FOCUS IS REQUIRED

RMPP EVENT 50

SCHEDULE

Welcome and Zoom Etiquette

Opening Prayer

Speaker Introduction
Steve Odera

Message
Focus is Required

Q&A and Discussion

Breakout Rooms

CONTENTS

Event Synopsis and Scripture **4**
Questions to Consider, Reading **5**

What Does the Bible Say? 8
Focus Leads to Stability 14
Focus Leads to Peace 20
Focus Leads to Direction 26
Spiritual Discipline Contributes to Focus 32
What Might You Lose? 38
Looking Back… 44

Fast and Pray For Your Wife **48**
Introducing RMPP **50**
Meet the Team **56**
2026-27 Event Dates, Zoom ID, Resources **58**
Connect Groups **60**

FOCUS IS REQUIRED

SYNOPSIS

When it comes to our faith, it can be all too easy to lose focus on who God calls us to be and what God asks of us. What can you learn about the importance of spiritual focus, and how can it help you stay rooted in God's Word and firm in your walk with Christ?

| *Event Messages and Devotional Booklets*

You can find RMPP messages and devotional booklets from events past and present at: https://themstproject.com/events

| *Scripture Reflection*

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. - *Hebrews 12:1-2*

EVENT 50

| *Questions to Consider*

What occupies first place in my life? Is it God or have personal goals quietly taken His place?

Why does our faith weaken when our understanding of God's character becomes blurred?

Why do we say that worry competes with faith?

How can fellowship strengthen our focus?

| *Book Recommendations*

Anxious for Nothing: Finding Calm in a Chaotic World
Max Lucado

The Purpose Driven Life
Rick Warren

NOTES

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

DEVOTIONAL 1

What does the Bible say about the necessity for us to have spiritual focus and not get distracted?

Remember the night when the disciples were crossing the Sea of Galilee and saw Jesus walking on the water? Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, if it's really You, command me to come to you on the water." Jesus replied, "Come!" So, Peter climbed over the edge of the boat and began walking on the water! But after a while, Peter took his eyes off Jesus and noticed the wind and the waves. Becoming fearful, he began to sink and cried out to Jesus, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him. "You of little faith!" Jesus chided. "Why did you doubt? (Matthew 14:28-31)." How do we keep our eyes focused on Jesus?

Read God's Word. "Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You (Psalm 119:11)." Even better, memorize God's Word so you can easily recall it when you need it. God's Word is the "sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17)." If

you are familiar with God's Word, the Holy Spirit can recall it as a weapon against your enemies.

Read other Christian writings. Always read the inspired Word of God first (2 Timothy 3:16-17), and then you can also be greatly blessed by the writings of other Christians. A wealth of material has been written by Christian brothers and sisters who have gone before you. If you take the time to read a variety of Christian authors, you will find some with whom you will especially connect. Some of my favorite writers are Andrew Murray, Watchman Nee, and A.W. Tozer.

Pray. Christianity is a personal relationship between you and God. Take the time to get to know your Heavenly Father. "This is eternal life, knowing the only true God and Jesus Christ… (John 17:3)."

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6–7)."

"Pray without ceasing! In everything give thanks, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus (1 Thessalonians 5:17-18)."

Listen to the Holy Spirit. As you mature in your Christian faith and walk, you will learn to listen to the Holy Spirit's voice. "Your ears will hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it…' (Isaiah 30:21)." You may not hear audible words. Still, you sense that God is speaking to you, sometimes using Scripture, sometimes circumstances, and sometimes speaking through another believer. Ask Holy Spirit to guide you - then listen and expect a response.

Support one another. As you walk through life with Jesus, you'll notice that others are walking with you. You don't need to walk alone! Support one another, share your struggles with one another, encourage one another, pray for one another, hold each other accountable, and praise God together. "Speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord. Always give thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God our Father. And be subject to one another in the fear (reverence) of Christ (Ephesians 5:19-21)."

Praise God! Always praise God for who He is, what He is doing in you, and what He is doing around you. "This is the LORD's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes! (Psalm 118:23)."

Avoid distractions. You know the specific things which tempt you and distract you from fixing your eyes on Jesus. As much as it depends upon you, avoid these things. Remember, you can do all things through Christ who gives you strength (Philippians 4:13). And if you "walk by the Spirit," you will not carry out ungodly desires (Galatians 5:16).

Be intentional. No good thing is achieved without trying! Be intentional in your desire to walk with Jesus. Have a plan and ask Holy Spirit to help you keep your eyes fixed upon Jesus.

