

# The Sermon Connection

## Connecting Sunday's Teaching to Everyday Living

Volume 3 Issue 2



The Sermon Connection is a weekly handout to help you apply Sunday's sermon content to your everyday life. It is designed to give you additional insights and practical tools for applying the teaching throughout the week.

The application, reflection and connection questions may also serve as a springboard for discussion in your small group, your family time, or in one-on-one conversations.

## Staying Focused

### Sermon by Calvin Brown

January 8, 2017

Today Calvin continued our New Year's sermon series entitled "Road Trip: Staying the Course on Your Spiritual Journey." He preached from Proverbs 4:25-27 which says: "Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you. Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways. Do not turn to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil." He used the Sirens from Greek mythology to illustrate the importance of "staying focused."

The Sirens lived on three small, rocky islands called Sirenum scopuli and sang beautiful songs that enticed sailors to come to them, which resulted in the crashing of their ships into the islands. When one sailor, Orpheus, heard their voices, his strategy was to pull out his lyre and play music that was more beautiful and louder than the Siren's music, drowning out their bewitching songs. His ship and crew were then able to pass safely. Calvin pointed out that as we travel on our spiritual journey we are similarly being wooed by inward desires and outward temptations that seek to undermine our faith. Remember, Satan comes to steal, kill and destroy. As Christians, we are not on a leisurely walk. Instead, we are on a journey that is purposeful, yet full of deadly trials and temptations. We must fix our attention and affections on that which is good and eternal.

In his message, Calvin provided us with 4 keys to staying focused. First, we need to **"count the cost."** He suggested that we always need to ask "then what?" when we are tempted. In other words, what will be the end result if I pursue this? He then pointed out that we need to **adhere to "strict training."** The Christian life isn't just about showing up. Christians must actively work at their spiritual growth. It takes effort, not to be saved, but to live a fruitful life that doesn't get shipwrecked. Third, we need to **"guard the gates."** Garbage in, garbage out. If we allow ungodly or unhealthy content to enter our gates and remain there, then it's only a matter of time before we act upon it; therefore, brutally guard your heart (mind) from content that is not godly. Finally, we need to **"set our course."** This is a choice that we make, but the wisdom and experience of those who have gone before us tell us that discipline and focus now will have a lifetime of benefits – now and in eternity.

As you work through the application questions on next page, you will see the references that Calvin used in his message. Work through them and be fortified to "stay focused" on your spiritual journey.

**E-CHECK: Embracing Intimacy With God**

### **READING AND REFLECTION:**

Read Proverbs 4:25-17. Think about a time when you were tempted by a “Siren,” or temptation of some kind. What did you do? Did you keep your eyes fixed straight in front of you, and keep walking in the right direction?

If you did not did NOT walk in the right direction, but instead TOWARD the temptation, hence indulging yourself in the temporary pleasure it was offering you, what were the results? How did that affect your journey?

Look up 1 Corinthians 10:13. What does this verse promise for those who are tempted? Think again about the above scenario, about a time in which you were tempted. What would have been a way (or maybe ways) out of that situation? If you did not choose the way out, why? What can you do differently, next time you are faced with the same temptation?

Read 2 Peter 1:3-11. This is another passage of hope for those times of temptation. What has God granted to us? What do we need to do to access all of these power tools?

### **PERSONAL APPLICATION:**

If there is a type of temptation that comes after you on a regular basis, set up a plan of action for what you will do next time that temptation arises. Write out scriptures and statements that you will say out loud, as part of your “way out.”

Commit to spending time in God’s word, and prayer every day. His Word is living and active and sharper than a two edged sword. It is the power that you have at your disposal to fight and flee from temptation. You will not be able to fight and flee, however, if you have not stored up this power in your heart. Don’t wait for the trials and temptations to hit before you fortify yourself. Build up your fortification day by day, bit by bit, and then you’ll be ready when the temptation hits!

Have an accountability/prayer partner with whom you have a commitment to call upon during times of temptation. The key is the commitment to call (or text) because it is very easy to say “I’ve got this” or “I don’t want to/feel like/have the time to call for support.” In the midst of a temptation, your greatest desire will be indulge. Instead, cry out to God for strength, wisdom and the power to pick up the phone and call or text your accountability partner.

### **COMMUNITY CONNECTION:**

With your family, accountability partner or small group, read and discuss the scriptures, and answer the questions, from the above Reflection and Application sections.

If comfortable, share a temptation for which the group can pray and hold you accountable. If you don’t want to share with the group, invite one person over to your home for coffee or tea, share your heart and ask them to be an accountability partner with you. Ask about their struggles and temptations, and begin to pray consistently for each other, as well as calling each other during times of temptation, so they can pray for you and encourage you in that very moment!

### **RESOURCES:**

The Daniel Plan, by Rick Warren.

The Celebration of Discipline, by Richard Foster.

The Bible. We recommend the One Year Bible, available at the Information Table on Sunday mornings at Destiny.



