

BIBLE STUDY

Singleness of Purpose

By Stephen Judd

In our fast-paced, multitasking world, the concept of focusing on a single purpose might seem outdated or even impossible. Yet, as we deepen our walk with Christ, we discover that singleness of purpose isn't just an old-fashioned idea—it's a powerful principle that can revolutionize our lives and our relationship with God.

Thomas Carlyle once emphasized the importance of having the ability "to see, dare, and decide; to be a fixed pillar in the welter of uncertainty." His words beautifully capture the essence of single-mindedness—a rare yet vital quality in a world dominated by compromise and indecision.

But what does it mean to be single-minded as a Christian? At its core, it means having one ultimate aim: to worship and serve God. This doesn't mean neglecting our other responsibilities, but rather ensuring that every aspect of our lives aligns with this primary goal.

The apostle Paul provides a striking metaphor in 2 Timothy 2:4: "No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier." His words compel us to reflect: Are we becoming entangled in the "affairs of this life" in ways that divert us from our higher calling?

In our modern world, countless demands compete for our attention, time, and loyalty. While many of these distractions aren't inherently wrong, they can prevent us from living with an eternal focus. As E. Stanley Jones wisely observed, "Your capacity to say 'no' defines your capacity to say 'yes' to greater things."

So, in what areas should we strive for this singleness of purpose? Let's explore four vital facets:

1. Single-minded Devotion to Christ

Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). Is Jesus the One to whom we give our highest devotion? Our primary focus should be on deepening our relationship with Him. The apostle Paul expressed this beautifully when he said, "That I may know him..." (Philippians 3:10). This wasn't just about knowing about Christ, but knowing Him deeply and intimately.

2. Single-minded Conviction

Francis C. Kelley once said, "Convictions are the mainsprings of action, the driving powers of life. What a man lives are his convictions." In a world that often celebrates moral relativism, standing firm in our beliefs is more important than ever. This doesn't mean being inflexible or judgmental, but rather having a clear understanding of what we believe and why, based on God's Word.

3. Single-minded Prayer

Regular, focused prayer is the lifeblood of our relationship with God, yet it's often the first thing we neglect when life gets busy. David exemplified this in Psalm 27:4 saying, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple." Is there any greater satisfaction than coming before God's throne in believing prayer, concentrating on one thing, and seeing it come to pass?

4. Single-minded Ministry

Serving others in the name of Christ is a tangible expression of faith. Ministry isn't about busyness or checking religious boxes, but about serving as an overflow of our love for God. Whatever our calling or gifts may be, we should approach our service to God and others with excellence and intentionality.

In our fast-paced, multitasking world, the temptation to become a "jack of all trades, master of none" is ever-present. We may pride ourselves on our versatility, but without focus, we risk becoming ineffective in what truly matters. As D.L. Moody wisely said, "Give me a man who says 'this one thing I do,' and not, 'these fifty things I dabble in.'"

Too often, we major in minors and minor in majors. We need to major in majors. My mentor, T. F. Tenney frequently reminded me, "The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing."

Owen Meredith captured this truth in a poem:

"He who seeks all things wherever he goes
Only reaps from the hopes which around him he sows
A harvest of barren regrets."

The power of singleness of purpose is evident in the lives of great leaders and thinkers throughout history. Benjamin Disraeli, a former British Prime Minister, once said, "The secret of success is constancy of purpose." Purpose alone is not enough; a person must have an unwavering commitment to that purpose.

Paul exemplified this principle, famously stating, "This one thing I do" (Philippians 3:13). His intense focus on Christ empowered him to endure hardships, establish churches, and write epistles that have profoundly influenced Christianity.

However, this kind of single-minded devotion doesn't come naturally or easily. It requires prayer, discipline, and perseverance. Jesus emphasized its importance when He said, "If your eye is single, your whole body will be full of light" (Matthew 6:22). In contrast, James warns that "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways" (James 1:8).

In pursuing singleness of purpose, we often discover that we are only tapping into a small portion of our God-given potential. Many settle for mediocrity when God has called us to excellence. We were made for much more! As it has been said, "The world has yet to see what God can do with a man fully surrendered to Him." By focusing our energy and attention on what truly matters, we open ourselves to the fullness of what God intends for us.

The account of Martha and Mary in Luke 10 vividly illustrates the importance of singleness of purpose. Martha, preoccupied with her many tasks, prioritized her service over spending time with Jesus. Mary, however, chose to sit at Jesus' feet and absorb His teachings. Jesus gently corrected Martha, saying, "Only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." This story reminds us that while serving is valuable, it should never take precedence over our relationship with Christ. Martha's focus on elaborate preparations, though well-intentioned, was temporary. Mary's decision to prioritize time with Jesus had eternal significance.

