

SERMON FOR BELIEVE SERIES #14/SINGLE MINDEDNESS

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To the story of Jehoshaphat, I would like to add the following scripture:

Matthew 6:25–34 (NLT) —25 “That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn’t life more than food, and your body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds. They don’t plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren’t you far more valuable to him than they are? 27 Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? 28 “And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don’t work or make their clothing, 29 yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. 30 And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith? 31 “So don’t worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ 32 These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. 33 Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. 34 “So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.

If you noticed, “**Worry**” is used six times in this section.

The word worry in the Greek means “**to divide the mind.**”

You might not have understood what single-mindedness was all about when you read it in the bulletin as the topic for today. Now it might make a bit more sense?

Yes.

Worry divides our mind. It shifts our focus. It breeds anxiety and fear so that we can’t think straight. Sometimes we can’t even function because our mind is so divided.

So what can you do? Well, one man tried something unique. He had so many worries that he decided to hire someone else to do his worrying for him. He found a guy who agreed to the job for \$200,000 a year. His first day on the job he looked at his employer’s bank account and asked, “How are you going to pay me \$200,000?” His new boss said, “That’s your worry.”

Seriously though, remember when you were a kid? When you were four years old did you worry about how the car in the shop was going to get paid for? When you were six did you get anxious about whether you’d have clothes for school? When you were eight were you concerned about how you were going to pay the mortgage? *Why not?* You had a father or mother who was taking care of that for you.

Well, you do now, too.

Jesus is saying here, “**Focus on God.** Be single-minded in looking to him. He has it under control, and he is taking care of you.”

The story we saw in the video is the story of King Jehoshaphat. He was one of the good kings – few and far between – who was leading the Israelites. There is so much good stuff in

this story that we could talk about, but the thing I want to emphasize is how KJ stayed focused on God instead of worrying.
This was an amazing discipline.
I don't think I could have done it.
Think about it.

Judah is being threatened by enemies who have come from the other side of the Dead Sea. The people all came together to seek God. They begin by remembering God's faithfulness in the past. What he has done to deliver his people, and the promises he made to them. Then King Jehoshaphat stood before the people and humbly said,

"We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you."

Let's say that together (unison repeat)

There are many times that I do not what to do

And those are the times I can get distracted, preoccupied, and lose focus

I am trying to figure out a problem all on my own, and I am not single-minded

Instead I am worrying, and many thoughts are flying into my mind

This is a good verse to memorize folks. The next time you do not know what to do, or life just seems overwhelming say this verse aloud

"I do not know what to do, but my eyes are on you"

(This may be the best scripture verse you'll hear all morning. Jehoshaphat was a good leader who authentically and transparently led his people to focus on God.)

³ All the people of Judah, stood there before the Lord. ¹⁴ Then the Spirit of the Lord came on Jahaziel (the prophet)...¹⁵ 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....** ¹⁷ **Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the Lord will be with you.'**"

Great story. Maybe today you are fighting some kind of a battle, and God is telling you to let up and not to be afraid. Maybe God is speaking you to now and saying, "I've got this, do not be discouraged – this is my battle. I will fight for you."

Now let me say a few things about this. This isn't about us just throwing up our hands and giving up. There are certain specific things we need to do so that we can have singleness of mind.

What helps with worry and preoccupation is to first of all...

1. Set your sights on what is known rather than unknown

Colossians 3:1–4 (NLT) — 1 Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. 2 Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. 3 For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.

We spend so much time worrying about the *unknown*. We tend to focus on what could possibly *maybe* happen instead of what we know has already happened.

I *don't* know:

What college or graduate school I might get into...
How I'm going to pay for that repair... Where my next job is coming from...
Where I am going to live...What other people are thinking and what they will
decide...
When or how I'm going to die.

I DO know:

- **GOD is BIGGER and more POWERFUL than any trial, temptation, situation, or circumstance.**
- **GOD loves me, is concerned about my life, and He is *always with me*.**

That is the reality!

Corrie Ten Boom: "Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God."
(repeat and say it together)

The second thing that can help with preoccupation and worry is to
2 Simplify your life

Try to decide what is most important to you. What are the priorities? Often these will be relationships. Our relationship to God and to other significant people.

Then try to eliminate all the rest. Friends, it is okay to say "no" to things. (I am shooting myself in the foot here)

Just because many of us have good hearts, we don't have to feel obligated to do everything. We *shouldn't* do everything. As far as the church is concerned, we may be taking away ministry opportunities from people who would really benefit from being more involved.

And also, I find that people do best when they operate out of their areas of giftedness and do one or two things really well.

It is okay to say no when someone asks you to do something Let's practice. On the count of three, 1,2,3

NO!

See...its easy. We can go back to that verse from Jehoshaphat

"I do not know what to do, but my eyes are on you."

YOU show me God how to best serve the church. Serve my family and community.

YOU show me God where YOU are calling me.

I am not going to go my way and ask you to bless *my agenda*.

Ever done that? I sure have. Launch headlong into a program or some kind of a commitment and then realize...oops. I didn't pray about that one first. Uh...sorry God. Could you please bless what I am doing over here on my own steam that I decided to do out of guilt or obligation without focussing my eyes on you first?

We don't ask God to bless what we have decided to do, we ask God to help us decide to do, what he wants to bless. (twice)

I have learned, and am still learning, the importance of seeking God's face always, in everything. Of making that a number 1 priority. Of saying, I do not know what to do, but my eyes are on you!

I am going to look at you, Lord, first, before I do anything; and find out from YOU what I say YES to

I am going to seek you first before I agree to do everything else.

