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Maintaining Focus on Jesus

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WHEN HAVE YOU FELT LIKE IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO KEEP UP?

The **POINT** ➤

Fasting and confession keep us rightly focused on Christ.

➤ **DANIEL 9:1-7,17-19**

¹In the first year of Darius, the son of Ahasuerus, a Mede by birth, who was made king over the Chaldean kingdom— ²in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the books according to the word of the LORD to the prophet Jeremiah that the number of years for the desolation of Jerusalem would be seventy.

³So I turned my attention to the Lord God to seek him by prayer and petitions, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. ⁴I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed: Ah, Lord—the great and awe-inspiring God who keeps his gracious covenant with those who love him and keep his commands— ⁵we have sinned, done wrong, acted wickedly, rebelled, and turned away from your commands and ordinances. ⁶We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, leaders, ancestors, and all the people of

the land. ⁷Lord, righteousness belongs to you, but this day public shame belongs to us: the men of Judah, the residents of Jerusalem, and all Israel—those who are near and those who are far, in all the countries where you have banished them because of the disloyalty they have shown toward you.

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¹⁷Therefore, our God, hear the prayer and the petitions of your servant. Make your face shine on your desolate sanctuary for the Lord's sake. ¹⁸Listen closely, my God, and hear. Open your eyes and see our desolations and the city that bears your name. For we are not presenting our petitions before you based on our righteous acts, but based on your abundant compassion. ¹⁹Lord, hear! Lord, forgive! Lord, listen and act! My God, for your own sake, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your name.

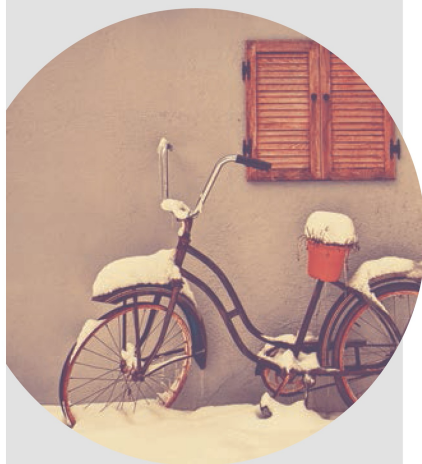




THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

FACT:

The average person in the US is interrupted once every 8 minutes.² It's pretty difficult to get anything done with this kind of reality!



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // SALVATION

No amount of good works can save a person, and Jesus' paying the penalty for our sin is the only way to be reconciled to God.

"Inbox zero" is a term used to describe the idea of taking back control of our lives from our computers.¹ The theory is that if we can clear out our email inbox and keep it empty, we will be able to spend our time on more important activities. Further, we will have less stress in our lives by not feeling behind—like there's always so much more we need to do.

Achieving "inbox zero" does not mean we have to constantly check our email. Actually, the opposite is true. It's usually better to disable notifications—not only in email, but also social media—and have the apps closed for most of the day. This allows us to focus our attention on the things that should have priority. We achieve a zero status when we reclaim our attention and thoughts and retake control of our lives.

While it is not possible to achieve sinless perfection this side of heaven, it is possible to achieve "confession zero." Sin build-up is far worse than any accumulation of messages, but through the spiritual disciplines of fasting and confession, we can maintain a strong relationship with God. With sin out of the way, we are free to devote our attention to Jesus.

DANIEL 9:1-4

1 What does the Bible have to say about fasting?

2 What are some good reasons for fasting?



Confession and repentance are always the right ways to respond when we do wrong. #BSFLSpiritual Disciplines

DANIEL 9:5-7

3 What can we learn about genuine confession from Daniel's prayer?

4 Why is confession an important part of our spiritual lives?

5 Why is it sometimes difficult to confess your sins?

DANIEL 9:17-19

6 How does confession of sin affect our relationship with Christ and with others?

7 What can you do to prioritize confession?

8 How can you help others who confess their sins?



LIVE IT OUT

LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // SALVATION

No amount of good works can save a person, and Jesus' paying the penalty for our sin is the only way to be reconciled to God.

We live in a culture where many people believe we get to heaven by living a good life—that when it's all said and done, if the scales of good versus bad tip in our favor, it will all be okay. However, this is absolutely wrong. The truth is we could never live up to God's standard of perfect righteousness. The only way we could experience salvation and the forgiveness of sins is through Jesus' taking upon Himself the punishment we all deserve.

> CHRIST

At times, we are all tempted to think pridefully about ourselves. We may think pride refers only to thinking too highly of ourselves—this is certainly one way pride is expressed—but pride can also refer to thinking of ourselves (even in ways that aren't necessarily good) instead of focusing on others or on Jesus. To live in a close relationship with Christ requires that we live in humility, continually practicing the discipline of confession.

9 How have you sinned against Jesus today, including sinning against others?

10 Confess those one by one, asking for forgiveness. Remember, a genuine confession is also a promise to never again commit this sin.

GOD

JESUS

HOLY SPIRIT

BIBLE

SALVATION

CREATION

CHURCH

PEOPLE

FAMILY

COMMUNITY
& WORLD

> COMMUNITY

We aren't only to confess our sins to Jesus. When we sin against others, we're also to confess to those we've offended in order to see the relationship restored.

11 Who have you sinned against? Make it a point to confess your sin to this person and ask for forgiveness this week.

(It may be a good idea to talk with a church leader before doing this. These situations can be sensitive, and you will need to make sure to come across as humble. People don't always respond the way we hope, and you may need a mature leader to help you navigate these challenges. Still, confession is worth it because it's right according to Scripture.)



> CULTURE

Your non-Christian friends may not necessarily claim they're sinless, but there's a high probability that some think they'll go to heaven because they're "good people."

12 Choose one friend and find a way to bring up the idea that all people have sinned and fallen short of God's standards. Appeal to the Romans road (Rom. 3:23; 6:23; 5:8; 10:9-10,13) if it helps. Pray every day this week for your friend.