When I served in the U.S. Navy, there were times I felt seasick, especially when I had to go below deck during heavy seas. Things around me looked stationary, but the ship was moving up and down and rolling from side to side. What usually helped me was going topside and looking out to the horizon. The sea might be heaving, but the horizon was fixed and steady. Similarly, in our spiritual life, when we encounter difficulties, it helps not to focus so much on ourselves and our challenges but fix our eyes upon Jesus. He will always remain steady and faithful during the storms of life.

Roger is retired and living in Bangkok, Thailand, with his wife Siri. They are members of Evangelical Church of Bangkok, and both are involved in discipleship ministry.

| *Discussion Questions*

1. What is your greatest challenge to "fixing your eyes upon Jesus"? How can you better address this challenge?
2. How can you make God's Word a more effective resource in your life?
3. How can you develop your relationship with the Holy Spirit?

| *Read*

Hebrews 12:1-3

| *Reflect on This*

"The more you focus on Christ and His love for you, the stronger your faith will become." - *Billy Graham*

FOCUS LEADS TO STABILITY

DEVOTIONAL 2

How does focus in your spiritual walk bring about stability in your faith?

How does focus on your spiritual walk bring about stability in your faith and life?

Life has a way of pulling our attention in a hundred different directions. Worries about tomorrow, regrets from yesterday, distractions of today, and the constant noise of the world can leave our minds exhausted and unstable, our hearts unsettled, and our focus shifting away from Christ to self-soothing of the flesh.

Scripture invites us to a different way of living—not by trying harder to control every thought, but by surrendering to the Holy Spirit and abiding and listening to Him. We are promised in John 15:4-5: "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither

can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."

Abiding and focusing describe the practice of settling your attention into the present moment. Whether applied to spiritual connection, productivity, or mindfulness, it involves intentionally resting in the present and eliminating distractions to keep your mind grounded. Hebrews 12:1-3 compares the Christian life to a long-distance race. It calls believers to "throw off everything that hinders," keep their "eyes focused on Jesus," and run with "perseverance" rather than giving up, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith.

When I lose focus or get distracted, typically it's because I'm relying on my flesh to guide me, whether it's doom scrolling, overanalyzing, overworking, or being stuck in a loop of 'what ifs'. When I realize this, I remind myself that what we focus on becomes who we are. My faith brings me back to abiding in the Holy Spirit, to surrender and allow the Holy Spirit to direct me.

The enemy rarely needs to destroy our faith outright; often, distraction is enough. When our minds become consumed

by fear, worry, conflict, busyness, or unresolved pain, our attention is diverted from Christ and from the people He has called us to love. A pastor's wife once told me the acronym for BUSY is **B**urdened **U**nder **S**atan's **Y**olk. If the devil can't make us sin, he can make us busy.

Both internal and external forces can draw our attention away from what matters most by causing us to focus on distractions rather than on God and His truth.

Internally, our past hurts, habits, and hang-ups can consume our thoughts. We may find ourselves overanalyzing situations, replaying conversations, trying to correct the past, or justifying our actions. These internal struggles can become so loud that they shift our focus away from God's grace and His purpose for our lives.

Externally, people, places, circumstances, and the pressures of everyday life can also compete for our attention. Whether intentional or not, these distractions can create a wedge in two important relationships: vertically, between God and us, and horizontally, between our family, friends, and community.

The invitation to a routine of studying Scripture is to continually redirect our focus. Rather than allowing our thoughts to be controlled by past wounds or present

distractions, we are called to fix our eyes on Jesus, seek first His Kingdom, and allow His truth to shape our perspective. As we intentionally refocus on Him, the distractions lose their power, our relationships are strengthened, our stability is strengthened, and we experience the peace that comes from walking closely with God. For example:

• Read scripture and listen to specific truths for your day.

• Pray and then listen and write down what you hear.

• Record answered prayers and thank God.

• Notice how God is making your life more stable.

James Klassen is the founder and Director of Next Steps Psychotherapy in Ontario, Canada. James became a psychotherapist out of the desire to help others in a Biblical professional way after struggling with addiction for over three decades and has achieved sobriety for over a decade by God's

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| *Discussion Questions*

1. What has been occupying my thoughts recently that distracts me? Are my thoughts leading me toward Christ or away from Him?
2. What worries do I need to surrender to God today to help me refocus? Which thoughts can be replaced with God's truth?
3. What would it look like to seek God's Kingdom first and throughout the day?

| *Read*

Psalm 139:23–24

| *Reflect on This*

"Thank God that He does give us difficult things to do! His salvation is a joyous thing, but it is also something that requires bravery, courage, and holiness. It tests us for all we are worth. Jesus is 'bringing many sons to glory' (Hebrews 2:10), and God will not shield us from the requirements of sonship. God's grace produces men and women with a strong family likeness to Jesus Christ, not pampered, spoiled weaklings." - *My Utmost For His Highest*

FOCUS LEADS TO PEACE

DEVOTIONAL 3

How does focus in your spiritual walk bring about perfect peace in your faith?

