
SINGLE FOCUS: A PHILOSOPHY & PROGRAM

Perhaps you've been challenged at times to answer questions like, "What do you want written on your tomb stone when you die?" or, "What is the purpose of life?" or, "Why did God create humanity?" or, "What's the big picture of our lives?" Etc. These questions all have to do with the issue of life philosophy (or, I suppose we could say, worldview). As you know, simply put, philosophy has to do with the why question—why do we do what we do, or how do we determine what we will do?

While I've always recognized the benefit of such questions, I've often wondered how the big picture answer to those questions will help me with the next step (i.e., "how do I get there?" or "how do I apply that?" or "where do I begin?"). As others have suggested their personal (and hopefully biblical) life philosophy, it sometimes has seemed that the big picture is so grand and so lofty, that I'm completely at a loss as to where to begin to get there. I guess I've concluded, then, that to have a really helpful and effective life philosophy, I have to answer both the big picture and the next step questions.

In other words, a well-formulated life philosophy provides next step direction when answering big picture questions, such as...

- What college should I go to?
- Who should I date?
- What activities should dominate my free time?
- How much time should I be spending in spiritual disciplines?
- Who should I allow to influence my thinking?
- What career path should I pursue?
- What church should I involve myself in?
- What kind of ministries should I be involved in?
- How should I be leading (my family, employees, etc.)?

I was recently compelled to write out my ministry philosophy, and in doing so, I concluded that my ministry philosophy and my life philosophy are really one and the same. This was an incredibly valuable exercise for me, one that really gives purpose and focus to each decision every day. I'd like to share with you what I've concluded to be my life philosophy.

MY GOAL: TO GLORIFY GOD

The concept of "glorifying God" doesn't seem to be very well understood today, and is instead more of a Christian catch phrase and cliché. Nonetheless,

it does summarize God's purpose for His entire creation. Colossians 1:16 lays a foundational understanding of the purpose for creation: "For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him." We were created for God. Romans 11:36 fleshes out this thought: "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen." We were created to God, specifically to His glory. Ephesians 1:3-14 expressed three times that the goal of God's gracious salvation is so that we would be "to the praise of His glory." I Peter 2:9 explains, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." Finally, the verse we all know...I Corinthians 10:31 says, "Whether therefore you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

While "glorifying God" can seem a bit vague and esoteric, it helps me to grasp the daily implications of this concept by using a few biblical synonyms:

- *Exalt God*: I must elevate God's status in the minds of others (Psalm 57:5, 11).
- *Honor God*: I must cause God to have weight in people's values (Malachi 1:6; cf. Psalm 29:1-2).
- *Fear God*: I must maintain a humble awe of God (Psalm 89:7).
- *Worship God*: I must proclaim God's intrinsic worth (Psalm 29:2).
- *Magnify God*: I must make God big in the sight of others (Psalm 34:3).
- *Bless God*: I must speak well of God (Psalm 34:1).
- *Adorn God*: I must make God and His gospel attractive (Titus 2:10).
- *Thank God*: I must express thankfulness for His benefits (Psalm 100:1-5; cf. Psalm 103:1-2).

Bottom line: In my life, God must "in everything...be preeminent" (Colossians 1:18)—this is the big picture.

MY OBJECTIVE: TO CULTIVATE A RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST

I believe that God is most glorified in my life when I am rightly related to Him in love and obedience. Having created man for His glory, God initially walked in perfect fellowship with His creation (Genesis 1:26, 31; 3:8). That relationship was abruptly and decidedly broken when man chose sin (Genesis 3) and was consequently separated from God (Isaiah 59:2). The overarching theme of Scripture then, initiated in Genesis 3:15 and culminating at the end of Revelation, is God's work of restoring His fallen creation to Himself through Christ. I Peter 3:18 exclaims the richest and most integral benefit of the Gospel to be that Christ did "bring us [back] to God." We now have restored

fellowship with God, and now that we are rightly related to Him, we can actively fulfill His purpose for us (Ephesians 4:1). While God will receive glory from my life (Philippians 2:9-11), it is also true that, now as His child, I can either actively contribute to or detract from His glorious reputation. This is where heartfelt love, active obedience, regular fellowship, immediate confession of sin, etc. come into play. The closer I am to (and thus, like) God, the more my life will be a billboard that proclaims His glory.

Bottom line: God will be most glorified in my life when I am most rightly related to Him through Christ.

MY FOCUS: TO RESPOND TO THE GOSPEL

The Gospel powerfully proclaims that it was nothing short of the work of Christ Himself that brought me back into a right relationship with God so that I could begin to actively pursue my purpose of glorifying God; and, it is that same work of Christ on my behalf that empowers me to live rightly related to God today, so that I can actively pursue my purpose of glorifying God (cf. Colossians 2:6). Since I still need salvation from the power of sin that mars my relationship with God, I still need the Gospel (Romans 1:16-17). The Gospel is not just for unbelievers; it is for sinners. The Gospel alone will empower me to stay rightly related to God both in my heart and in my lifestyle, so that His purpose can be accomplished through both. Therefore, the next step for my life is to focus on four responses to the Gospel:

- *Know it:* have a rich, yet practical, understanding of Christ's work both historically and personally (understanding)
- *Love it:* have a deep gratitude for Christ's work that responds in public and private, verbal and visible worship (passion)
- *Live it:* have a commitment to adorn Christ's work through holy living and godly service (obedience & ministry)
- *Give it:* have a habit of communicating the realities of Christ's work to believers and unbelievers alike (edification & evangelism)

Bottom line: I will stay rightly related to God only as much as I respond to the Gospel's reality in my life today—this is my next step.

So, to summarize my big picture/next step approach to life:

My life should have as its goal, God's glory;
As its objective, a vibrant relationship with Christ;
And, as its daily focus, the Gospel.

APPLICATION: "SINGLE FOCUS"

Purpose Statement

The Single Focus ministry exists to enable single believers to glorify God through a vibrant relationship with Christ by daily focusing on four responses to the Gospel: knowing it, loving it, living it, and giving it.

Ministry Verse:

Romans 1:16 -- For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth—to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Components of Singles Ministry:

- Sunday AM Bible Study ---- KNOW IT
- Sunday AM Service ---- KNOW IT/LOVE IT
- Midweek Bible Study ---- KNOW IT/LOVE IT
- Community Bible Studies ---- KNOW IT/LIVE IT
- Personal Discipleship ---- KNOW IT/LIVE IT
- Campus Evangelism ---- GIVE IT
- Activities (e.g., Focus Fellowship) ---- LOVE IT/LIVE IT
- Ministry ---- LIVE IT/GIVE IT
- Website (online daily Bible Study, prayer requests, pictures, blog, discussion, resources) ---- ALL FOUR

Benchmarks of Success:

- Young adult believers moved from complacency to passion within their own personalities.
- Young adult believers taking ownership of this church, even during the summer months.
- Young adult believers moved from living by sight to living by faith.
- Young adult believers making Bible-based life choices for their practice and convictions.
- Young adult believers seeking to minister to and interact with the whole church body, cross-generationally.
- Young adult believers pushed from fear to boldness in equipped evangelism.
- Young adult believers passionate about knowing God's Word personally and deeply, while also loving and respecting their elders.
- Young adult believers earnest about discipling their families OR choosing a mate who will be a co-disciple.
- Unbelievers won to belief.