

Focused Living Process

“Life on Mission” Series - Mosaic Chapel – Fall 2020

Over the course of our “Living on Mission” series, you’ll have the opportunity to process your own life and calling through this Focused Living Process. It’s a tool I’ve used myself and found very helpful in clarifying where I’ve been, how my story contributes to who I am, and setting a vision and intentional plan for living out my calling.

The purpose of the Focused Living Process:

- To discover how God has been at work in your life. This is about you and your development, and discovering God’s work in your past and who He has made you to be.
- To give you a process for living more intentionally.
- To experience a fresh surrender to God’s will. Abandoning all that you are to God so that nothing blocks you from living the life He means for you to live.

The Focused Living Process is in three steps. We’ll do one step each month throughout this series, to give you time to consider and reflect on each step. The three steps of the Focused Living Process include:

Step 1 – Assessing the Past: Creating Your Time-Line

By creating a time-line of your life, you get to see how the events of your life have shaped and informed the person you are today. From your time-line and reflection on the lessons God has taught you, you will identify a set of life values. These values are the core assumptions and convictions which guide your behavior and decisions on a daily basis.

Step 2 – Discovering the Future: Capturing God’s Vision for Your Future

The events and lessons of your past have not only been God’s tools to shape your life, they are guideposts that inform your future. Vision is a word picture that captures the future from God’s perspective. In Step 2, we write personal values, calling and vision statements.

Step 3 – Implementing Your Calling: Living Intentionally

When you understand the life and ministry God has created you for, you gain the ability to live, grow, and minister intentionally. In Step 3, we consider adjustments we can make to better align the aspects of our life with our values, calling and vision.



Step 1 – Assessing the Past: Creating Your Time-Line

Materials needed:

Poster board

Two colors of post-it notes

Journal or notebook for writing down your thoughts and reflections.

Clarity for the future is found through perspective on God's work in your past. Most people believe their lives are commonplace. It is not until one takes an in-depth look at their life, that they begin to recognize God's sovereign work. We develop perspective by taking a journey back through the pages of our lives. Some of these pages contain moments in joy and other moments are riddled with painful and hurtful entries. Yet **ALL** the pages are seasoned with God's grace, lessons and presence. Perspective begins with writing your story.

Use your poster board and post-it notes to create a timeline of your life. If you'd like, you can use one color for positive experiences, and the other color for negative experiences. Here are some helps as you begin:

- Include key people who have impacted and influenced your life.
- Record events and experiences that have shaped who you are today.
- Include circumstances affecting your life and direction, note positive and negative.

Examples:

- People: parents, friends, family, teachers, mentors, bosses, pastors, etc.
- Events: graduation, marriage, change jobs, moving, etc.
- Circumstances: challenges, promotions, team experiences, adventures, conflicts, etc.

Biblical reflection: What Scriptures has God used to give focus, purpose, and direction to your life in the past? List those verses and summarize the insight you gained from each verse. You can do this on post-it notes and add them to the timeline, write them on the back of your poster board in a journal.

Share: If you're starting this activity as part of a Group, take time at the end to share some parts of your story with the Group. Consider sharing one highlight (positive experience) and one lowlight (negative experience) that has shaped who you are. This is a great opportunity to get to know others in a new way, and help them know you, too.

Identify Values: Values are guiding principles that inform our beliefs and decisions. Take time to reflect on your story and the Bible passages that God has used in your life. What values have you developed over the years? Write these out, either in your journal or your poster board. Bring these before God, considering each one in turn. Which values are in line with the heart and character of God? Are there any values that you may need to let God speak into and adjust?



Step 2 – Personal Values, Vision and Calling Statements

Group Format for Step 2

1. Begin your group by reading the Biblical Purpose, and doing verse review and reflection together. Involve the group by taking turns reading the Scriptures.
2. Take 20-30 minutes and work individually on the Personal Values, Vision Statement and Calling Statement.
3. Come back together and share where you're at in the process.

NOTE: It's likely this process will take more time than we have allotted in a Home Group. Be sure to let people know this. You could also forgo worship this week, and for the Scripture reading and observations with the kids for your worship time. Let people know it's okay to not finish in Group. The goal is to start giving personal attention to these topics.

Biblical Purpose:

Living a focused life with kingdom influence begins with a sure foundation. A study of key Scriptures helps reveal our reason for existence as individuals. The biblical foundation of your life is like true north, the point of reference by which all things are measured.

Review these familiar verses and summarize the insights they provide regarding the question of purpose for a believer's life.¹

Matt. 22:37-40

Matt. 28:18-20

John 15:1-11

John 13:34-35

Romans 12:1-2

Col. 2:6-7

1 Cor. 12:12-20

Reflection on your study: Based upon your reflection on these Scriptures, answer these questions as a means to help you begin to think through God's purpose for your life:

- Why do I exist as a person?
- Why did God create me?
- In a single word or in phrases, what themes have emerged from your review of and reflection on the scriptures?

¹ Scriptures for further study: Romans 15:6-7, 2 Corinthians 4:7-11, Phil. 3:7-10; 2 Pet. 1:5-11



Personal Values, Vision Statement and Calling Statement

Take a moment to reflect personally on the Scriptures you read and the questions you processed as a group. Now individually, consider these questions to help you get your brain flowing:

- Apart from what I do, what gives my life its deepest meaning?
- What am I good at? What am I not good at?
- What is my response to God's work of grace and salvation on my behalf?

