spirit and in truth,” ones who will love

the Lord with all of their heart, soul, mind, and strength (John 4:23–24; Luke 10:27).

We can respond by doing the one thing Paul did, parting with our old way of life—including our sin, pride, hesitation and fear—and running with abandon toward Christ.

This will look different for each person, but the heart is the same—to know Christ and make Him known to others, with nothing standing in the way of our wholehearted obedience.

By embracing this one thing, we can experience a sense of purpose and power that is both eternal and divine. And in this, we can “know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, somehow [we] might make it to the resurrection of the dead” (Phil. 3:10-12).

What is one step you can take toward living for one thing?

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