

Fix your eyes on Jesus

**Afraid? Stressed? Confused?
Plagued by doubts, cynicism or a sense of meaninglessness?
Tired? Bored? Joyless? Discouraged?**

When clarifying His mission, Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and *have it to the full*” (John 10:10). Other translations render it as “I came that they may have life and *have it abundantly*” (ESV) and “My purpose is to give them *a rich and satisfying life*” (NLT). Do these expressions describe your experience? If I look at many Christians around me and consider over the years my own experience, it is clear that this ‘full life’ which should be the daily experience of every believer is not automatic.

We have a very firm foundation and a bright future. Jesus explained, “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has *eternal life* and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life” (John 5:24). We are forgiven! We are safe! Later Jesus added, “I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am” (John 14:3). We are destined to be together with Him in the Father’s house! Forever! With all this good news, why are we sometimes overwhelmed with negative thoughts and feelings? Consider the following three biblical metaphors.

Drinking water - Seeking significance: We humans thirst for significance. The apostle John tells us of the Samaritan woman who met Jesus by the well. She needed water. That is why she regularly visited that well. During the conversation Jesus told her that He could give her “living water”, and that “whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” She concluded that if she received this living water she would be self-sufficient and would not need to return to the well (John 4:10-15). She was wrong. Jesus Himself was the new well she so much needed. For her life to have significance, to quench the thirst of her dry soul she not only needed to *meet* Jesus but also *follow* Him. It is one thing to find the well, and another to drink daily from its living waters. Both are necessary.

Carrying burdens - Experiencing peace: The Lord Jesus made a similar point when teaching the crowds. “Come to me,” He said, “all you who are weary and burdened, and I will *give you rest*.” When we turn to Jesus, our sin is forgiven, our burden of sin and guilt is taken away, He gives our soul rest. But after conversion, some burdens remain and in time new ones are added. Some burdens are unnecessary or sinful and should be rejected (Hebrews 12:1). Other burdens are legitimate, like having a family, caring for others, doing your job and serving the Lord in some way (2 Corinthians 11:27-28). Those who have received this ‘rest’ can also become stressed, confused, tired, demotivated and even experience ‘burn out’. Sometimes we carry good burdens that were intended for someone else. Sometimes we hold on to God-given burdens beyond the God-designed time. Often the root of our problem is that we seek to carry our burdens alone. That is why Jesus went on to explain, “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart *and you will find rest* for your souls”

(Matthew 11:28-29). It is one thing to receive 'rest' at conversion and another to daily find rest by consciously carrying our burdens with Him. Both are necessary.

Running a race - Staying motivated: Our Christian life can also be understood as running a marathon. The focus is not on running faster than others but on completing the race. Unnecessary weights will zap up our energy and slow us down. "Therefore... let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles." Some things we avoid or choose to drop not because they are sinful but because they "hinder", that is, they slow us down by taking too much of our time or energy. We are then encouraged to "run with perseverance the race marked out for us." The Lord Himself has marked out the race before us which includes preparing good works for us to do (Ephesians 2:10). Running outside of "the race marked out for us" may feel easier, shorter or happier but it is wasted time. It may also be wrong or damaging. We will eventually regret it. And how should we run this life-marathon? Not looking at the curves and hills ahead, neither at the weather, the observers or fellow runners. We are to run "*Looking unto Jesus*" (NKJ), or "*fixing our eyes on Jesus*, the pioneer and perfecter of faith" (Hebrews 12:1-2).

Every Christian has legitimate concerns and these should not be ignored. But our natural instinct is to fix our eyes on these concerns instead of on Jesus. Depending on our temperament, family upbringing, religious background, life experience, fears and longings, our hearts may be distracted, absorbed, even addicted to one or more of the many alternatives.

If you are to run well, with perseverance, without growing weary or losing heart, you need to...

