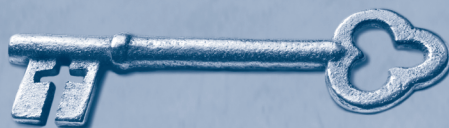


# ACT



## CHAPTER

# 14

## Single-Mindedness

### KEY QUESTION

How do I keep my focus on Jesus  
amidst distractions?

### KEY IDEA

I focus on God and his priorities for my life.

### KEY VERSE

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness,  
and all these things will be given to you as well.

*Matthew 6:33*

## OUR MAP

*To be single-minded means to have one desire that trumps all others. One goal. One focus. From the beginning God made clear that he should be his people's main focus. But this is challenging in a hectic, fast-paced world. It's easy for days, months and even years to get away from us. The spiritual practice of single-mindedness is all about determining our priorities to ensure we are practicing our faith, living out our beliefs and accomplishing God's will for our lives.*

*In this chapter we will be reading Scripture that addresses:*

- *Principles of Single-Mindedness*
- *Profiles of Single-Mindedness*
- *Product of Single-Mindedness*

## PRINCIPLES OF SINGLE-MINDEDNESS

**"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me."**

EXODUS 20:2–3

*In the first of the Ten Commandments, God commanded the Israelites to serve him exclusively because he was worthy of their trust, as he had proved by delivering them from Egypt. Later, just before Moses died and the Israelites entered the promised land, God inspired Moses to remind the people of their single-minded calling.*

*We read this passage in Chapter 1 to reinforce that the God of the Bible is the one true God. Now we will read this powerful text again and hear the call to prioritize our lives around God.*

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As you read the passage below from Deuteronomy 6, look for what God promised to the Israelites if they obeyed the first commandment and kept their covenant with him.

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These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, so that you, your children and their chil-

dren after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. Hear, Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, promised you.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. **These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.**

DEUTERONOMY 6:1–9

*God's people were given the first commandment because they needed to submit fully to his authority and look to him and him only to provide all they needed. In the New Testament, Jesus described the "other gods" we might have in a way that hits close to home.*

**"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

**"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."**

MATTHEW 6:19–24

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What kind of “treasure” keeps us from being single-minded?  
 How can “unhealthy eyes” keep us from being single-minded?  
 Why isn’t it possible to serve two masters?

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*Seeking first God’s kingdom was the apostle Paul’s message as he traveled from city to city teaching people about the gift of salvation and how believers could single-mindedly follow Christ. In many cases, a combative group of religious leaders approached the new churches after Paul had left and tried to undermine his authority and teaching. They boasted about their religious credentials and weighed down Paul’s message with Jewish laws and traditions. This infuriated Paul, who then urged the believers to follow his example in keeping their focus steadfastly on Jesus alone.*

Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh. For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh — though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

**But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things.** I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ — the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ — yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings,

becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. **But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.**

PHILIPPIANS 3:1–14

### PROFILES OF SINGLE-MINDEDNESS

*King Jehoshaphat of the southern kingdom of Judah faced a tremendous challenge. His land was threatened by a hostile army. Rather than being overcome by fear, Jehoshaphat led the people to turn to the Lord with single-minded and wholehearted trust.*

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In the following passage from 2 Chronicles 20, identify the key beliefs in which Jehoshaphat anchors his prayer. How can these key beliefs instill confidence in God's provision and guide our decisions?

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**KEY** The Moabites and Ammonites with some of the Meunites came to wage war against Jehoshaphat.

Some people came and told Jehoshaphat, "A vast army is coming against you from Edom, from the other side of the Dead Sea. It is already in Hazezon Tamar" (that is, En Gedi). Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the LORD, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. The people of Judah came together to seek help from the LORD; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him.

Then Jehoshaphat stood up in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem at the temple of the LORD in the front of the new courtyard and said:

"LORD, the God of our ancestors, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you. Our God, did you not drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your

friend? They have lived in it and have built in it a sanctuary for your Name, saying, 'If calamity comes upon us, whether the sword of judgment, or plague or famine, we will stand in your presence before this temple that bears your Name and will cry out to you in our distress, and you will hear us and save us.'