"But what if we started a whole marketing department and YOU could be the one who runs it?"

Things just got more interesting...I had been traveling around Southeast Asia for almost six weeks at this point, and this was my third time back in Bangkok. The only reason I found myself at this small, bilingual Christian school in the suburbs of Nonthaburi was that a friend from college was working there. The first time I visited, it seemed like a one-off remark that I could take the place of the school photographer who was leaving.

Well, for starters, I told my friend, "I'm not a photographer... I'm a videographer." I'm not sure why that kind of comment always puts me on the defensive, but it does. Videographers do NOT like being called photographers. "And I don't want a

new job! Besides, Thailand is way too hot for me." Being born and raised in the temperate Pacific Northwest, with its idyllic setting, four seasons and mild summers that rarely broke 90 degrees, had given me a bit of a soft underbelly. I tended to wilt at the first sign of mugginess. "I'll think about it," I said. My trip was coming to an end, and I really had to give the idea of moving halfway around the world more thought. I was faced with a serious decision.

Self-employed at 28 and still living with my parents meant there were minimal logistical ties to wrap up. I had no corporate salaried job with a 401k to give up, no apartment to pack up and move out of. The true variable of this life-altering decision came down to one thing: peace. Did I feel a true, settled peace that this was the next step God wanted me to take? We often mistake peace for a feeling: a calm stomach, an absence of nerves, or a serene environment. But that's not the peace Scripture describes when Isaiah writes:

"You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you." (Isaiah 26:3)

The Hebrew word for steadfast implies being "leaned upon" or "sustained." Perfect peace isn't the byproduct of a life that feels safe and predictable;

it is the byproduct of a mind intentionally stayed on God. It's a matter of spiritual focus and attention.

As author Winifred Gallagher famously observed, our reality is ultimately the total of whatever we choose to pay attention to. Because our focus actively shapes our perspective, guarding where we fix our mental gaze is the most important choice we make every day.

God rarely provides us with bright neon signs or a "this is the optimal decision for your life, or your money-back" guarantee for our future. Instead, He invites us into a daily spiritual walk of alignment. In Hebrews, this is described in racing language: "fixing our eyes on Jesus (Hebrews 12:2)." A runner who constantly glances at the crowd, who obsesses over the mechanics of their technique, or who stares at their own feet will inevitably trip or lose the race entirely. Peace is found when we stop trying to perfectly predict the outcome and start consistently fixing our gaze at the Creator.

Four weeks later, when the email came through offering me the job, I did feel that peace. Not the absence of nervousness. I was still the guy who "couldn't handle" the heat, and this was a country where 90 degrees and near-100 percent humidity are basically the year-round reality. But I did have a settled confidence that this was where God was leading. So, I went.

What I couldn't have known is that saying yes to that peace and moving 7,000 miles from home would lead me to the love of my life. She is now my wife, and we have two kids I can't imagine life without.

To be honest, I'm still learning how to hold my focus on Him and live in the abundant reality of the perfect peace that He promised, day in and day out. In the spiritual walk, anxiety and peace cannot occupy the same space. Anxiety demands to see the whole road ahead. Peace simply requires that our eyes remain fixed on 'The One' who is leading the way.

Joseph is a freelance creative director and editor. He spent 4 ½ years living in Bangkok, Thailand but now resides in Ferndale, Washington, USA, with his wife and their two kids.

| *Discussion Questions*

1. What is currently competing hardest for your mental real estate? How does shifting your focus from your circumstances to God's character change the level of anxiety you feel?
2. Isaiah ties perfect peace to a steadfast mind, one that repeatedly returns to God. What is a practical "trigger" you can use this week to prompt yourself to pause, refocus, and lean your mind back on Him when tension rises?
3. Think of a decision or uncertainty you are facing right now. Are you waiting for total clarity before you step out, or are you actively practicing trust in the middle of the fog? What does "fixing your eyes on Jesus" look like in this exact situation?

| *Read*

Isaiah 26:3

| *Reflect on This*

"We must look to Christ, not to our own faith, nor to our own feelings, for our peace." - *John Newton*

FOCUS LEADS TO DIRECTION

DEVOTIONAL 4

How does focus in your spiritual walk bring about direction and clarity in your faith?