1. **Fix your eyes on Jesus...** and not on **yourself**, on how much Bible you read, how much time you spend in prayer, your moral and disciplined lifestyle, the tenacity of your convictions and devotion. Neither on your own weakness, your sins and your failures.
2. **Fix your eyes on Jesus...** and not on your **usefulness** in God's Kingdom, your past victories and successes, your gifts, your service or ministry. Not even on your 'spiritual' vision, goals and strategies for the future. Neither on your past or current failures.
3. **Fix your eyes on Jesus...** and not on your **feelings**, be they happy or depressing feelings. You may feel sure that you are a child of God. Sometimes you may doubt your salvation. Assurance comes by trusting His Word (1 John 5:10-12). The Lord sometimes feels far away, asleep and unconcerned. "Don't you care that we drown?" cried the stressed disciples? (Mark 4:38). Don't fix your eyes on your feelings. Feelings change. Jesus doesn't.
4. **Fix your eyes on Jesus...** and not on your **sickness**, your pains, your growing limitations due to age or a deteriorating health condition. Aware of the growing limitations of his own body, Paul wrote, "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day... So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen" (2 Corinthians 4:16-18).
5. **Fix your eyes on Jesus...** and not on **doctrine**, teachings, faith statements or traditions of your church - however old or biblical they may be. Theology is important. But without Jesus it can also kill (2 Corinthians 3:6). The Holy Scriptures lead us to Christ (John 5:39).

6. **Fix your eyes on Jesus...** and not on what **other believers** are doing, regardless of how effective and blessed their labours may be, nor on what some may be saying about you and your labours, however positive or critical their comments may be.
7. **Fix your eyes on Jesus...** and not on the **moral decadence** you see in society around you. Like Lot, the “depraved conduct” and “lawlessness” which has growing social acceptance will only distress you (2 Peter 2:7).
8. **Fix your eyes on Jesus...** and not on this **world’s system**, its values, its morality, its priorities and its symbols of success. Neither focus on the way it manipulates the media, politics, religion and the ‘truth’ itself. Jesus warned His disciples, “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world” (John 15:18-19). It is by fixing your eyes on Jesus that you become light and salt in this world.
9. **Fix your eyes on Jesus...** and not Satan and the **demonic**, nor on the different ways they manifest themselves in the world around you, nor on how they seduce the youth, destroy marriages, encourage conflict (even within the church) and instil fear, depression and hopelessness. We know that their mission is “to steal, kill and destroy” (John 10:10). But we are not to fix our eyes on the enemy.
10. **Fix your eyes on Jesus...** and not on the difficulties, obstacles and **problems** you face. The apostle Peter begun to sink when he turned his eyes away from Jesus and fixed his eyes on the wind and waves (Matthew 14:29-30).

The Lord tells each of us that “we are more than conquerors through him who loved us” (Romans 8:37) and yet He also knows that life here in a broken world can be difficult. He reminded His disciples, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). To fix our eyes on Jesus is to fix our eyes on the Overcomer!

Why fix eyes on Jesus? Because He is central to everything. By fixing our eyes on Him, it helps us see everything else in the right perspective. “For in him [Jesus Christ] all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created *through him and for him*. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Colossians 1:16-17). He is clearly worthy! Secondly we are to fix our eyes on Jesus because His example will inspire us, “For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart” (Hebrews 12:2-3). And here we see also a third good reason: it will stop us from growing weary and losing heart!

As you regularly fix your eyes on Jesus, you will notice changes in the way you live...

1. **As you fix your eyes on Jesus...** you will be motivated to give, to **sacrifice** for the wellbeing of others and the advancements of the Father’s purposes on earth. You will notice that you see and love people the way He does. Your appreciation for the church, His Body, His Bride will grow. You will grow in love and willingness to invest in His church.