"But now here are men from Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir, whose territory you would not allow Israel to invade when they came from Egypt; so they turned away from them and did not destroy them. See how they are repaying us by coming to drive us out of the possession you gave us as an inheritance. Our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. **We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.**"

All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the LORD.

Then the Spirit of the LORD came on Jahaziel son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite and descendant of Asaph, as he stood in the assembly.

He said: "Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the LORD says to you: 'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's. Tomorrow march down against them. They will be climbing up by the Pass of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the gorge in the Desert of Jeruel. **You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you, Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you.**'"

Jehoshaphat bowed down with his face to the ground, and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell down in worship before the LORD. Then some Levites from the Kohathites and Korahites stood up and praised the LORD, the God of Israel, with a very loud voice.

Early in the morning they left for the Desert of Tekoa. As they set out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Listen to me, Judah and people of Jerusalem! Have faith in the LORD your God and you will be upheld; have faith in his prophets and you will be successful." After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to

the LORD and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying:

“Give thanks to the LORD,  
for his love endures forever.”

As they began to sing and praise, the LORD set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated. The Ammonites and Moabites rose up against the men from Mount Seir to destroy and annihilate them. After they finished slaughtering the men from Seir, they helped to destroy one another.

When the men of Judah came to the place that overlooks the desert and looked toward the vast army, they saw only dead bodies lying on the ground; no one had escaped. So Jehoshaphat and his men went to carry off their plunder, and they found among them a great amount of equipment and clothing and also articles of value — more than they could take away. There was so much plunder that it took three days to collect it. On the fourth day they assembled in the Valley of Berakah, where they praised the LORD. This is why it is called the Valley of Berakah to this day.

Then, led by Jehoshaphat, all the men of Judah and Jerusalem returned joyfully to Jerusalem, for the LORD had given them cause to rejoice over their enemies. They entered Jerusalem and went to the temple of the LORD with harps and lyres and trumpets.

The fear of God came on all the surrounding kingdoms when they heard how the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel. And the kingdom of Jehoshaphat was at peace, for his God had given him rest on every side.

2 CHRONICLES 20:1–30 

*While Jehoshaphat certainly proved that his focus was on God, Jesus serves as an exemplary model for the type of single-mindedness God had in mind when he announced in the first of his Ten Commandments: “You shall have no other gods before me.” Living out this ancient command, Jesus didn’t make choices based on his desires or anyone else’s expectations. His sole goal was to live according to his Father’s will.*

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light

of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

The Pharisees challenged him, “Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid.”

Jesus answered, “Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going. But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going. You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one. But if I do judge, my decisions are true, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent me. In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true. I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me.”

Then they asked him, “Where is your father?”

“You do not know me or my Father,” Jesus replied. “If you knew me, you would know my Father also.” He spoke these words while teaching in the temple courts near the place where the offerings were put. Yet no one seized him, because his hour had not yet come.

Once more Jesus said to them, “I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come.”

This made the Jews ask, “Will he kill himself? Is that why he says, ‘Where I go, you cannot come’?”

But he continued, “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins.”

“Who are you?” they asked.

“Just what I have been telling you from the beginning,” Jesus replied. “I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is trustworthy, and what I have heard from him I tell the world.”

They did not understand that he was telling them about his Father. **So Jesus said, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.”** Even as he spoke, many believed in him.

JOHN 8:12–30

*Unfortunately, Jesus' disciple Peter had a bit more trouble retaining his single-minded focus when he was distracted. Peter's experience is a good reminder of how we are to think about Jesus, and keep our eyes on him, even when our thoughts get sidetracked or we feel frightened.*

✞ Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.

But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

"Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."

"Come," he said.

**Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"**

Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

MATTHEW 14:22-33 ✞

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Can you list some of the things that distract you from putting God first in your life? What can you do to become more focused on God?

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*Ultimately, the disciples adopted Jesus' bold and unwavering devotion to God and his purposes.*

The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's

Colonnade. No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by impure spirits, and all of them were healed.

Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. "Go, stand in the temple courts," he said, "and tell the people all about this new life."

At daybreak they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people.

When the high priest and his associates arrived, they called together the Sanhedrin — the full assembly of the elders of Israel — and sent to the jail for the apostles. But on arriving at the jail, the officers did not find them there. So they went back and reported, "We found the jail securely locked, with the guards standing at the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside." On hearing this report, the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests were at a loss, wondering what this might lead to.