The challenge for each of us is to identify and pursue the "one thing" God has called us to do. This doesn't mean neglecting our responsibilities, but rather filtering every aspect of life through the lens of our primary purpose—to know Christ and make Him known.

As we reflect on this call to singleness of purpose, consider implementing the following practical steps:

1. Evaluate our priorities and commitments regularly.
2. Practice saying "no" to good things to avoid distractions from the best things.
3. Cultivate a deep prayer life, seeking God's guidance to maintain focus.
4. Surround ourselves with like-minded believers who encourage spiritual growth.
5. Regularly study Scripture, allowing God's Word to shape our convictions and priorities.

Singleness of purpose doesn't mean adopting a narrow-minded perspective. Instead, it calls us to align every aspect of our lives with the ultimate goal of knowing and serving

God. It requires the wisdom to say "no" to good things so we can say "yes" to what is best.

In a world that constantly pulls us in countless directions, may we have the courage and conviction to focus on "this one thing"—loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. As we allow this love to shape our priorities and decisions, it will naturally overflow into every area of our lives. In doing so, we will not only experience greater clarity and fulfillment but also become beacons of light in a world desperately in need of direction and hope.

STUDENT HANDOUT

Singleness of Purpose

But what does it mean to be single-minded as a Christian?

The apostle _____ provides a striking metaphor in 2 Timothy 2:4.

In what four areas should we strive for singleness of purpose?

1. Single-minded _____ to Christ (Matthew 6:24; Philippians 3:10)

2. Single-minded Conviction

"Convictions are the mainsprings of action, the driving powers of life. What a man lives are his convictions." - Francis C. Kelley

3. Single-minded Prayer (Psalm 27:4)

Regular, focused prayer is the _____ of our relationship with God, yet it's often the first thing we neglect when life gets busy.

4. Single-minded Ministry

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We may pride ourselves on our versatility, but without focus, we risk becoming ineffective in what truly matters.

"The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing." – T. F. Tenney

- "This one thing I do" (Philippians 3:13).
- "If your eye is single, your whole body will be full of light" (Matthew 6:22).
- "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways" (James 1:8).

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SMALL GROUP GUIDE

Singleness of Purpose

Opening Ice Breaker:

Share a time when you felt pulled in many directions. How did it affect your relationship with God?

Key Scriptures:

- Matthew 6:24
- Philippians 3:13
- Luke 10:38-42

Key Takeaways:

1. Singleness of purpose means having one ultimate aim: to worship and serve God.
2. We need to align every aspect of our lives with our primary goal of knowing and serving God.
3. Focused prayer and devotion to Christ are essential for maintaining singleness of purpose.
4. Saying "no" to good things may be necessary to say "yes" to the best things.
5. Our convictions, based on God's Word, should guide our decisions and actions.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does "singleness of purpose" mean to you in the context of your Christian faith?

2. The sermon mentions four vital facets of singleness of purpose. Which one resonates with you the most and why?
 - a) Single-minded Devotion to Christ
 - b) Single-minded Conviction
 - c) Single-minded Prayer
 - d) Single-minded Ministry
3. How do you balance the various responsibilities in your life while maintaining a focus on your relationship with God?
4. Reflect on the quote: "Your capacity to say 'no' defines your capacity to say 'yes' to greater things." How can this principle be applied in your life?
5. Discuss the story of Mary and Martha. How do you relate to each of these characters? What can we learn from Jesus' response?
6. In what ways does our modern, fast-paced world challenge our ability to maintain a single-minded focus on God? How can we overcome these challenges?
7. How might your life change if you truly embraced the concept of singleness of purpose in your faith journey?

Practical Applications:

1. Conduct a personal "priority audit": List your current commitments and evaluate how they align with your spiritual goals.
2. Develop a focused prayer strategy for the week, concentrating on one specific area each day.
3. Choose one area of your life where you can practice saying "no" to create more space for your relationship with God.
4. Set aside time daily to study Scripture, focusing on passages that reinforce your convictions and purpose.

5. Identify one way you can serve others this week as an expression of your love for God.

Closing Activity:

Have each group member write down one specific action they will take this week to cultivate greater singleness of purpose in their faith. Share these commitments with the group and pray for each other.

Closing Prayer:

End the session by praying for God's guidance and strength as you all strive to maintain singleness of purpose in your walk with Him.