



January 2007

NEVER MOVE ON

*"You don't have to know a lot of things . . .
to make a lasting difference in the world.*

*But you do have to know the few great things that matter,
perhaps just one, and then be willing to live . . . and die for them.*

*The people that make a durable difference in the world
are not the people who have mastered many things,
but who have been mastered by one great thing."*

(John Piper)

By Jeff Bonzelaar, Executive Director

So much of our lives are wasted by the excessive amount of time and energy we give to lesser things. Like Martha of old, we scurry about doing so many things when only one thing, as Jesus pronounced, is necessary (Lk. 10:41-42). After many years of meaningless toil, the Apostle Paul came to the conclusion that only one thing really mattered—the crucified Lord. Thus, he “resolved to know nothing . . . except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (see 1 Cor. 2:2; 15:3).

I am simplifying this year. I don't want to waste my life. I have a limited supply of resources, and I want to use them wisely. My aim is to focus increasingly on the cross and make that my single boast (see Gal. 6:13). I am learning that a failure to fix my eyes on the cross has serious consequences, with a loss of peace and joy topping the list (see Rom. 5:1-2).

Below are some strategies for making and keeping Christ's work at Calvary the driving force of your life. (I am greatly indebted to author and pastor C.H.

Mahaney for his insights and inspiration).

1. Memorize and meditate upon the gospel.

Few things are more important in our spiritual growth and development than hiding God's Word in our heart. And what better Scripture to memorize than those rich in gospel content. Here are a few passages I highly recommend:

- 2 Cor. 5:21 (The greatest verse in the Bible.)
- Rom. 3:21-26 (The greatest paragraph in the Bible.)
- Is. 53 (The greatest chapter in the Bible.)
- Eph. 2:11-18

2. Study the gospel.

Camp out in books such as Leviticus, Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews. In fact, read all of the Scriptures with your eyes peeled for the gospel. When you read the stories of Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Esther, and Ruth ask: “Where is Jesus? How is the message of the gospel being communicated?” Also, take in good books like, *Living the Cross-Centered Life* by C.J. Mahaney, *The Passion of Jesus Christ* by John Piper, *The Cross of Christ* by John Stott, *The Discipline of Grace* by Jerry Bridges, and *The Power of the Cross* by Charles Spurgeon.

3. Sing the gospel.

Singing has a way of getting truth into our heart like nothing else. There are countless worship CDs available that can help you along, but it’s important to choose ones that draw attention to the amazing truth of God’s gracious actions towards us. Many songs are more centered on what we need or want rather than on what God has done through Jesus Christ.

By the way, the hymn-book is a rich treasury of gospel songs. In fact, if I could only have two books in the world, one would be a Bible and the other a hymn-book. Some of my favorites include:

- *Hallelujah, What a Savior!*
- *The Solid Rock*
- *Nothing but the Blood*
- *At Calvary*
- *Near the Cross*
- *There is a Fountain Filled with Blood*
- *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*

4. Pray the gospel.

Thank God for the forgiveness of sins purchased through the death of His Son. Thank the Lord Jesus for bearing the wrath of God on your behalf. Thank God for the reconciliation that was accomplished when Jesus shed His blood for your sins. Bless God for clothing

you in His Son’s righteousness. Thank the Spirit of God for adoption.

5. Share the gospel.

This doesn’t mean you preach a 3-point sermon every time you meet an unbeliever, but it does mean that you make a deliberate attempt at speaking some part of the gospel to anyone you happen to be with.

For instance, when you discipline your children, don’t miss the opportunity of preaching the gospel. Point out their indwelling sin and their need for God’s redemption and forgiveness. Lead them in a prayer of repentance and renewal.

Or when you are in various social settings and asked an all-too-familiar question, give an all-to-unfamiliar answer. Pastor and author C.H. Mahaney says that when he is asked, “How are you doing?” he frequently replies, “Better than I deserve,” and in so doing, testifies to the gospel.

Mahaney shares of a time when he was at a Starbucks and the attendant waiting on him asked him, “How are you doing?” When Mahaney replied, “Better than I deserve,” the employee began challenging his self-assessment. “Oh come on, you can’t mean that. You look like a decent guy. You haven’t killed anybody, have you?”

With that, the door was opened for Mahaney to share a little bit of the gospel. “Yes, I have murdered. I have killed others with my words. So I deserve to be punished. But in God’s great kindness, His Son suffered in my place, and I now stand justified before Him.”

*“Abide hard by the cross and search
the mystery of His wounds.”
(Charles Spurgeon)*

CONCLUSION

Friend, never move on. Keep the gospel ever before you. Never tire of probing the depths of Calvary and asking, “What happened at the cross? Why did Jesus suffer and die? What did Christ achieve by His passion?” Charles Spurgeon wrote, “Abide hard by the cross and search the mystery of His wounds.”

Interestingly, in the New Testament’s final book where end times and eternity are central themes, the cross remains on center stage. The main description used of Jesus in Revelation is the “Lamb of God.” Heaven forever remembers Him who was slain from the foundation of the world. Heaven does not “get over” the cross, as if there are better things to think about.

John Newton, the slave-trader turned preacher and writer of many hymns including “*Amazing Grace*,” never moved on. He never left Calvary. Grace never ceased to amaze him. At the end of his life when asked what he had learned, he replied, “I am a great sinner, and He is a great Savior.”

*“Lest I forget Gethsemane,
Lest I forget Thine agony;
Lest I forget Thy love for me,
Lead me to Calvary.”*

Testimony ***Velvet Parter***

“I grew up in a small town in Arkansas. My parents were not married, and I rarely saw my father. My mother could not care for both me and my sister so my grandmother offered to raise me.

My earliest childhood memory was of physical pain. My uncle and some of his friends began abusing me at the age of two and continued throughout my childhood. This led me into a very promiscuous life-style, looking for someone to love me and by the time I was fifteen I was pregnant.

My grandmother had a hard time dealing with this so she sent me back to live with my mother. My mother

was an alcoholic and rarely showed love. My loneliness and insecurities began to control me, and I became bound to drinking alcohol and smoking marijuana. By the age of twenty I was using cocaine. This sinful behavior went on for the next twenty years.

My oldest son was killed at the age of fifteen as a result of selling drugs. Guilt overwhelmed me. He died doing what I had taught him. Eventually my three other children were taken from me and adopted by another family. These events brought shame and even more guilt. I lost everything – my home, my family, my mind, and all hope.

But God in His mercy reached out to me. During one of my stays in a treatment center in 2002, I gave my life to Jesus Christ. After I got out I attempted to live a Christian life but failed miserably. I didn’t let go of all of my idols. Drugs and memories of the past gave a stronghold to the Enemy. I attended church every Sunday and acted the “part”, but in private lived a different life.

My pastor found out about my double-life and my sin was brought out into the open. With the churches support, he offered to help me and contacted Life Challenge. I accepted and entered Life Challenge in November 2005.

Since entering Life Challenge I have learned more and more how much Jesus Christ really cares for me and forgives me. He has given me His life, and I now enjoy the peace of His salvation. I am a new creation in Christ. I thank God for restoring my life and giving me hope to face tomorrow.”

P.S. Velvet graduated November 2006 and is now doing a six-month internship at the Women’s Center.

✠

Our hope at Life Challenge is that men and women by the grace of God would learn to count as wisdom and power what the world considers foolishness and weakness—a crucified Christ.

Cherishing the cross,

Jeff