Then someone came and said, "Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts teaching the people." At that, the captain went with his officers and brought the apostles. They did not use force, because they feared that the people would stone them.

The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood."

**Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than human beings!** The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead — whom you killed by hanging him on a cross. God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he

might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins. We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death. But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while. Then he addressed the Sanhedrin: “Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered. **Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God.**”

His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. **Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.**

ACTS 5:12–42

### PRODUCT OF SINGLE-MINDEDNESS

*Near the end of the book of Deuteronomy—and Moses’ life—the Lord called the Israelites to make a choice: trust and obey his commands or go their own way. Speaking through Moses, God gave this message to his people. And what was the result of the people’s decision? Because they chose obedience, the following seven years were the most fruitful years in Israel’s history—the glory days!*

You yourselves know how we lived in Egypt and how we passed through the countries on the way here. You saw among them

their detestable images and idols of wood and stone, of silver and gold. Make sure there is no man or woman, clan or tribe among you today whose heart turns away from the LORD our God to go and worship the gods of those nations; make sure there is no root among you that produces such bitter poison.

When such a person hears the words of this oath and they invoke a blessing on themselves, thinking, “I will be safe, even though I persist in going my own way,” they will bring disaster on the watered land as well as the dry. The LORD will never be willing to forgive them; his wrath and zeal will burn against them. All the curses written in this book will fall on them, and the LORD will blot out their names from under heaven. The LORD will single them out from all the tribes of Israel for disaster, according to all the curses of the covenant written in this Book of the Law.

Your children who follow you in later generations and foreigners who come from distant lands will see the calamities that have fallen on the land and the diseases with which the LORD has afflicted it. The whole land will be a burning waste of salt and sulfur — nothing planted, nothing sprouting, no vegetation growing on it. It will be like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboyim, which the LORD overthrew in fierce anger. All the nations will ask: “Why has the LORD done this to this land? Why this fierce, burning anger?”

And the answer will be: “It is because this people abandoned the covenant of the LORD, the God of their ancestors, the covenant he made with them when he brought them out of Egypt. They went off and worshiped other gods and bowed down to them, gods they did not know, gods he had not given them. Therefore the LORD’s anger burned against this land, so that he brought on it all the curses written in this book. In furious anger and in great wrath the LORD uprooted them from their land and thrust them into another land, as it is now.”

**The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.**

When all these blessings and curses I have set before you come on you and you take them to heart wherever the LORD your God disperses you among the nations, and when you and your children

return to the LORD your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today, then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you. Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the LORD your God will gather you and bring you back. He will bring you to the land that belonged to your ancestors, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your ancestors. **The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.** The LORD your God will put all these curses on your enemies who hate and persecute you. You will again obey the LORD and follow all his commands I am giving you today. Then the LORD your God will make you most prosperous in all the work of your hands and in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your land. The LORD will again delight in you and make you prosperous, just as he delighted in your ancestors, if you obey the LORD your God and keep his commands and decrees that are written in this Book of the Law and turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, “Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?” Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, “Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?” No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.

See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.

But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You

will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.

**This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.**

DEUTERONOMY 29:16—30:20

*In the New Testament, the apostle Paul also challenged believers to establish a single-minded commitment to God. And with his exhortations came encouraging promises about the fruitful results of such devotion. As it was for the Israelites, so it is with us today: if we single-mindedly focus on Christ and his will for our lives, we will experience our own glory days!*

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God — this is your true and proper worship. **Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.**

ROMANS 12:1–2

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. **Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.** For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

COLOSSIANS 3:1–4

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. **And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.**

COLOSSIANS 3:15–17

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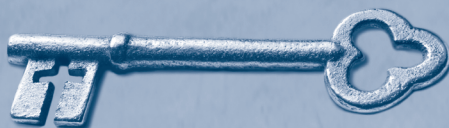
Paul writes, "Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus." What does this admonishment mean to you? Does it change how you prioritize things in your life?

