

WRITTEN BY PASTOR SCOTT BARBER AUGUST 2021

Focus Forward On Jesus

Don't live life looking through the rear-view mirror.

Stay off the sidewalks! My oldest son turned 15 a couple of months ago. So, of course we have to joke about staying off the sidewalks and over dramatize for fun. All in all, he is doing a great job being cautious and a humble learner. There are, of course, basic instructions about driving that we are teaching which are very applicable to life. "You can only control how you respond to what is in front of you. Check your mirrors, but focus forward. You can't control what happens in your rearview mirror. If you drive focusing on the rearview mirror you will end up hurting yourself and others."

Isn't this true in life!? If we live focusing on our past, on what we have done or haven't done or what has been done to us, then we will end up hurting ourselves or others around us. We need to focus forward and occasionally check our mirrors to make course corrections or changes to keep us moving forward in the right direction. We can only control how we respond to what is in front of us in life. When we focus on the rearview mirror in life we focus on things we cannot change and cannot control to our own harm and potentially others as well.

The apostle Paul picks this up in Philippians 3:12–14:

I don't mean to say that I have already achieved [being like Jesus] or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. 13 No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.

Paul has just finished a passionate declaration of his desire to be like Christ in every way including Christ's sufferings. He declares how all his achievements that he might use to compare with others to make himself feel good or give him identity are just as worthless and repulsive as sewage waste. In addition, in light of how good and perfect Jesus is, Paul also realizes how broken and imperfect he is. Instead of focusing on his failures and on how imperfect he is, he realizes the power and resilience of focusing forward on, focusing who Christ is and what He has done and is doing to change Paul.

We were made for one purpose: Jesus; to know Him, become like Him and Make Him known. We won't be fulfilled, we won't know true joy and contentment until this becomes our purpose. However, he also knows our tendency to live life looking through the rearview mirror. We compulsively find our identity and worth by comparing ourselves against others with either our successes or accomplishments or with our failures and sins.

Like Paul, if we are to realize our purpose and potential, if we are to be successful in this life we must forget what lies behind. However, we cannot merely forget what is behind us without turning our focus elsewhere, that just impossible. We must intentionally focus forward in life or

we will fall back into our instinctive pattern focusing on ourselves and on our past. Let's be clear this not some arbitrary focus, this is not empty humanistic positivity. This is focusing on who Jesus is, what He has already done for you, and what he is doing in you.

- Instead of focusing on what I have done, what I haven't done or what has been done to me, I choose to focus on what Christ has done for me and what he is doing in me. He pulls you and me forward in life with His forgiveness, with His unconditional love, with His glory and majesty.
- Instead of focusing on opportunities I have missed, I choose to focus on opportunities I have in front of me to follow Jesus today and share his love.
- Instead of focusing on what others have said about me, I choose to focus on who He says I am.
- Instead of focusing on how far I have to go, I choose to focus on what Christ is working in me now to make me like Himself
- Instead of focusing on what I can't change or control, I choose to focus forward on being under Christ's control and being changed by Him.

Are you living life looking through your rearview mirror? If so, then people need to stay off the sidewalks. So, let's focus forward on Christ and truly live in this life!

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