



"If God commands something, that is the highest evidence that we can do it."

—Charles G. Finney

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Consequences of a Wrong Focus (Part One)

Most of us realize how important it is to concentrate on what we are doing. We have to focus on our work, our study, our conversations, our driving, and so forth, so that we get the most out of them—and in the last case, so that we arrive home alive! Clearly, there are benefits that come from maintaining a proper focus, but it is equally plain that there are consequences for having a wrong focus. While a right focus leads to progress, endurance, and growth, the consequences of a wrong focus is a downward spiral that can end tragically.

As a young boy, I was walking home from school one day when I heard the sound of a small airplane flying nearby. Being somewhat fascinated with airplanes, I naturally stopped to look for it in the sky. I saw it coming just over the tree line in the distance. I stood watching it fly around for a few moments, and as I turned to walk away, there was sudden silence in the sky. Returning my eyes to the sky, to my surprise the plane was falling in a slow downward spiral. As I lost sight of it beyond the trees, I braced myself to hear the crash.

Instead, I heard the noise of the engine firing up again. I thought, "Whoa! How lucky!" Seconds later, the plane came flying up. It circled a few times, and then the engine died again! Down it went in that slow downward spiral. So much for lucky! As I lost sight of it beyond the tree line, I was certain it would crash this time, but I heard the engine come back to life. Back up it came, flew around a couple of times, lost power, and down it went for a third time. In fact, this continued for a half-dozen times or more. My younger self thought, "How stupid! What if the engine didn't start back up? It would crash into the earth, and the pilot would face certain death!" This descending spiral illustrates what happens to us when we lose our focus, when we take our eyes off [Jesus Christ](#) and the [Kingdom of God](#) and focus on our problems instead. If we fail to restart our engines, that is, regain our focus, we will invariably crash in flames into [the world](#). In other words, we will begin to be controlled by the spirit of the world, which will lead to certain separation from [God](#), and if allowed to continue, spiritual death.

As an aid to memory, we will use four words that begin with *c* to explain the downward spiral when we are focusing on the wrong things:

1. *Concentration* on the problem;
2. *Contempt* for the problem;
3. *Contrivance* to solve the problem; and
4. *Conformed* or *controlled* by the world, which invariably occurs rather than our being transformed into the image of Christ.

[I Corinthians 10:6](#), 11 teach us that God's dealings with the people of Israel form examples or analogies for us to use today to avoid their mistakes. Here are these statements in context:

Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into [Moses](#) in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as

they also lusted. . . . Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. ([1 Corinthians 10:1-6](#), 11-13)

Paul concludes his teaching here by saying that God is always aware of what we are going through and that He never leaves nor forsakes us ([Hebrews 13:5](#)), even though it may sometimes seem that way. Despite how difficult our trials may be, we can never let ourselves forget that God is faithfully working with us through it all.

With that in mind, recall that the first step of the downward spiral is concentrating on the problem. [Numbers 11:1-2](#), 4-6, alluded to in [1 Corinthians 10:6](#), provides an example from the Israelites in the wilderness:

Now when the people complained, it displeased the LORD; for the LORD heard it, and His anger was aroused. So the fire of the LORD burned among them, and consumed some in the outskirts of the camp. Then the people cried out to Moses, and when Moses prayed to the LORD, the fire was quenched. . . . Now the [mixed multitude](#) who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: "Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!"

When we start complaining about our plight, it is usually because our focus has shifted off the Lord, who is leading us, and on to our problems, the details of life. It usually involves something we think we ought to have but do not, so we feel as if He has given us the short end of the stick.

For instance, we think that, if we only had more money, a bigger home, a better job, better health, or some other advantage, we would be happy or

satisfied. So we focus on these details and become ungrateful, dissatisfied, and bored with spiritual things or God's purposes. God tells us in [Deuteronomy 8:3-5](#) that He fed Israel with the manna to discipline and train them that they might understand an important truth, but their focus and desire was only on what they were missing and thought they needed. So they complained.

Manna was a perfect food and precisely what Israel needed at that time. It was healthy and nutritious, and it was not a boring food, since it could be cooked in a number of ways. It also provided a perfect spiritual picture, as it represented Jesus Christ, the true Bread from heaven ([John 6:32-35](#)), the only One who can give abundant life. But because the people were focused elsewhere, because they thought happiness came from things like cucumbers and garlic, they considered it to be boring and became ungrateful for this miraculous food from God.

Do we get bored with the spiritual food we receive? Think about it. Complaining is generally the first sign that we are concentrating on our problems or the details of life rather than on Jesus Christ and His Kingdom. We will take up the other consequences of a wrong focus in Part Two.

- Clyde Finklea

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Don't Lose Your Focus!](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Because most prophetic interpretations have not been correct, we must exercise caution when attempting to interpret prophecy. As we have erred regarding Israel's identity, Protestants have erred by assuming that the tiny nation of Israel is end-time Israel. The greater church of God does not have all the pieces about the identity of Israel, the nature of the Laodicean and Philadelphian churches, whether the Beast will rise from a feeble and decrepit Europe, who the King of the South is, etc. The apostle Paul urged that we get our focus more balanced, emphasizing love over prophetic

correctness, not remaining indifferent to what Christ deemed important, and learning how to use our trials to persevere and grow. Christ warned His disciples as He ascended not to obsess over prophecy. Instead, we need to persevere, not becoming distracted, and diligently submit to the Word of God.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Focus on the Father](#)

by Staff

Instead of some grandiose title, God asks us to call Him simply "Father." We have human fathers, church fathers and since our calling, a spiritual Father. The role of father is very important!

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