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### WHAT WE BELIEVE

*The practice of single-mindedness is about setting priorities. This involves putting our past decisions and actions behind us and focusing on God's kingdom with help from the Holy Spirit. The Bible presents us with many inspiring profiles of people who have displayed tremendous single-mindedness for God, including King Jehoshaphat in the Old Testament and Jesus in the New Testament. During his early years Peter struggled to "fix his eyes" on Jesus, but later he and the disciples declared with great conviction in the face of persecution, "We must obey God rather than human beings" (Acts 5:29). The product of a life of single-minded determination and focus is an untouchable peace from the hand of the one true God who loves us deeply. Seek first God's kingdom!*

# ACT



## CHAPTER

# 15

## Total Surrender

### KEY QUESTION

How do I cultivate a life of sacrificial service?

### KEY IDEA

I dedicate my life to God's purposes.

### KEY VERSE

I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy,  
to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice,  
holy and pleasing to God — this is  
your true and proper worship.

*Romans 12:1*

## OUR MAP

A genuine decision to follow and obey God is a decision of total surrender. We leave nothing off the negotiation table. We are “all in” as a reasonable response to God being “all in” for us. When God the Father offered up his Son for our redemption, he revealed how valuable we are to him. The gift of salvation was an act of total surrender by our Savior. Are you willing to return the gesture? Are you prepared to surrender your life for his purposes?

Total surrender does not occur without some sacrifice, which is illustrated poignantly through the people and stories of the Bible:

- The Expectation: What God Wants From Us
- Profiles of Total Surrender
- The Cost of Total Surrender
- The Inspiration of Martyrs

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Reflect on the key verse. What do you think it means to offer ourselves as “living sacrifices”? Recalling our study of the practice of worship in Chapter 11, why do you think offering ourselves as a living sacrifice is the true and proper way to worship God?

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### THE EXPECTATION: WHAT GOD WANTS FROM US

God is often referred to in the Old Testament as “jealous.” This passionate description comes out of the language of love, similar to that of a marriage. God is totally committed to us. He, in turn, asks us to be totally committed to him. He will not share our allegiance with anyone or anything else. He made this very clear to the Israelites when he etched the Ten Commandments on the stone tablets. The first three commandments clearly communicate the exclusivity of our relationship with God.

And God spoke all these words:

“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

“You shall have no other gods before me.

“You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. **You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.**

“You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.”

EXODUS 20:1–7

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The first three of the Ten Commandments govern our relationship with God. Why do you think it is important to get in right relationship with God in order to keep the rest of God’s commandments?

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## PROFILES OF TOTAL SURRENDER

*Despite having God’s expectations written in stone, the Israelites failed to remain faithful. After many years of disobedience, the people suffered when God removed his protection. The northern kingdom of Israel was destroyed by the Assyrians, and the southern kingdom of Judah was conquered by the Babylonians. Before Judah was captured, some of the people were carried off in deportations. Along with Daniel, a small group of bright young men—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—were selected from the captives to be trained to serve the king. While in captivity, they were forced to make a crucial choice: worship the one true God or compromise and save their lives. They chose total surrender.*

🔑 King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, sixty cubits high and six cubits wide, and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. He then summoned the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials to come to the dedication of the image he had set up. So the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials assem-

bled for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and they stood before it.

Then the herald loudly proclaimed, “Nations and peoples of every language, this is what you are commanded to do: As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.”

Therefore, as soon as they heard the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp and all kinds of music, all the nations and peoples of every language fell down and worshiped the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

At this time some astrologers came forward and denounced the Jews. They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “May the king live forever! Your Majesty has issued a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music must fall down and worship the image of gold, and that whoever does not fall down and worship will be thrown into a blazing furnace. But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon — Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego — who pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up.”

Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?”

**Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, “King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. But even if he does not, we**

**want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”**

Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. The king’s command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.

Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, “Weren’t there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?”

They replied, “Certainly, Your Majesty.”

He said, “Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.”

Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, “Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!”

So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them.

Then Nebuchadnezzar said, “Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king’s command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God.”

DANIEL 3:1–28 🔑

*About 70 years after the first deportation of Jews to Babylon, the Babylonians were conquered by the Persians. Although King Cyrus of Persia decreed in 538 BC that the Jews could return to Judah, many of them chose not to go home. We know that Esther and her cousin Mordecai stayed in Susa under the rule of the*

*Persian king, Xerxes. When the reigning queen was removed from power, Esther (who kept her Jewish heritage a secret) was selected to replace her. Haman, the king's highest official, hated Mordecai because Mordecai refused to bow down and honor him. As revenge, Haman made plans to kill Mordecai and all the rest of the Jews in Xerxes' kingdom. Like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, Esther had a difficult decision to make: protect her people or protect her position as queen—and perhaps her own life. She chose total surrender.*

King Xerxes honored Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, elevating him and giving him a seat of honor higher than that of all the other nobles. All the royal officials at the king's gate knelt down and paid honor to Haman, for the king had commanded this concerning him. But Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor.