Read: Hebrews 12:1-2

We live in an era called the "attention economy." Every app on your phone, every billboard on your commute, and every email in your inbox fights a silent, aggressive war for your attention. But the most dangerous distractions we face aren't always the loud, external ones. Often, they are the quiet, internal drifts—the subtle shifts in our hearts where we slowly lose focus on who God has called us to be and what He has asked us to do. In the Christian walk, a drift is rarely a sudden cliff we jump off; it's a slow, barely noticeable current that carries us away while we think we are standing still. That is why focus is not just a helpful spiritual habit. It is an absolute requirement.

The Anatomy of Distraction: In Hebrews 12, the author gives us a vivid picture of a runner preparing for a race. To run effectively, the runner must do two things: throw off hindrances and fix their eyes on the finish line. Notice that the author

mentions throwing off "everything that hinders" and "the sin that so easily entangles." A hindrance isn't always a blatant sin. Sometimes, a hindrance is a good thing that has taken the place of the best thing. It could be an overcommitment to work, an obsession with the news, or a relationship that subtly pulls you away from God's standards. When our eyes wander from the path God has marked out, we begin to stumble. We start leaning on our own understanding instead of His Word. Our values slowly shift to align with the culture around us rather than the kingdom of God. This is why focus is required. It is an active, daily guard against spiritual drift.

Rooted in the Word: How do we maintain this focus in a world of constant noise? The answer lies in the beautiful imagery of Psalm 119:105: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." In ancient times, a traveler used a small oil lamp that provided just enough light to see the very next step. The lamp didn't illuminate the entire forest or reveal what was waiting miles ahead; it simply kept the traveler from tripping over the immediate obstacle. Staying focused requires us to return to that lamp. In Matthew 14, the disciples find themselves in a boat, tossed by waves in the middle of the night. Jesus comes to them walking on the water. Boldly, Peter asks to join Him, steps out of the boat, and begins walking on the water too. But then, the text notes a dramatic shift: "But when he saw the wind, he

was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, 'Lord, save me!' Matthew 14:30 (ESV)." Peter didn't start sinking because the wind suddenly started blowing; the storm had been raging the entire time. He started sinking because he changed what he was looking at. He took his eyes off the Creator of the waves and focused instead on the chaos of the waves. Losing focus makes us forget our true identity. When we aren't actively anchoring our minds in God's truth, we naturally start looking to the world to tell us who we are. We begin to believe we are defined by our productivity, our relationship status, our bank accounts, or our failures. God's Word offers a radically different anchor. It tells us we are chosen, redeemed, set apart, and deeply loved. But keeping hold of that identity requires an intentional, daily narrowing of our vision.

Anchored in the Word: The Practice of Focus: How do we build this kind of focus in a world designed to distract us? It starts with how we interact with Scripture. We often treat reading the Bible like checking a box on a to-do list. We skim a chapter, close the app, and immediately jump into our day. But true spiritual focus requires meditation, which simply means lingering on a truth long enough for it to sink from our heads into our hearts. Consider the promise of Psalm 1: "He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. (Psalm 1:3 ESV)" The secret to that tree's stability

isn't its strength; it's in its location. It is planted right next to the water, constantly drinking from the source. When we focus on God's Word daily, we are planting our roots deep into the only source of life that won't run dry when the dry seasons of life hit. Focus is not just about quiet contemplation; it translates directly into how we walk. When your eyes are fixed straight ahead, your steps are naturally firmer and straighter. When you are constantly looking left and right—comparing your life to others, chasing every new trend, or worrying about tomorrow—your steps become unsteady. To stay firm in your walk with Christ, focus on the next step He has put in front of you. You don't need to figure out the next five years; you just need to obey what He is asking of you today.

Reflect On: What is one 'good thing' in my life right now that might be acting as a weight—draining my spiritual focus, energy, or time? When I feel myself starting to 'sink' like Peter, what specific external noise or circumstance is usually stealing my eyes off Christ? Am I trying to demand a searchlight for the next five years, or am I willing to trust God's 'lamp' for just today's next right step?

Born in Thailand and now based in Tennessee, USA, Noum approaches everyday life through the lens of cross-cultural mission. Guided by his wife and inspired by his son, he seeks to reflect the love and character of God the Father in all he does.

| *Discussion Questions*

1. What is one 'good thing' in my life right now that might actually be acting as a weight—draining my spiritual focus, energy, or time?
2. When I feel myself starting to 'sink' like Peter, what specific external noise or circumstance is usually stealing my eyes off Christ?
3. Am I trying to demand a searchlight for the next five years, or am I willing to trust God's 'lamp' for just today's next right step?

| *Read*

Colossians 3:2

| *Reflect on This*

"Faith is the gaze of a soul upon a saving God." - *A.W. Tozer*

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE CONTRIBUTES TO FOCUS

DEVOTIONAL 5

How do spiritual disciplines contribute to focus in your spiritual walk and overall faith?