CS Lewis said it this way..."When we put first things first (*seeking God's kingdom*), we get the second things thrown in. When we put second things first, we lose the first things entirely."

Single-mindedness is helped when we set our priorities – when we simplify. Throw out the rest of the stuff....

Someone had an interesting way of operationalizing simplicity in putting God first....using the five fingers on your hand...

Sometimes it helps me in putting God first and simplifying...

Give God....

- 1. The first hour of every day**
- 2. The first day of every week**
- 3. The first tenth of every dollar**
- 4. The first consideration in any decision**
- 5. The first place in your heart**

Simplify. Put God first. Be Single- Minded. Know What Your Priorities Are. It is okay to say NO.

So this weeks challenge...**Say NO to at least one thing this week without feeling guilty about it.** And let me know what it was. (Just don't say "NO" to me)

3. Trust God To Meet Your Needs

That's what Jehoshaphat did that was so amazing

He trusted God to take care of his people, even when those two angry armies were advancing against them. So scary!

Jesus said...Don't worry little flock...Do the flowers worry? No! They don't...and look at the beautiful colors that God clothes them in. Of how much more value are you than the flowers...Trust God to Meet Your Needs.

Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these other things will be added to you as well.

I did a little service in a nursing home recently

And I used this scripture about the flowers

And I brought a vase of flowers, and I asked the people

As I gave them each a flower

Do flowers worry? Is it because they worry that they are so beautiful and have such lovely colors

And everyone was saying, "No...flowers don't worry..."

And then one lady piped up, "They most certainly do worry!"

And I said "What do you mean flowers worry?"
And she said, "My name is Rose. I am a flower, and I worry all the time."

Well clearly I didn't make my point to that person
I just stood there and said, "Oh"...so much for that object lesson
But I didn't WORRY about it...

Probably one of the most moving stories I have heard recently about Single Mindedness, Priorities and Trusting God is the story of GRACE HOUSE.

It's a story that Tim and I heard when we were on Cape Cod during my sabbatical time; we stayed there with Tim's cousin Steve – who is a psychologist – psychology runs in the family – we've got a gene for it...we need to isolate it and analyze it...

Now Steve has given me permission to share this with you today; I told him I was going to do that...he was all for it...

Steve, or Dr Steve as he is called by his clients, established a home in Lynn MA that catered to homeless men who were on the streets due to alcohol related issues

Most of them also had a history of being in prison; they were released from prison and often had nowhere to go. Grace House gave them a second chance at life, and they were so grateful to be able to live there.

Steve had felt God's call to establish this house, after he himself had worked in the prisons, as a psychologist, and seen what these men had been through – terrible sorts of abuse as you can imagine as children – to land them where they were

His desire was that these men find hope again, once they were released.
And so Steve, who had been raised as a Christian, pursued God's call on his life and single-mindedly created Grace House.

It was his passion

It was his focus

It was his call...and it was definitely of God because

Grace House was full before Dr Steve could even bat an eye,

He had a system figured out where the men were accountable to each other. There was no house monitor to oversee the men, but they were required to do certain things and live in community.

And as I said, be accountable to one another...

And it worked!

It was so successful that even representatives from the White House came out to see the program to learn how to rehabilitate former inmates.

All this good stuff is going on and then Dr Steve finds himself in the midst of his own personal crisis - a terrible divorce and custody battle. The details of this are very complicated – so I am not going to explain everything. But the point is...

He loses just about everything in the divorce, including his house.
He has nowhere to live, he thinks he will never see his child again.
And he is destitute.

And he told me, he said, “Kim, I was kneeling in prayer by the couch where I was staying, and I cried out to God. I was desperate. I had lost everything. There was so much financial pressure on me to sell Grace house. I could have gotten a lot of money for that piece of real estate...and even though my mind said I should sell it...when I prayed about it... I couldn't do it. God did not want me to send those men out into the street...the message to me from God was **“Trust Me”**.”

My life was in shambles and I had nowhere to turn. But Grace House was God's project and he did not want me to destroy it. God had called me to build that house for those men. Better *I* was out of a place to live, then they. But I didn't know where to turn or what to do. I simply waited, and tried the best I knew how to trust God. It was really hard.

And then Dr Steve got a call.

It was from one of the Grace House residents – a former inmate.

“Dr. Steve,” the caller said. “This is Chuck.”

“Yeah Chuck, what's up?”

“You know the guys and I, we've been talking. And we've cleared out a room here for ya, here at Grace House cause we think its high time you came and lived with us.

You've helped us so much. You've counseled us through some rough patches. You've been there for us Doc. And we know you have been having a tough time, so now its our turn. We want to say thank you for all you've done. Come over here Doc. Come live with us.”

And Dr Steve did just that. He went and lived at Grace House. The very place he had created as a home for others, became his home as well. He has since purchased his own home – its a lovely place - and he is able now to see his child.

But the trust he had in God, came because he was focused first on God's agenda not his own – and the priority of keeping Grace House - trumped his own comfort, and financial security. That is single-minded purpose.

That is seeking first the kingdom of God

It isn't easy.

Life isn't always fair.

Many things come in to deter and distract us and tempt us away from what is most important
But when we seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness all these other things will indeed be added unto us.

And we can trust God completely.

Single-mindedness. So important. Let's say that verse one more time from the story of King Jehoshaphat.

“We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you”.

Let us pray.

Keep our eyes on you. Keep our priorities straight. Help us to simplify and do what really matters. To seek first your kingdom and your righteousness. May that be always #1 for us. Amen