

Monday

Read Jeremiah 29:11

We can live our lives in at least three ways. The first is a way that we know we probably shouldn't do and don't like to admit that this is how we live but it is a self-focused life. The life lived with the focus on self and self-gratification with the goal of self-fulfillment. You can be a very generous person and be living a self-focused life because the goal is on what you want and how you feel.

The second is a goal-focused life. We think we are on our game when we are living a goal-focused life. Our life is focused on mastering life's challenges and obtaining more. Goal-driven individuals seek to be in control of life and its outcomes and we are the ones coming up with the goals. It breaks down when we realize that at its deepest levels, all things in life can't be controlled. You may forgive someone and they don't accept it. You may ask to be forgiven and they won't forgive you. You may want to reconcile and they won't reconcile. And when these goals or hopes fail we usually turn to being more self-focused because we can be in more control. You might have goals to be very purposeful and very Christ-like and still feel that something is lacking.

The third was to live is a Christ-focused life. This is a life surrendered to Christ's purposes and mission. Life is focused on worshiping God with all of who you are at all times and discovering God's unique design for your life. It isn't about self-fulfillment, achieving goals, or becoming more humanly perfect and free of any error. It is about giving up control of your future to Jesus, asking what God has for you, and aligning yourself to God's plans. It is when you do this that you will then be satisfied because it is the Holy Spirit who will give you satisfaction, peace, and hope.

Which way are you living? Honestly, which is most appealing? When you find yourself in panic-mode, which way of living do you run to?

Open yourself up in prayer today to being searched by the Holy Spirit to get you to let go of the ways that lead you to living that are not Christ-focused.

Tuesday

Romans 6:13 (The Message): ¹³ Don't even run little errands that are connected with that old way of life. Throw yourselves wholeheartedly and full-time—remember, you've been raised from the dead!—into God's way of doing things.

When you use what God has given you to help others – that is your ministry.

The problem is that we are afraid that God could not possibly use us. We are stuck in past mistakes and don't believe that God could show mercy to us. We are stuck in past mistakes and don't believe that God could use us because we are trapped in how other people perceive our past. Having been in ministry for 20+ years, I can tell you that I've made plenty of mistakes and I'll make plenty more, I'm sure (whether actual mistakes or things people just don't prefer or don't know the whole story about). And you know what? Making a mistake in ministry is one of the most painful places to make a mistake because you think you are disappointing God more than in other areas of life – or people communicate to you that you are failing God. And what makes it worse is that the church can seem to be the most unforgiving, unmerciful place. So, any pastor, anyone in significant ministry – paid, volunteer, etc. - gets that you might feel hesitant or unworthy of living God's purposes and aligning to God's mission for your life. And even if you want to do that, they get that doing that in a public way is scary because they know that Christians and non-Christians have a hard time not zinging someone doing ministry. Because every pastor and everyone who has committed to significant ministry has been

wounded – for mistakes they’ve made, for not being perfect in someone’s eyes, how people have talked about them, and because they become a lightning rod for everything wrong – and that wounding cannot be overcome except for giving oneself up to the mercy of God. Sadly, we default to fighting about who is right and how we can be in control instead of God’s mercy.

What resonates with you about this? Where do you find yourself today?

Wednesday

Read 2 Corinthians 4:1-18

God didn’t create you so that you could be someone else. He doesn’t call the qualified, he qualifies the called, and in the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, you have been called by God and therefore are qualified. And the Holy Spirit will continue to qualify you by transforming you into greater Christ-likeness. This means that you can be real. You can be yourself when you use the gifts God has given you to help others – to do your ministry.

How do you want to be more yourself as you journey to being more like Jesus today?

Thursday

Read 2 Corinthians 4:8-18

That pain in doing God’s will – the feelings of inadequacy, shame over past mistakes, not being qualified, not being good enough – are not only overcome by God’s mercy but are used by God’s mercy.

You might be afflicted, but you will not be crushed by the weight of being in God’s service.

You might be perplexed, but you will not be driven to despair by a lack of understanding God’s plan.

You might be persecuted, but God will not forsake you.

You might be struck down, but you will not be destroyed for you are alive in Christ – you are dead to the ways of sin and death and alive in Christ.

Do not lose heart. Because of God’s mercy, God is using you for ministry and the greatest joy is to be used by God for that purpose which is greater than yourself.

Friday

Each week in 2022, we are praying for the most dangerous places to be a follower of Jesus. Please spend today in prayer for Maldives and the Christians in Maldives. You can get more info, and this info comes from, here: <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/world-watch-list/>

What is life like for Christians in Maldives?

While many see the Maldives as a luxury holiday destination, behind the beauty of this island paradise lies a strict Islamic regime. This chain of nearly 1,200 islands has one of the highest population densities worldwide, especially on its main island, Malé. The close-knit, homogeneous communities keep a close watch on their members for any sign of deviation—which naturally includes religious choice. Conversion to Christianity can easily result in a report to Muslim authorities.

Areas for prayer:

- Pray for opportunities for believers to gather safely.
- Pray that God will use the Bible to powerfully strengthen, encourage and nurture the lives of believers.
- Pray that attitudes among government officials, especially President Solih, will soften towards Christians and other religious minorities.
- Pray for the Christians among expatriate migrant workers, that they can be strong witnesses of the hope they have in Christ.