One of the greatest challenges in our walk with Jesus is maintaining our focus. Think about this: how many things do you have to focus on in your life right now? Family? School? Children? Work? The list goes on and on. However, we live in a world filled with constant distractions via phones, social media, busy schedules, and endless responsibilities. While these things are not necessarily wrong, they can slowly pull our attention away from the One who deserves to be first in our lives. A focused spiritual life does not happen by accident; it is cultivated through intentional spiritual discipline. We will be focusing on what intentional means in our walk with Him. Hebrews 12:1–2 says, "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."

What is the writer of Hebrews telling us? It does not simply tell us to look at Jesus occasionally (or when we feel obligated to). He tells us to keep our eyes fixed on Him. That kind of focus requires daily choices and consistent habits that keep our hearts centered on God. One of the greatest lessons the Lord has taught me came through something very simple and practical. I realized that if I truly wanted God to be first in my life, then He should be the first thing I do each day. I committed myself to reading my Bible every morning, but I had to answer a question: How long should I start with? Instead of setting an unrealistic goal, I decided to begin with just five minutes. My reasoning was like starting a physical workout routine. No one walks into a gym for the first time and immediately lifts the heaviest weights or runs a marathon. You begin with what you can do consistently, and over time those muscles become stronger. I realized spiritual discipline works the same way. Five minutes became ten. Ten minutes gradually became thirty. As I remained consistent, my desire to spend time with the Lord continued to grow. Today, by God's grace, my mornings regularly include about one to one-and-a-half hours of prayer and Bible reading. The amazing part is not simply the amount of time I spend with God. That was never the goal. The greatest blessing has been seeing how God has transformed my relationship with Him. As I continued to "flex" this spiritual muscle, my love for His Word deepened,

my prayer life became richer, and I experienced growth in my relationship with God in ways I never could have imagined, and we've only just begun! Jesus modeled this kind of discipline. Luke 5:16 tells us, "But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed." If Jesus intentionally made time to be alone with the Father, how much more do we need regular times to quiet our hearts before God? Seriously, if Jesus did it, so should we! Spiritual disciplines like prayer, Bible reading, worship, fasting, and meditating on God's Word do not earn God's love or acceptance. We are saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Instead, these disciplines position our hearts to hear His voice, know His character, and become more like Him. They help us keep our attention on Jesus rather than being consumed by the distractions around us. Boy, do we ALL need this focus on Him today! Psalm 119:105 reminds us, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." God's Word provides direction when life becomes confusing. Prayer aligns our hearts with His will. Worship shifts our focus from our circumstances to God's greatness. As these disciplines become part of our daily lives, we begin to think differently, respond differently, and trust God more fully. One lesson I have learned is that consistency matters more than intensity. Spiritual growth often comes through faithfully meeting with God, day after day. Small acts of obedience, repeated over time, produce lasting transformation.

Just as physical strength develops through consistent exercise, spiritual maturity develops through consistent time with the Lord. A seed does not become a tree overnight. It takes time and the right environment for it to become mighty. If you are struggling to develop a daily time with God, start where you are. Maybe it is five minutes. Maybe it is ten. The important thing is not how long you spend with God, but that you consistently spend time with Him. Allow Him to grow both your discipline and your desire. The goal is knowing Jesus more deeply and becoming more like Him. As we faithfully seek Him each day, our focus becomes clearer, our faith becomes stronger, and our lives will increasingly reflect the One on whom we have fixed our eyes.

Let's pray: *Father, please help us have laser focus on Your Word, Jesus. In whatever capacity that we can take to start reading Your Word, help us start small and grow us from there. A little here, a little there is what we need for You to grow us spiritually into who we will be within Your Kingdom. Help us be more like Jesus. Amen.*

Dr. Frank Ritz has a Doctorate of Physician Assistant Studies who has served in healthcare for over 16 years with a passion for both medicine and ministry. He has been happily married to his wife, Jackie, for 18 years and is the proud father of two wonderful teenage basketball players. When he is not caring for patients or serving his congregation, he enjoys beekeeping in Central Florida.

| *Discussion Questions*

1. What distractions in my life are competing for my attention and keeping me from fully fixing my eyes on Jesus?
2. What is one small spiritual discipline I can begin today that will help me grow closer to God?
3. Am I viewing time with God as an obligation, or as an opportunity to deepen my relationship with Him?

| *Read*

1 Corinthians 9:25

| *Reflect on This*

"No spiritual discipline is more important than the intake of God's Word." - *Donald S. Whitney*

WHAT MIGHT YOU LOSE?

