

GROWTH + GROUPS

NAVIGATE LIFE TOGETHER

Maranatha Chapel Sermon Based Study Guide SB 06.27.2021

SPEAK – FIX YOUR EYES ON JESUS – Acts 18:18-28

Receiving the Message and Relating to the Study

What insights, principles, or observations stood out to you from this week's message? Discuss with your group.

During a traditional Jewish wedding, a couple makes a vow and says these words (in Hebrew), "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine" (Song of Solomon 6:3). Vows are incredibly meaningful and personal. They provide the contractual commitment which guides the newlyweds through their shared life together and sets the tone for what is to come. In the same way, Paul a converted Nazarite, took a voluntary vow of full commitment to God. As a Jewish Nazarite, he was not to cut his hair, he was to eat no fruit of the vine, and he wasn't to come near a dead body, no matter how close of kin. All this had a spiritual significance. The Nazarite was a picture of one separated to God, one who turned from the pleasures of this world and sought to walk in holiness before God, and one who was undefiled by the spiritual dead world (Numbers 6:1-6). Paul had taken a vow to be a Jewish Nazarite for a number of years. If he had been unfaithful in this, he would have lost the confidence of Jews to whom he sought to present Christ, and so he kept that vow conscientiously. The time had now elapsed, and Paul was free to wear his hair as other men do. So, Paul had the long locks of Naziritism cut off and fixed his eyes Jesus. Let's get into our study...

1. What stood out to you during this week's study?
2. Have you ever made a vow? If so, describe the experience.

Digging Deeper in God's Word: Life Lessons

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 18:18-23

Paul was set apart and fully committed to follow after the will of God in his life. He traveled hundreds of miles spreading the gospel. He went from Ephesus to Caesarea to Jerusalem to Syrian Antioch and then back to Asia Minor to strengthen the disciples and transform the lives of people he encountered. Returning to Jerusalem and the church in Antioch marked the end of his second missionary journey and his departure to Galatia and Phrygia (Asia Minor) was beginning of his third missionary journey. Paul's eyes were completely fixed on Jesus.

1. According to Romans 12:1-2, we are to be "transformed" and "present ourselves a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God". What does it mean to be transformed? (2 Corinthians 5:17). What does it mean to be a living sacrifice (Luke 9:23)?
2. According to 2 Corinthians 10:5, we are to "take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. How does one take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ? (Proverbs 4:23)
3. Read Matthew 14:22-32. What happen when Peter's eyes were fixed on Jesus? What happened when Peter's eyes were not fixed on Jesus, but were fixed on circumstances? Describe a time your eyes were fixed on Jesus. Describe a time your eyes were not fixed on Jesus, but were fixed on circumstances?
4. In Luke 1:74-75, Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, prayed that we "might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life". How is this a beautiful picture of what it means to serve Jesus Christ?
5. Dedicated Christians demonstrate commitment by going places and doing things for the cause of Christ. They act constructively as people committed to fulfilling Christ's plan and purpose in this world. What does it mean to fulfill Christ's plan and purpose in this world? (Matthew 28:19)

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 18:24-28 AND MATTHEW 7:13-14

The term “the way” was used for Christians in the early years of the church. They called Christians “people of the way”. It was a reference to the way of Christian life. The Christian life is a life of constant growth and it is God’s purpose that we grow into full stature and become mature in Christ (2 Peter 3:18). The opposite of a Christian life is a broad way that leads to destruction. The city of Ephesus demonstrated a broad way leading to destruction. The city hosted the Temple of Diana, the goddess of fertility. The temple encouraged sinful customs and followed this false goddess down a path of destruction. Later, another path of destruction was the communist views of Karl Marx. In the book “The Devil Karl Marx”, Paul Kengor points out that “long before Karl Marx was writing about the hell of communism, he was writing about hell” This was often done through demonic poetry. Kengor tallied, the Marxist way of destruction led to a death toll of nearly 100 million in the twentieth century. The Marxist way of destruction was also instilled into his two daughters who later committed suicide.

6. To fix our eyes on sin leads to death (James 1:15). The only way to get rid of this sinful way is to fix your eyes on Jesus. How does fixing our eyes on Jesus rid our sinful ways? (Hebrews 12:1-3)
7. Apollos had been instructed in the way of the Lord, though he knew only of the teachings of John the Baptist. Aquilla and Priscilla then explained to Apollos the way of the Messiah. (Acts 18:25-26). Describe the Christian way of Life (See Appendix).
8. As we fix our eyes on Jesus and move forward, we should not look back. There is no rearview mirror. How does a Christian move forward and persevere (Philippians 3: 13, 14)? Why should a Christian not look back (Luke 9:62)?

Applying God’s Word

What did you learn from this study and how does this personally speak to you? Discuss with your group.

WE’VE GOT TO KEEP OUR EYES FIXED ON JESUS. We need to lock eyes with the One who saved our soul. We have a connection with Jesus and every part of us needs to align with Him. He is the Key and you are the lock. A key serves as security for access to a locked area; only a person having the correct key can open the lock and gain access. Although hard times may come, you should have such a connection with Jesus that you do not waver. You know He’s got you. Your eyes are locked in with His. You have clarity. Your life may not be perfect, and you face difficult circumstances, but you KNOW you belong to Jesus. “I am my beloved’s and He is mine” (Song of Solomon 6:3).

1. We should have such a connection with Jesus that we do not waver. Are your eyes fixed on Jesus where every part of you aligns with Him? What are some areas in your life where you might need to allow Jesus in?
2. The vow of the Nazarite was the vow of full commitment to God. Pastor Ray challenged us to make a vow and keep it for three weeks. Have you identified your 3-week vow with God?
3. When people are totally committed to God, they are people of great strength. There is power in commitment. How will you commit to keeping your vow with God over the next 3 weeks?

PRAYER

Jesus, you are the Way, the Truth and the Life, no one comes to the Father unless they first come through You. Thank You for being our way. Lord, as we deal with the trials and tribulations of life, help us to fix our eyes upon You. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. 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 12:1-3).

Visitation/Restoration in 2021

10 Guidelines for Christian Living

1. Read your Bible daily. Do not be content to skim through a chapter merely to satisfy your conscience. Hide the Word of God in your heart. It comforts, guides, corrects, encourages – all we need is there.
2. Learn the secret of prayer. Prayer is communicating. Every prayer that you pray will be answered. Sometimes that answer may be “Yes” and sometimes “No,” and sometimes it is “Wait,” but nevertheless it will be answered.
3. Rely constantly on the Holy Spirit. We know that the Holy Spirit prays for us (Romans 8), and what a comfort that should be to the weakest of us. Stand aside and let Him take over all the choices and decisions of your life.
4. Attend church regularly. The visible church is Christ’s organization upon earth. Christians need one another, we need to gather together to worship God and nothing can take the place of church attendance.
5. Be a witnessing Christian. We witness in two ways: by life and by word – and the two, where possible, should go hand in hand.
6. Let love be the ruling principle of your life. Jesus said to those who followed Him, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). The greatest demonstration of the fact that we are Christians is that we love one another.
7. Be an obedient Christian. Let Christ have first place in all the choices of your life.
8. Learn how to meet temptation. Temptation is not sin. It is yielding that is sin. Let Christ through the Holy Spirit do the fighting for you.
9. Be a wholesome Christian. Our lives and appearance should commend the Gospel and make it attractive to others.
10. Live above your circumstances. Don’t let your circumstances get you down. Learn to live graciously within them, realizing the Lord Himself is with you.

Guidelines for Christian Living is excerpted from “Peace with God” by Billy Graham, published in 1953, revised and expanded in 1984.