2. **As you fix your eyes on Jesus...** you will be inspired to **endure** the difficulties and setbacks your heavenly Father may allow in your life, your family or ministry.
3. **As you fix your eyes on Jesus...** you will grow to **love Him** more. Mary's love for her Master grew as she spent time with Him. Moved by love, she "took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair" (John 12:3). As your love and appreciation grow, you will become a better worshiper.
4. **As you fix your eyes on Jesus...** you will better understand your own **identity**, your own worth, your place in the big puzzle. You will learn to accept and embrace the choices your Loving Father has made for you, reflecting His image as a man or as a woman. For a season, king Nebuchadnezzar took on a wrong identity, that of an animal. "At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, *raised my eyes toward heaven*, and my sanity was restored" (Daniel 4:34). We are who we are in His sight.
5. **As you fix your eyes on Jesus...** you will want to grow in **practical holiness**, to be more and more like Him. You will become aware of your own shortcomings and sinfulness, you will recognize and confess what is wrong and rejoice in His grace and forgiveness.
6. **As you fix your eyes on Jesus...** you will be reminded to **share your legitimate burdens** with Him, take up His yoke (Matthew 11:28-30); to be gentle and humble enough to recognize your own insufficiency, to remind yourself that without Him you can do nothing (John 15: 5).
7. **As you fix your eyes on Jesus...** you will receive **guidance** on how to live and what to do. On the way to Jerusalem, the pilgrims would sing "I lift up my eyes to you, to you whose throne is in heaven. As the eyes of slaves look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maid look to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the LORD our God" (Psalm 123:1). Regularly close to the Master, servants will better sense His desires and instructions.
8. **As you fix your eyes on Jesus...** you will be **encouraged** to take the risk inherent in obedience, to step out of your comfort and security. When Peter saw Jesus, he heard Him say "come". While looking at his Lord, he "got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came towards Jesus" (Matthew 14:29).
9. **As you fix your eyes on Jesus...** you will feel more free from **social pressure**, from the many and sometimes unrealistic expectations of your fellow believers and also from the secular culture you live in. In His presence you will receive the moral strength to break free from this cobweb of human expectations.
10. **As you fix your eyes on Jesus...** your heart will **rejoice**, it will grow warmer, especially as you read the Scriptures in His presence – as the disciples on the way to Emmaus said, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us? (Luke 24:32). King David also noticed that "Those who look to Him are radiant" (Psalm 34:5).

How to fix your eyes on Jesus? It involves consciously directing the 'eyes of your heart' and mind toward Jesus. Remind yourself who He is, what He has said, what He has done, does

and has promised to do. Earlier in the letter to the Hebrews (3:1) we read “fix your thoughts on Jesus”, also translated “consider Jesus” (ESV) and “think carefully about this Jesus” (NLT). Christians may do this collectively, for example while celebrating the Lord’s Supper (Luke 22:19). But we may also learn to do this alone, as we make some time in our busy days, at home, at work or while travelling, to focus on our Lord and Saviour. As we thank Him and worship Him, as we remind ourselves that He is the Lord and King of our lives (and therefore has authority over us), as we become conscious that He is now with us, that He enjoys being with us, that He delights in who we are, that He is preparing a place for us and that He will soon come again... our hearts warm and the situation or task before us begins to look different. We gain perspective. Our life and choices are invested with significance. We begin to see our life as He sees it.

How to really experience this practically? Maybe you agree that all this is true but it feels so distant from your lived experience. I have been there too. From time to time I notice that I trust in Him and yet my heart or soul feels cold or disconnected. How can we get the truth from our heads to our hearts? Perhaps a good place to start is recognizing our problem. Without this recognition we may become more and more religious. Or we may become cynical. Why not be open with the Lord and tell Him about our sad predicament? The disciples asked the Lord for faith. We often ask the Lord to ‘open the eyes of our mind’ to understand God’s Word. Why not also ask the Lord to ‘open the eyes of our heart’ to better enjoy His presence and His truth? Over the years I have discovered the power good Christian songs can have on the state of my soul. In times of spiritual dryness I incorporate two or more songs and hymns into my morning devotionals. These I find on YouTube and play on my mobile phone. Here are some which the Lord has often used to encourage me. Maybe the Lord will use one of them to help turn and fix your eyes on Jesus, also in your lived experience.

1. [Turn your eyes upon Jesus](#)
2. [Jesus we enthrone you](#)
3. [Jesus be the centre](#)
4. [Be still my soul...](#)
5. [You are my all in all](#)

Conclusion

When we repent and turn our lives over to the Lord Jesus, we are born again, we find the well of living water, our souls ‘rest’, we begin the Christian race. Our Christian life begins. If we are to make anything of it, if we are to live this new life to the full, we will soon discover that (a) we need to drink daily from that well, (b) we will need to learn to take up His yoke and carry our burdens together with Him, and (c) that to “run with perseverance the race marked out for us” we will need to do so while fixing our eyes on Jesus. Without this daily discipline, we will grow thirsty, exhausted or demotivated. The Lord Jesus delights in meeting His people. You know that. What may surprise you is that He delights in meeting you! Yes, you! Is there anything holding you back?

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Source: www.philipnunn.com

The NIV Bible translation is used unless mentioned otherwise