Then the royal officials at the king's gate asked Mordecai, "Why do you disobey the king's command?" Day after day they spoke to him but he refused to comply. Therefore they told Haman about it to see whether Mordecai's behavior would be tolerated, for he had told them he was a Jew.

When Haman saw that Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor, he was enraged. Yet having learned who Mordecai's people were, he scorned the idea of killing only Mordecai. Instead Haman looked for a way to destroy all Mordecai's people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Xerxes.

In the twelfth year of King Xerxes, in the first month, the month of Nisan, the *pur* (that is, the lot) was cast in the presence of Haman to select a day and month. And the lot fell on the twelfth month, the month of Adar.

Then Haman said to King Xerxes, "There is a certain people dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom who keep themselves separate. Their customs are different from those of all other people, and they do not obey the king's laws; it is not in the king's best interest to tolerate them. If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them, and I will give ten thousand talents of silver to the king's administrators for the royal treasury."

So the king took his signet ring from his finger and gave it to

Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. “Keep the money,” the king said to Haman, “and do with the people as you please.”

Then on the thirteenth day of the first month the royal secretaries were summoned. They wrote out in the script of each province and in the language of each people all Haman’s orders to the king’s satraps, the governors of the various provinces and the nobles of the various peoples. These were written in the name of King Xerxes himself and sealed with his own ring. Dispatches were sent by couriers to all the king’s provinces with the order to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews — young and old, women and children — on a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods. A copy of the text of the edict was to be issued as law in every province and made known to the people of every nationality so they would be ready for that day.

The couriers went out, spurred on by the king’s command, and the edict was issued in the citadel of Susa. The king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Susa was bewildered.

When Mordecai learned of all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the city, wailing loudly and bitterly. But he went only as far as the king’s gate, because no one clothed in sackcloth was allowed to enter it. In every province to which the edict and order of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing. Many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

When Esther’s eunuchs and female attendants came and told her about Mordecai, she was in great distress. She sent clothes for him to put on instead of his sackcloth, but he would not accept them. Then Esther summoned Hathak, one of the king’s eunuchs assigned to attend her, and ordered him to find out what was troubling Mordecai and why.

So Hathak went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king’s gate. Mordecai told him everything that had happened to him, including the exact amount of money Haman had promised to pay into the royal treasury for the destruction of the Jews. He also gave him a copy of the text of the edict for their annihilation, which had been published in Susa, to show to Esther

and explain it to her, and he told him to instruct her to go into the king's presence to beg for mercy and plead with him for her people.

Hathak went back and reported to Esther what Mordecai had said. Then she instructed him to say to Mordecai, "All the king's officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that they be put to death unless the king extends the gold scepter to them and spares their lives. But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king."

When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?"

Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: **"Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."**

ESTHER 3:1—4:16

### THE COST OF TOTAL SURRENDER

*A commitment to surrender completely to God's purposes is easy to say but hard to do. Jesus made this clear to his disciples and never masked the harsh reality they would encounter or the impact it would have on their lives. He also never shied away from difficult conversations, as is obvious from his interactions with Peter regarding the disciple's betrayal before Jesus' death. Through Peter's story, we learn that the cost of total surrender can sometimes feel like it's too much to bear.*

**Then [Jesus] said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self? Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of**

**Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.”** LUKE 9:23–26

A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. You are those who have stood by me in my trials. And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”

But he replied, “Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.”

Jesus answered, “I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me.”

Then Jesus asked them, “When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?”

“Nothing,” they answered.

He said to them, “But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don’t have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one. It is written: ‘And he was numbered with the transgressors’; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment.”

The disciples said, “See, Lord, here are two swords.”

“That’s enough!” he replied.

Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. On reaching the place, he said to them, “Pray that you will not fall into temptation.” He withdrew about a stone’s throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him.

