

Two of **ONE** – Spiritual focus requires knowing yourself

Creating and maintaining spiritual focus is not all that different from maintaining ones physical, mental or social health. The goal should not be to simply modify a few behaviors so we can meet some pre-established norm that some person at some time inserted into our current culture. It is not about simple avoidance of certain ideas or the acceptance of others and the restraints that both may place on us. Rather, health on any level must be viewed as a lifelong process of personal growth and development that matures over time. We shouldn't "lose weight," but become a healthier person. The difference between the two is not only perception, but the determining factor between success and failure. The person trying to lose weight will have a far greater chance of failure than the person trying to become a healthier person. Why? It is simple. Weight loss may not now match who you are as a person, but if you grow to be a healthy person with healthy habits then a healthy weight will be natural.

Spirituality is no different. If you want to have spiritual focus it is not a matter of simply doing things that others have listed as being spiritual activities. Rather, it is about a personalized effort to grow and mature into a spiritual person who is able to see the world through the lenses of spirituality. One can never hope to have spiritual focus unless they are a spiritual person. Thus, not only is the journey toward spiritual focus a process rather than a checklist, but also begins with you as an individual. In other words, you must know yourself and how God has designed you to tap into spirituality.

Paul said it this way. "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on **to make it my own** (bold mine – E.B.), because Christ Jesus has made me his own" (Php 3:12). In the very next verse Paul says, "Brothers I do not consider that I have made it my own." The difference between the two verses is startling. At first they appear to be contradictory, until one realizes that the first "make it my own" is a personal statement about his past, most likely referring to his conversion; whereas the second statement speaks of a state of being not yet attained. In other words, Paul had begun the process of making spirituality his own, but had yet to reach the state of being of the mature child of God. Let's note a few things about this.

First, Paul took it personally, just as Christ, at his conversion, had personally taken hold of Him and fundamentally changed his perspective and thus his behavior. Second, Paul understood that spirituality was a personal process of development, which begins at conversion and moves toward a goal. Third, that goal was the state of being of maturity or the perfection of Christ.

How spiritually focused you become will depend greatly on your thoughts, disposition, perspectives and willingness to act responsibly. No one can be spiritual for you. That being said, we begin pressing forward with self examination. As Paul said in 2 Cor. 13:5, "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves..."

One Assignment

This week you will be filling out a journal about you, affirming and focusing on the positive things about your faith, talents and abilities. Read the journal instructions and keep it each day. Note: We are assuming that you have become a Christian. If not or you don't know, just ask us how you may begin.