

# LIVE LIKE JESUS

## ABANDON SELF-FOCUS

**Letting go of self-focus and obsession so that I can release myself from intolerance, materialism, selfishness, and greed.**

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This Week's Key Verse to Think About, Soak in, and Memorize:

*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.*

***Philippians 2:3-4***

More Resources to Explore!

See the Spiritual Growth Section of the Twin Cities Church website:

[www.twincities.church/spiritual-growth-live3](http://www.twincities.church/spiritual-growth-live3)

Click on the “Abandon Self-Focus” picture to find many helpful resources.

# ABANDON SELF-FOCUS

We live in a world that constantly tells us to “look out for number one.” Chase your dreams. Put your comfort first. Make life work for you. Before we know it, self-focus becomes the default setting for how we see the world—our wants and ambitions take center stage, while others (and even God) get pushed to the edges. It can feel normal, even admirable, but over time it feeds materialism, entitlement, and disconnection. We start running every choice through one simple filter: *What’s best for me?*

The Bible points us to a completely different way of living—one where real fulfillment comes from seeking God’s will and putting others ahead of ourselves. Jesus lived this way, modeling humility, sacrifice, and love. But letting go of self-focus is no small thing. It costs us more than we realize: it can stunt our spiritual growth, dull our ability to hear God’s voice, and leave us stuck in comparison, insecurity, or anxiety. It can make us less patient, less compassionate, and more easily irritated.

The truth is, self-focus promises happiness but rarely delivers. Real joy and freedom come when we stop trying to make life orbit around us and instead give ourselves away in love and trust. Choosing this path isn’t easy, but it opens the door to a richer, deeper life—one shaped by Christ’s character and grounded in His grace.

## What the Bible Says About Self-Focus

Overcoming selfishness and self-centeredness is a key theme in the Bible:

- **Philippians 2:3-4:** *“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.”*

Here, Paul calls us to humility and selflessness, urging us to look to others’ needs before our own. This is a direct challenge to the lure of self-focus.

- **2 Timothy 3:2-4:** *“People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—”*

In these verses Paul warns of a time when selfishness will reign. We must guard our hearts against this.

- **Matthew 16:24-25:** *“Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.’”*

Jesus teaches us that it’s in letting go of a selfish life that we discover true freedom.

## **An Example of Being Blinded by Self-Focus - Judas Iscariot**

One of the most tragic examples of self-focus in Scripture is Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus's twelve disciples. Judas walked closely with Jesus, witnessed miracles, and heard the teachings of the Kingdom firsthand. But despite being so close to Jesus, Judas's heart remained consumed with personal ambition, greed, and misguided expectations.

The Bible records insights into the mind and heart of Judas:

**John 12:4–6** *“But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, ‘Why wasn’t this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year’s wages.’ He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.”*

Judas disguised his self-interest behind spiritual-sounding objections, but his true motivations were selfish. His position as treasurer gave him control and access, and he used it for personal gain. His focus wasn't on serving Jesus or others—it was on what he could get for himself.

Eventually, this self-focus led Judas to betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 26:14–16). His decision wasn't driven by sudden hatred or opposition—it was the culmination of a heart increasingly ruled by greed, unmet expectations, and disillusionment with a Messiah who didn't fulfill his personal agenda.

Judas's story shows us just how dangerous self-focus can be. It has a way of disguising itself as devotion, when in reality it's often driven by our own desires and agendas. On the outside, Judas looked like a committed follower—close to Jesus, part of the inner circle—but inwardly, his motives were dark and misguided. Self-focus can create that same kind of distance from Jesus in our own lives, even when everything looks right on the surface. Over time, it can blind us to truth and lead us down a path of compromise, where we prioritize our own will over surrender to God. As Judas's life tragically illustrates, that path can end with devastating consequences.

It's easy to read about Judas and think, “I'd never do that.” But self-focus is subtle. Like Judas, we can speak the language of serving Jesus while quietly prioritizing our own goals, comfort, or reputation. It's entirely possible to be near Jesus in practice—going through the motions of faith—while our heart is truly far from Him. That's why we're challenged to examine our hearts honestly. Are there areas in our lives where we use spiritual language to justify selfish choices? Do we view our time, influence, and resources as tools for our own success, or are we genuinely offering them for God's glory? Are we still willing to follow Jesus when doing so costs us something we value? Jesus offers a better way—the way of surrender, humility, and purpose. As we turn from self-focus and embrace the call to love and serve others, we become more like Him and begin to experience the freedom and joy that come from living for something greater than ourselves.