And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. “Why are you sleeping?” he asked them. “Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.”

While he was still speaking a crowd came up, and the man who was called Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him, but Jesus asked him, “Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?”

When Jesus’ followers saw what was going to happen, they said, “Lord, should we strike with our swords?” And one of them struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear.

But Jesus answered, “No more of this!” And he touched the man’s ear and healed him.

Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard, and the elders, who had come for him, “Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come with swords and clubs? Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on me. But this is your hour — when darkness reigns.”

Then seizing him, they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest. Peter followed at a distance. And when some there had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them. A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, “This man was with him.”

But he denied it. “Woman, I don’t know him,” he said.

A little later someone else saw him and said, “You also are one of them.”

“Man, I am not!” Peter replied.

About an hour later another asserted, “Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean.”

Peter replied, “Man, I don’t know what you’re talking about!” Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: “Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times.” And he went outside and wept bitterly.

LUKE 22:24–62

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What did Jesus mean when he instructed the disciples to “take up their cross daily”? Why does Jesus say this is a wise decision to make?

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### THE INSPIRATION OF MARTYRS

*Despite his betrayal, Peter was graciously given a second chance to prove he was totally surrendered to God’s purposes. After Jesus’ resurrection, Jesus forgave and reinstated Peter to a leadership position. Peter boldly lived out his faith and later in his life, according to ancient tradition, was crucified upside down—perhaps because he didn’t feel worthy of dying as Christ had.*

*Stephen, however, was the first martyr of the Christian church. Although he was not an apostle, he played an important role in the early church by ministering to the widows in Jerusalem and by being a powerful witness for Jesus. His death triggered a tidal wave of persecution in the first century. Stephen was brought before the Sanhedrin where he courageously put his total surrender to God on display.*

🔑 Now Stephen, a man full of God’s grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people. Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called) — Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia — who began to argue with Stephen. But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke.

Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, “We have heard Stephen speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God.”

So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin. They produced false witnesses, who testified, “This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us.”

All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

Then the high priest asked Stephen, “Are these charges true?”

To this he replied: “Brothers and fathers, listen to me! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Harran. ‘Leave your country and your people,’ God said, ‘and go to the land I will show you.’

“So he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Harran. After the death of his father, God sent him to this land where you are now living. He gave him no inheritance here, not even enough ground to set his foot on. But God promised him that he and his descendants after him would possess the land, even though at that time Abraham had no child. God spoke to him in this way: ‘For four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves,’ God said, ‘and afterward they will come out of that country and worship me in this place.’ Then he gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision. And Abraham became the father of Isaac and circumcised him eight days after his birth. Later Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob became the father of the twelve patriarchs.

“Because the patriarchs were jealous of Joseph, they sold him as a slave into Egypt. But God was with him and rescued him from all his troubles. He gave Joseph wisdom and enabled him to gain the goodwill of Pharaoh king of Egypt. So Pharaoh made him ruler over Egypt and all his palace.

“Then a famine struck all Egypt and Canaan, bringing great suffering, and our ancestors could not find food. When Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our forefathers on their first visit. On their second visit, Joseph told his brothers who he was, and Pharaoh learned about Joseph’s family. After this, Joseph sent for his father Jacob and his whole family, seventy-five in all. Then Jacob went down to Egypt, where he and our ancestors died. Their bodies were brought back to Shechem and placed in the tomb that Abraham had bought from the sons of Hamor at Shechem for a certain sum of money.

“As the time drew near for God to fulfill his promise to Abraham, the number of our people in Egypt had greatly increased. Then ‘a new king, to whom Joseph meant nothing, came to power in Egypt.’ He dealt treacherously with our people and oppressed

our ancestors by forcing them to throw out their newborn babies so that they would die.

“At that time Moses was born, and he was no ordinary child. For three months he was cared for by his family. When he was placed outside, Pharaoh’s daughter took him and brought him up as her own son. Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action.

“When Moses was forty years old, he decided to visit his own people, the Israelites. He saw one of them being mistreated by an Egyptian, so he went to his defense and avenged him by killing the Egyptian. Moses thought that his own people would realize that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not. The next day Moses came upon two Israelites who were fighting. He tried to reconcile them by saying, ‘Men, you are brothers; why do you want to hurt each other?’