DEVOTIONAL 6

What might you lose in your walk with Christ if you lose spiritual focus?

Keeping your eyes on God and His kingdom purpose and goal is essential for a successful spiritual life; nevertheless, it is a challenge. Having walked with God and served Him for the past 35-plus years, I would be lying if I said that keeping your focus on God and prioritizing your time, resources, and energy for His kingdom purpose is easy. I've read about it, preached it, and tried to live it as best I could; nevertheless, it is not easy. However, to live the Christian life that is pleasing to God, there is no other way but to keep your eyes on God and seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. It's one of the most basic teachings of Scripture that we know to follow, but if we are honest with ourselves, we often allow distractions to steer us away from what is really important. The good news is that walking the narrow road of the kingdom while fixing your eyes on Jesus is possible through the help of the Holy Spirit.

What do you lose when you lose your focus on God?

First, you lose self-control, self-discipline, and direction. Solomon observed, "Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint (Proverbs 29:18)." Vision and dreams keep you grounded, disciplined, and motivated. They become your source of energy to say "no" to the things that do not contribute to fulfilling your vision and "yes" to the things that do. They help you prioritize your time, energy, and resources toward what matters for the future. Vision is what helps you wake up in the morning and endure hardships throughout the day. If you lose your vision and focus on God, you lose all of that—motivation, energy, hope, joy, and the power to resist temptation. There is a new counterculture movement in China among Gen Z and millennials called 'tang ping', which literally translates as "lying flat." A related term is 'bai lan', which means "let it rot." Many young Chinese people are "lying flat" and "letting it rot" because of the lack of job opportunities and poor socioeconomic conditions in China. Many college graduates cannot find jobs, regardless of how hard they try. As a result, they have lost their vision, hope, and dreams of getting married, raising families, and pursuing their aspirations. Consequently, they have lost their motivation, energy, and reason to live productive lives. They choose to simply " lie flat and let it rot."

As Christians, if we fail to look to Jesus and maintain our spiritual lives, we too will, by default, "lie flat and let it rot."

That is simply the inevitable consequence.

Second, if you lose your focus on God, you lose your reward in heaven. Jesus told a parable about three servants to whom their master entrusted talents according to each one's ability so that they could produce a return. When the master returned from his journey, he required an account of how they had used the talents. The first and second servants invested what they had been given and earned twice as much. They kept their eyes on the goal and worked diligently. As a result, the master rewarded both for their faithfulness. However, the third servant buried his talent, did nothing with it, and produced no return. He neglected the purpose, responsibility, and opportunity that had been entrusted to him. Consequently, the master rebuked him as a wicked and lazy servant. Not only did he receive no reward, but he was also cast into outer darkness. This parable teaches us that the same will happen to those who lose their vision and focus on God and the work He has called them to do.

Third, if you fail to keep your eyes on God, you will lose your peace. The prophet Isiah discovered the secret to living a peaceful and stable life. He said, "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You" (Isaiah 26:3). True and lasting peace cannot be achieved through mindfulness, career success, material possessions, or even relationships with loved ones. Genuine, lasting, heavenly peace comes from God alone.

In the book of Revelation, John saw a vision of heaven: "Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city." (Revelation 22:1-2) The river flowing from the throne of God and filling the entire city was the river of life—the very life of God Himself—full of heavenly peace, serenity, and calmness that washes away every worry, fear, and anxiety.

Such is the result for those whose minds and hearts are fixed on the Lord. From Him comes heavenly peace that surpasses all understanding, reasoning, and circumstances. However, when we begin to look to other things instead of keeping our eyes on God, we forfeit the costly heavenly peace that can't be replaced with anything else. If we keep our eyes on God and stay in the center of His will, there is no reason to worry or be afraid of anything. His blessings and peace will surround us. However, if we fail to do so, we lose everything. Therefore, let us all strive to be like Paul the apostle and "press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:13)."

Scott is a career missionary to Thailand evangelizing, planting churches and teaching at the local Bible college.

| *Discussion Questions*

1. What are some distractions that keep you from gazing upon God?
2. What can you do you get rid of those distractions?
3. What are some spiritual practices you can do in order to restore your relationship with God?

| *Read*

2 Chronicles 26:5

| *Reflect on This*

"When we lift our inward eyes to gaze upon God we are sure to meet friendly eyes gazing back at us…when the eyes of the soul looking out meet the eyes of God looking in, heaven has begun right here on this earth." - *A.W. Tozer*

LOOKING BACK...