So, what does this sort of life actually look like? Picture yourself experiencing the deep joy and fulfillment that comes from making a tangible difference in the lives of those around you. Envision your relationships deepening as you prioritize the needs of others and build genuine

connections based on selfless love. By intentionally cultivating generosity in all its forms, you can break free from the bonds of self-focus and step into a richer, more meaningful life—a life that reflects the heart of Jesus and shines His light into the world.

Now is the time to take an important step in that direction. Together we are going to explore the spiritual practice **Abandon Self-Focus**. It will take grit and determination to resist the pull toward self, but as we rely on the Holy Spirit and one another, God will help us grow.

# **GROUP STUDY: Abandon Self-Focus**

## **Begin with Prayer and Silence**

As a group say a quick prayer to invite the Holy Spirit to guide your time together. Then spend a moment in silence, expressing a desire to hear from God.

## **Explore the Scriptures**

1. Let's read 2 Timothy 3:1–2. Paul warns Timothy that self-love is a sign of spiritual decay. How do we see this creeping into our walk with God—even in seemingly innocent ways? What small, practical steps can help us recognize and uproot self-centered habits?
2. God calls us to use our freedom not for ourselves, but for loving service. Let's read Galatians 5:13-14. What does it look like to use your time, energy, or resources to serve someone else? Share a time when doing so brought unexpected joy or connection.
3. Selfish ambition is often subtle and can even appear justified in our culture. Let's read James 3:16. According to this verse, what are the spiritual and relational consequences of a self-centered mindset? How can we guard our hearts against selfish ambition and instead pursue the kind of wisdom and humility that leads to peace and blessing (see James 3:17–18)?

## **Read the Practice Together**

Read through the practice on the next page together, and then answer these questions:

- Do you feel you understand the practice? Do you have any questions about it?
- How do you feel about practicing this, any concerns?

## **Share Your Personal Action Plan with the Group**

I will practice this on (day and time) \_\_\_\_\_

in this place (location) \_\_\_\_\_

## **Close in Prayer**

## **PRACTICE: Abandon Self-Focus**

One of the most effective ways to overcome self-focus is to examine our heart through prayer and reflection. This practice involves inviting God to help us see the underlying motivations of our heart, particularly the areas where we may be caught in self-centered thinking or behavior. Self-focus often originates from unresolved pain, fear, or a sense of inadequacy. Instead of suppressing these feelings, this practice allows us to bring our true selves before God, invite Him into the hidden areas of our lives where self-obsession takes root, and ask for His healing.

### **How to Practice:**

#### **1. Ask God to Reveal the Motives of Your Heart**

Begin with a time of quiet prayer. Ask God to reveal any areas of your life where selfishness has taken root. Psalm 139:23-24 says, *“Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”*

Invite the Holy Spirit to bring awareness to selfish tendencies that you may not have noticed before. Sit and wait quietly and see if any thoughts come to you.

#### **2. Reflect on Your Core Beliefs**

Often, self-focus is fueled by deep-seated beliefs about our own worth, security, or place in the world. Ask yourself, "What beliefs am I holding about myself that might be driving my need to focus on my own desires or material possessions?"

For instance, you might uncover that your self-obsession is rooted in a fear of inadequacy, a desire for control, or an attempt to feel significant in the eyes of others.

#### **3. Journaling Your Insights**

After your prayer time, consider journaling your thoughts and reflections. Writing helps solidify what God has revealed to you and provides an opportunity to process your emotions and thoughts. Write about the areas where you feel insecure or where you've been overly focused on your own desires and fears. This will help you begin to uncover the root causes of your self-focus.

#### **4. Confession and Repentance**

Once God has revealed areas of self-focus in your heart, take time to confess and repent. Bring these areas of sin before God and ask for His forgiveness. True healing and transformation happen when we are honest with God about our weaknesses and invite Him to replace those self-centered tendencies with His love and truth.

#### **5. Replace False Beliefs with Truth**

Find scriptures that address areas of false belief that you have carried and begin to think about, meditate upon, and memorize these verses. The Lord will use His truth to renew your mind which will result in the transformation of your thoughts and behaviors.