“But the man who was mistreating the other pushed Moses aside and said, ‘Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?’ When Moses heard this, he fled to Midian, where he settled as a foreigner and had two sons.

“After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai. When he saw this, he was amazed at the sight. As he went over to get a closer look, he heard the Lord say: ‘I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.’ Moses trembled with fear and did not dare to look.

“Then the Lord said to him, ‘Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. I have indeed seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their groaning and have come down to set them free. Now come, I will send you back to Egypt.’

“This is the same Moses they had rejected with the words, ‘Who made you ruler and judge?’ He was sent to be their ruler and deliverer by God himself, through the angel who appeared to him in the bush. He led them out of Egypt and performed wonders and signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea and for forty years in the wilderness.

“This is the Moses who told the Israelites, ‘God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your own people.’ He was in the

assembly in the wilderness, with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our ancestors; and he received living words to pass on to us.

“But our ancestors refused to obey him. Instead, they rejected him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt. They told Aaron, ‘Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who led us out of Egypt — we don’t know what has happened to him!’ That was the time they made an idol in the form of a calf. They brought sacrifices to it and reveled in what their own hands had made. But God turned away from them and gave them over to the worship of the sun, moon and stars. This agrees with what is written in the book of the prophets:

“‘Did you bring me sacrifices and offerings  
forty years in the wilderness, people of Israel?  
You have taken up the tabernacle of Molek  
and the star of your god Rephan,  
the idols you made to worship.  
Therefore I will send you into exile’ beyond Babylon.

“Our ancestors had the tabernacle of the covenant law with them in the wilderness. It had been made as God directed Moses, according to the pattern he had seen. After receiving the tabernacle, our ancestors under Joshua brought it with them when they took the land from the nations God drove out before them. It remained in the land until the time of David, who enjoyed God’s favor and asked that he might provide a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. But it was Solomon who built a house for him.

“However, the Most High does not live in houses made by human hands. As the prophet says:

“‘Heaven is my throne,  
and the earth is my footstool.  
What kind of house will you build for me?  
says the Lord.  
Or where will my resting place be?  
Has not my hand made all these things?’

“You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the

Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him — you who have received the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it.”

**When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. “Look,” he said, “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”**

At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.

**While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then he fell on his knees and cried out, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he fell asleep.**

ACTS 6:8—7:60 

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Compare and contrast Stephen’s story with the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Compare Stephen’s death with the death of Christ. Which detail of each story best exemplifies total surrender?

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*Another martyr of the early church was the apostle Paul. While traveling throughout the Roman Empire on numerous missionary journeys, Paul formed countless close friendships and made some serious enemies. Knowing that severe hardship was in his future, he met with many believers for what he assumed would be one last time.*

Through the Spirit they urged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. When it was time to leave, we left and continued on our way. All of them, including wives and children, accompanied us out of the city, and there on the beach we knelt to pray. After saying goodbye to each other, we went aboard the ship, and they returned home.

We continued our voyage from Tyre and landed at Ptolemais, where we greeted the brothers and sisters and stayed with them for a day. Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven. He had four unmarried daughters who prophesied.

After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.'"

When we heard this, we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. **Then Paul answered, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." When he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said, "The Lord's will be done."**

ACTS 21:4–14

*The predictions made by Agabus were correct. Paul was arrested in Jerusalem and spent a couple of years imprisoned in Caesarea before finally being shipped to Rome, where he remained under house arrest for a couple more years. Jesus promised that when we lose our life we will truly find it. Surrendering his life for God's purposes was Paul's ultimate goal. Will you make it yours?*

Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.

Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. **I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.**

PHILIPPIANS 1:12–21

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Which of the stories you've read inspires you the most? Why?

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### WHAT WE BELIEVE

*The decision to dedicate our lives to God's purposes is a daily practice. Jesus instructed his disciples to take up their cross daily and follow him. God expects this kind of dedication from us as well. Part of this dedication includes being a "living sacrifice," which requires a daily decision to crawl up on the altar. Thankfully, we can find inspiration from the stories of many courageous and faithful followers of God, including Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Esther, Stephen and Paul. We can also find comfort from the life of Peter, who denied Jesus three times in some of the most critical moments of Jesus' life. Because of the unconditional love he had for him, Jesus restored Peter. And he will do the same for us!*