
The LIGHT

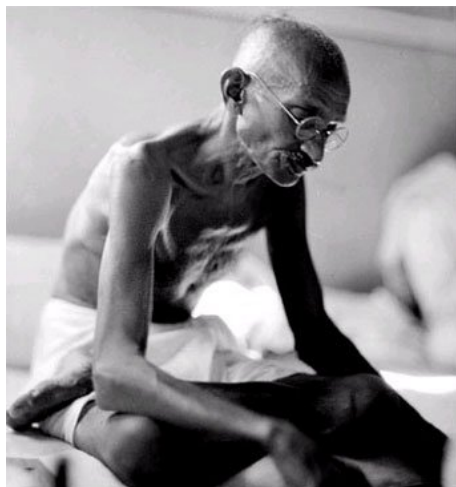
NEWSLETTER OF THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH OF CLIFTON AND PASSAIC

"A Church UNITED in faith, hope, & love!"

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Keeping Your Focus

Once, there was a guru in India who had a disciple. He was so pleased with the man's spiritual progress that the guru left him on his own.



Now, the disciple lived in a little mud hut and lived simply begging for his food. Each morning, after his devotions, he washed his loincloth and hung it out to dry. One day, he came back to discover the loincloth torn and eaten by rats. He begged the villagers for another and they gave it to him, but the rats ate that one, too. So he got himself a cat. That took care of the rats, but now he had to beg not only for his own food, but also for milk for his cat.

"This won't do," he thought. "I'll get a cow." So he got a cow but now he had to beg for fodder. He decided to till and plant the ground around his hut to feed the cow. Soon he had no time for contemplation, so he hired servants to tend his farm. But overseeing the laborers became such a chore, that he married a wife to help him. Next, he and his wife had several children and the little mud hut would no longer do. And so it went, one thing leading to another, until the disciple became the wealthiest and busiest man in the whole village.

One day the guru returned to check on his disciple. He was shocked to see that a palace, surrounded by a vast estate worked by many servants, now loomed where once stood a simple mud hut. "What is the meaning of this?" he asked the disciple.

"You won't believe this, sir," the man replied, "but there was no other way that I could keep my loincloth." (Mark Buchanan, "Trapped in the Cult of the Next Thing," Christianity Today, 9/6/99.)

The secret to living a meaningful life is to keep your focus. It is so easy to get distracted by first one thing and then another until we are far from where we set out to be.

Such was the case with Mary and Martha. You remember their story. Jesus came to visit them one day and both Mary and Martha wanted to do right by Jesus. Mary sat at Jesus' feet, giving him her undivided attention, while Martha scurried about cleaning the house, cooking up a storm and carrying a big chip on her shoulder. When she could stand it no longer, she appealed to Jesus to have her sister help with the chores. Jesus replied, "Martha, Martha, you are distracted by many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken from her." (Luke 10:41-42)

What should be our focus in life? Getting the kids to the next event? Earning a living? Having the latest gadget? Going on great vacations? All of these things are nice but not essential. Jesus said the two essentials in life are to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Unless our activities reflect these two essentials, they are merely distractions. The important question we need to ask is not "What do I need to do next?" but "Whom is God calling me to love today?"

In Christ's love,

Pastor Mike