Personal Values:

In Part 1, we looked at our life story and began to identify some values. We began discerning what lessons were forged, values grounded in us as a result of God's sovereign work and life circumstances. Values can be actual or aspirational. Actual values that you live out intuitively are typically forged in you over time.

Take a few moments to refresh your memory of Part 1.

Write out some personal values you've identified.

Personal Vision Statement:

Vision is the ability to see God's preferable future. It captures in a word picture what God wants to accomplish through the unique contribution of our lives. Vision is the heartbeat of the personal calling statement. God designs it, we discover it. Vision ignites passion! It motivates and captures us. It describes what the heart yearns to see accomplished and moves us to sacrificial living and obedience. Personal vision answers the question: If you knew that you would not fail, and circumstances were not hindering you, what would you do in your lifetime for the glory of God? Many of us have pursued ambition, but called it vision. It was our own dream for God. Ambition is about me, calling is about obedience. Ambition leads to drivenness, restlessness, and panic. Surrendering to God's calling and plan leads to peace, power, and passion. Vision is not about dreaming up the biggest dream we can for God. Vision is discovering and embracing what God has created and called you to do.

Open Statements to Consider as You Proceed a Personal Vision Statement:

- When I think about ministry and service in the future, the area I would love to concentrate upon is...
- The qualities of character I most admire and desire for God to shape into my life are...
- People who know me well believe I am most used by God when I am involved in...
- The activities I do that I feel are making my greatest contribution to God's kingdom are...
- Though I may have dismissed the thought many times for various reasons, I sometimes feel I really should be doing...

Personal vision answers the question: If you knew that you would not fail, and circumstances were not hindering you, what would you do in your lifetime for the glory of God?

Based on your reflection of the above, write a first draft of a Personal Vision Statement.



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Personal Calling Statement

A statement of personal calling is your best understanding to date of your unique, personal destiny. It is a holistic statement that integrates what you understand God has called you to be and do for his glory. Over time, as you refine your statement of calling, it often becomes a very unique document, reflecting the style, perspective, and growing insight you will gain. It is dynamic, not static and can be a tool you will use through the years, to keep you focused and on track with what God is doing in and through you.

Based on your reflection of the above, write a first draft of a Personal Calling Statement.

If this is a new concept for you, or there is still a lot of uncertainty about your personal vision and/or your unique calling, it okay! The goal of this exercise to help you to begin to process these things, and give time and attention to you, your unique self, and the special role you are meant to play in God's kingdom. In the coming weeks, bring this before Him, and let Him speak into it. Allow it to be a dynamic and evolving process in your life.



Step 3 – Implementing Your Calling: Living Intentionally

The goal of step 3 is to begin making decisions that move us towards centering our lives on God's calling and vision for us. In Step 2, we wrote values, a personal vision statement and a personal calling statement. Of course, not every area is going to perfectly line up with our values, vision and calling, and it's important to honor our responsibilities, take care of ourselves, and play at times. But we can work towards a greater alignment and efficiency. The more the different aspects of our lives line up with how God made us, the more effective we'll be and the more fulfillment we'll receive.

It's easy to simply live for the immediate and urgent. The goal here is to step back from the day-to-day responsibilities, and give some attention to the larger picture of our lives. What can I change, add, subtract or ask for help with, to better focus my time, energy and gifts on how God has created me? Below are four questions to help you consider adjustments you might make to better align yourself with your calling and vision.

1. Take some time to reflect on the different areas of your life. Where do you see aspects of your life line up with your values, calling and vision? Where do see a disconnect?

Different Aspects of Our Lives to Consider

Occupation and work relationships

Hobbies

Self-Care

Family relationships

Ministry and volunteering

Finances

Thought to Consider: Aligning ourselves with God's purposes requires surrender. It means aligning ourselves with His kingdom, His rule, His reign, rather than the self-enthronement and personal control that comes so naturally. Those areas of life we refuse to surrender could become the stumbling blocks that would prevent us from living out his calling on our lives.

Verses on Surrender: James 4:7-10, Romans 12:1-8, Mark 14:35-36

2. What one thing could keep you from living out God's vision and calling for your life?

Another way to approach this is to identify something that could prevent us from better aligning ourselves with God's calling and vision. This could be something more subjective, possible a past experience or hurt, a perception of ourselves or the world, or an area of our lives we're unwilling to submit to God.



3. What's one change I can make today to help God's calling and vision for my life be realized?

Remember, this doesn't simply mean adding something. This could mean a variety of things, like removing something, reorganizing something, or creating a new structure or discipline. It could also mean dedicating time in prayer and reflection to gain greater clarity about a next step.

4. Who Can Help Me Get There?

Relational connectedness is foundational aspect to our growth, health and success. We need people to support us, challenge us, mentor us and cheer us on. Who can help you continue to pursue the goal of focused living?

There are multiple versions of the Focused Life Process that people use. This version has been adapted from the Foursquare Women in Ministry Leadership Cohort, 2018-2019.