DEVOTIONALS 1-6

During this connect group cycle, we pray that you have been challenged, encouraged, and inspired as you pursue greater sexual purity, spiritual wholeness, and Christlike maturity in your life. We want to encourage you to now take some time to reflect on the last six devotionals and see how you can consistently apply the many truths that have been shared and that you have learned in your life.

Devotional 1

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life? Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

Devotional 2

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life? Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

Devotional 3

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life? Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

Devotional 4

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life? Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

Devotional 5

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life? Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

Devotional 6

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life? Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

FAST AND PRAY FOR YOUR WIFE

Each month, we encourage you to set aside a time to fast and pray for your wife (or future wife) for one or all of the following points. As husbands (or future husbands) commit to praying and fasting for their wives, we will see a significant spiritual breakthrough and a spiritual legacy created.

Serve Her

My wife is not a project I need to work on or change; instead, I want to serve her better as her husband, lover, and friend.

Love Her

I want to love and support my wife better so that our marriage reflects Christ's love for the Church.

Honor Her

I want to honor my wife's emotions better by being a safe place where she can freely share her feelings without my trying to solve every problem.

Respect Her

I want to respect my wife better by learning to appreciate the unique talents, gifts, and perspectives she has. Couples should complement one another and not compete with each other.

Listen to Her

I want to be a better listener. I want to listen to my wife with my heart and not just my ears.

INTRODUCING RMPP

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

| *What Is RMPP?*

Real Men Pursuing Purity (RMPP) is a community of men who are committed to growing in integrity, purity and wholeness through relevant teachings, accountability, mentoring and honest dialogue. You might not be sure that you really need to be part of a community like this because you don't struggle with compulsive addictions or sexual sin. While it is very important for many men to focus primarily on resisting sexual temptation and sin, we want to inspire and challenge you to pursue more. Although growing in purity is a big part of the vision for RMPP, it's much more than that. It's also learning about deep-rooted insecurities, developing proper work boundaries, embracing our identity in Christ, confronting fears and anxiety, expressing ourselves emotionally in a healthy way, and pursuing holiness in a safe environment with like-minded brothers. We believe that when we invite Him into these areas, He will extend His healing hand and bring about wholeness. Max Lucado says this very well.

EST. 2014

"Our Savior kneels down and gazes upon the darkest acts of our lives. But rather than recoil in horror, he reaches out in kindness and says, "I can clean that if you want."

We are men who are not willing to settle for a life of spiritual mediocrity. We choose to relentlessly pursue greater depths of purity and wholeness for ourselves and for our families. Welcome to the RMPP community.

| *How does RMPP support the local church?*

RMPP does not intend to replace or represent a church; it only creates a safe place for men who want to stay active in their own church community. When a man joins the RMPP community he joins other like-minded men who desire to pursue greater spiritual growth and Christ-likeness. He is choosing to walk out in greater honesty and vulnerability. He is choosing to pursue purity in all aspects of his life. Aspects such as deep-rooted insecurities, developing proper work

boundaries, embracing our identity in Christ, confronting fears and anxiety, expressing ourselves emotionally in a healthy way, and pursuing holiness in a safe environment.

We then pray that as these men grow in greater maturity that they would influence their families. That they would impact their communities and their work places, and that they would be an example for other men in their home church. We believe that as men take hold of the awesome and holy call to live lives that reflect Christ, that the church will be inspired and the world will take notice.

| *What happens next?*

If you have ever attended a men's retreat, you probably remember being deeply impacted by worship, challenged by teaching, and being in community with many men who shared your excitement and enthusiasm for growth and change. A few weeks or months down the road, the gathering became a distant memory as you settled back into the routines of daily life. We don't want to create just another mountain top experience. We are committed to creating a long-term mentoring relationship for everyone who attends an event. That is why you are holding this devotional book in your hands. As you flip through these pages you will see that there devotionals with corresponding

questions. Each devotional is meant to solidify the teaching of the event by encouraging and challenging you, as well as helping to stimulate discussion through thought provoking questions, verses and quotes.

| *Who writes the devotionals?*

Christian men from around the world have written these devotionals and have overcome real issues in their life through God's grace, goodness, mercy and love. We hope and pray that their testimonies and stories inspire, challenge and point you to Christ.

| *What are RMPP connect groups?*

RMPP connect groups are a safe place for men to pursue both purity and wholeness within an environment of peer support and encouragement. The journey to greater purity and wholeness is a journey that involves inviting other men to walk alongside of you. It is a place where you can share your prayer requests, victories, and struggles and where you can be heard, prayed for and challenged to grow in all areas of life. A connect group is designed to be a support system for you for as long as you want.

