



We Kept Our Eye on the Prize?

We have to keep our focus on Jesus in order to move closer to Him. If we focus on anything else, we'll miss out on the greatest blessing God has for us! Paul warned about trading what is really important for things that won't last. Esau showed us the perfect example of this sad choice.



Day #1: To Know Him

There's a big difference between knowing *about* someone and knowing someone. Who is your favorite singer, TV star or athlete? What facts do you know about him or her? Do you really *know* him/her? Knowing facts about Jesus is not our goal. The devil knows facts about Jesus but he does NOT know Him, trust Him, or follow Him (James 2: 19).

Paul said:

† *I want to know Christ better. I want to know the power that raised Him from the dead. I want to share in His sufferings. I want to become like Him by sharing in His death. Then by God's grace I will rise from the dead. - Philippians 3:10-11*

Paul wanted nothing more than to really know Jesus. He was so eager to know Him that he was willing to do what Jesus did and experience what Jesus experienced.

Paul wanted the Holy Spirit power (Romans 8:11) to work boldly in his life, just as it did in Jesus' life (Matthew 3:16; Luke 4:1, 14; 10:21; Acts 10:38). Paul depended on that power over and over again.

Paul wasn't afraid to suffer. Jesus suffered the day He went to the cross, so when Paul was hurt, he knew a little bit more of how Jesus felt at that moment. Every time Paul suffered, he could think, "Jesus suffered *on purpose* to take away my sin. How He must love me!"

Paul was glad to put to death his old way of life and live a new life for Jesus. And Paul knew that when his body finally wore out, he was absolutely certain that he would live with Jesus forever in heaven.

* Read what Paul said about Jesus, after he knew Him a little better: *All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Him.* (Colossians 2:3) Does this sound like Someone you'd like to know better? Tell Him!

Day #2: Diamond Cut

Does anyone in your house have a diamond? Maybe it's in a ring or a pair of earrings. If so, take a good look at the diamond. How would you describe it? You'd probably use words like shiny, sparkly, clear, beautiful, and perfect.

But did you know that diamonds don't start out like that? When a diamond is dug out of the ground, it looks a lot like a regular rock. (See picture.) It's called "a diamond in the rough." It takes many steps to perfect it.



Very high quality diamonds might take up to 40 hours to cut properly. It takes thousands and thousands of cuts, grinds, and polishings by a master diamond cutter to end up with a prized diamond.

When Paul talked about knowing Jesus, thinking like Jesus thinks, and doing the things Jesus does, Paul said:

† *I have not yet received all of those things. I have not yet been made perfect. But I move on to take hold of what Christ Jesus took hold of me for. - Philippians 3:12*

Paul understood that it takes thousands and thousands of steps to be made perfect. So he would just keep moving forward, one step at a time. Every day he would listen to Jesus and do whatever Jesus wanted him to do that day.

* Don't be frustrated that you don't know Jesus perfectly yet. If you take steps in the right direction every day, you are closer to perfection today than you were yesterday and you'll be closer tomorrow than you are today!

Day #3: Eye on the Ball

With your parents' permission, wad up a piece of paper and try a mini batting practice. Use a rubber spatula or wooden spoon. (Be sure the coast is clear before you start! You don't want to hit anything or anyone!)

If you have ever been to a little league baseball game you have heard the phrase, "Keep your eye on the ball." This is shouted by coaches and parents to remind

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the batter to watch the ball all the way to the bat. Many players make the mistake of looking away before the ball makes contact with the bat. For some reason, batters automatically look out to where they hope the ball is going to go. But the problem is, when they take their eyes off the ball, they often don't hit it at all.

This can be said of our relationship with Jesus. If we take our eyes off of knowing Him, we will certainly miss the mark. We might make the mistake of thinking that good habits are the same as a relationship. We might start to think that just going to church with our family or saying a blessing before we eat is the same as knowing Jesus.

Good habits are fine, but it's when we live life with Jesus that we get to know Him. Every day, open your Bible and read His words. Then ask, "Jesus, what do you want me to know about this today?" Take your time and listen. Throughout your day, obey what He says. When you venture out and do what His Holy Spirit is nudging you to do, you'll get to know Him ever deeper. It's the difference between sitting in the stands and playing in the game!



I move on toward the goal to win the prize. God has appointed me to win it. The heavenly prize is Christ Jesus himself. - Philippians 3: 14



Start now! Ask Jesus what He wants you to know about what we just read. Be still and listen. (What He communicates to your heart will always agree with the Bible.)

Day #4: Don't Forget!

List some ways that people remember things. (They might tie a string around their finger, put a sticky note on the fridge, write it on their calendar, or enter it into their smart phone.)

God had made amazing promises to Abraham. God promised that He would give Abraham a huge family, God would bless and protect them, and then God would bless every single person through Abraham's offspring. This would happen when Jesus was born to Abraham's great, great, great... (37 greats) grandson.

Esau was Abraham's first grandson. As the firstborn son of Abraham's son Isaac, Esau was entitled to inherit a fortune, as well as leadership of the family after his dad died, and he would receive a special blessing from God. Esau was in the very special line of men that Jesus would one day be born into.

But one regular, ordinary day, everything changed. Esau came in from a long day out in the wilderness. He was tired and hungry. He smelled some mouth-watering stew that his brother had been cooking. So Esau foolishly agreed to trade all the blessings that

Day #4 continued:

were in store for him for one measly bowl of stew (Hebrews 12: 16).

If only Esau had believed and remembered the promises God made about his family and his future. What if Esau had studied the promises every day? What if Esau taped them to his bedroom door?



So keep My words in your hearts and minds. Write them down...Talk about them... Speak about them... Write them on the doorframes of your houses... - Deuteronomy 11: 18-20



Keep God's promises in front of you every day! Read His word and talk to Him. Ask Mom or Dad go to: <http://bit.ly/1byZL31> to print out our Jeremiah29: 11 *printable*. You can frame it for your room, put it on your fridge, or set it anywhere to will remind you that God has an amazing plan for you!

Day #5: Terrible Trade

Take a bowl out of your kitchen cabinet and set it on the table. Grab a pen and a few scraps of paper while you're up. What was it that Esau was just "dying" to get from his brother? (a bowl of stew) How long do you think the bowl of stew lasted? (about 5 or 10 minutes) And you know what? The next day, Esau was hungry again. But at that moment, Esau thought the stew was the most important thing in the world. How long would God's blessings last? (forever!) Esau traded eternal blessing for momentary fulfillment.

What about you? Ask God to check out your heart and mind right now.



God, see what is in my heart. Know what is there. Put me to the test. Know what I'm thinking. - Psalm 139:23

What is the most important thing in your life right now? Is there something that you think you just *have* to have, like Esau's stew? (It may be not be a "thing". It might be a hobby or sport, an accomplishment, etc.)

Many things we want are okay—they are not bad at all. But if there's something you can't stop thinking about, or if you think your life will be perfect once you get it, or your life will be miserable without it, jot it down on a scrap of paper. Then ask these questions:

- Will this bring me or others closer to Jesus?
- Will it last forever?
- Is knowing Jesus more important to me than having this thing?



If the answer to these questions is no, ask Jesus to give you right thoughts about what you wrote & to help you put it in its proper place. Then put the paper in the bowl as a reminder that there is absolutely nothing that compares to what God has in store for you! Don't trade it for anything in this world!