During your time in a connect group you will be:

***Challenged*:** You will be challenged to grow in your love for Biblical truth. The men in your group will challenge you to grow in your knowledge and application of God's Word thereby enabling you to stand firm in the midst of life's trials.

***Encouraged*:** You will be encouraged to persevere when life, work, and numerous responsibilities may seem overwhelming. The men in your group will support you through prayer, encouragement and a listening ear.

***Inspired*:** You will be inspired to pursue greater spiritual growth and Christ-likeness. While pursuing Christ-likeness may not always be easy, it will also be worth it. The men in your group will be there to inspire you on that journey.

***Accountable*:** The men in your group, as well as your group leader, will support you and hold you accountable as you pursue greater freedom and victory. Be assured that whatever you share in your group will be strictly confidential.

| *When are the events held?*

RMPP events are held online 4x a year in February, May, August, and November.

| *Who can attend?*

RMPP events are open to all men worldwide.

| *What about privacy?*

Because of the sensitive nature of RMPP events, video or audio recording by participants is not allowed. Also, details of personal testimonies are not to be published via email, social media, or in any other form. Thank you for contributing to a safe and secure environment that helps build honesty and vulnerability.

| *Who started RMPP?*

Real Men Pursuing Purity was founded in 2014 and is an initiative of The MST Project.

MEET THE TEAM

THE MST GLOBAL BOARD

Christian Lenty is the founder and director of The MST Project, a ministry that seeks to mentor men into a pursuit of sexual purity, spiritual wholeness, and Christlike maturity. Christian has lived in Thailand for over 21 years and resides in Bangkok with his wife.

Rex DeKoning is the 60-year old husband and father of a large family. A former nurse and pastor, he now works in Thailand with New Counseling Service as a counselor. Rex has experienced great healing of addictive behaviors after he confessed everything and began to live an accountable life. Rex is highly motivated to inspire other men to seek out a mentor, as it has helped him to walk freely, build honesty and vulnerability.

Nick Chilver is married and is part of a blended family containing 6 children. He is grateful for the people God has brought into his life and across his path. And as he continues to learn to better reflect Him, it is his prayer that God will grant

him the privilege of helping others on the path to freedom and into the Light. He resides in Thailand with his wife.

Mike B. Wood is married to his wonderful wife of 28 years. He is a Pastoral Counselor in the area of sexual recovery therapy. He is a man in process, passionate about bringing men together to share life together. This is where we study God's Word together and share the challenges we face. This inspires us to accept what God has freely given us: His love, mercy, grace and acceptance. He and his wife have lived in Thailand for 18 years.

Steve Odera has been happily married to Liz for the last 43 years and they have two wonderful adult children. After serving as a pastor in Bangkok, Thailand, for seven years, Steve returned to his native Kenya in 2023, where he and Liz are involved in the family enrichment ministry – their sweet spot - in their local church.

EVENT DATES AND RESOURCES

WE'RE HERE TO HELP

| *2026 and 2027 Event Dates and Zoom ID*

Mark your calendars, plan to attend, and invite a friend to one or all of the events below.

Event 51, Dependancy is Required: November 21, 2026
Event 52: February 20, 2027
Event 53: May 15, 2027
Event 54: August 21, 2027
Event 55: November 20, 2027

Zoom ID for all events: 561 433 8821

| *The Pursuit of Purity*

The book, The Pursuit of Purity, is meant to transform the way you think and live, putting you on a lifetime path of purity and wholeness leading to consistent victory.

***W*:** themstproject.com/pursuit-of-purity
***E*:** hello@themstproject.com

THANK YOU

| *With Gratitude*

We would like say thank you to the following for their contribution to RMPP.

Financial Donors

Thank you for generously providing funding that allows for RMPP events, seminars, and translation of materials.

Devotional Authors

Thank you for writing devotionals that inspire, encourage and challenge each of us to pursue greater sexual purity, spiritual wholeness and Christlike maturity.

| *Scriptural Oversight Team*

RMPP has a Scriptural Oversight Team consisting of several pastors from local churches that review all devotionals for theological integrity.

CONNECT GROUPS

RMPP connect groups are a safe place for men to pursue sexual purity, spiritual wholeness, and Christlike maturity within an environment of peer support, encouragement, and accountability.

Connect groups are held worldwide on a weekly basis. To inquire about joining a group or to find out more information please email **hello@themstproject.com**.

If you are interested in starting an RMPP connect group at your church, men's ministry, Bible study, college group, etc., please contact us. We'd love to support you and have the resources to help you.

JOIN ONE
TODAY!

AUGUST 2026