

The Main Thing

“The Cross is the blazing fire at which the flame of our love is kindled, but we have to get near enough to it for its sparks to fall on us.” John Stott

1. Practice Strategic Scripture Memory

Isaiah 53

Romans 3:21-26

Romans 5:6-11

Romans 8:28-39

1 Corinthians 15:1-8

2 Corinthians 5:21

Galatians 2:15-21

2. Read and reflect upon the Gospels

It would be well if professing Christians in modern days studied the four Gospels more than they do. No doubt all Scripture is profitable. It is not wise to exalt one part of the Bible at the expense of another. But I think it would be good for some who are very familiar with the Epistles, if they knew a little more about Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Now, why do I say this? I say it because I want professing Christians to know more about Christ. It is well to be acquainted with all the doctrines and principles of Christianity. It is better to be acquainted with Christ Himself. It is well to be familiar with faith and grace and justification and sanctification. They are all matters 'pertaining to the King'. But it is far better to be familiar with Jesus Himself, to see the King's own face, and to behold His beauty. This is one secret of eminent holiness. He that would be conformed to Christ's image, and become a Christ-like man, must be constantly studying Christ Himself.

*Now the Gospels were written to make us acquainted with Christ. The Holy Ghost has told us the story of His life and death, His sayings and His doings, four times over. Four different inspired hands have drawn the picture of the Saviour. His ways, His manners, His feelings, His wisdom, His grace, His patience, His love, His power are graciously unfolded to us by four different witnesses. Ought not the patient to be familiar with the Physician? Ought not the bride to be familiar with the Bridegroom? Ought not the sinner to be familiar with Saviour? Beyond doubt it ought to be so. The Gospels were written to make men familiar with Christ, and therefore I wish men to study the Gospels.....Surely we cannot know this Christ too well! Surely there is not a word, nor a deed, nor a day, nor a step, nor a thought in the record of His life, which ought not to be precious to us. We should labour to be familiar with every line that is written about Jesus. **J. C. Ryle***

3. Study the seven sayings of the Savior on the Cross:

- *Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.*
- *I tell you the truth, this day you will be with me in paradise.*
- *Dear woman here is your son and to the disciple here is your mother*
- *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*
- *I am thirsty.*
- *It is finished.*
- *Father into your hands I commit my spirit.*

4. Study atonement, substitution, propitiation, justification, redemption, reconciliation, and salvation.

5. Study Galatians and Romans accompanied by a good commentary.

Recommend: John Stott's Commentaries

6. Read a new book on the Cross each year.

The Cross of Christ by John Stott
The Discipline of Grace by Jerry Bridges
The Atonement by Leon Morris
The Power of the Cross of Christ by Charles Spurgeon

The Apostles Doctrine of the Atonement by George Smeaton
The Glory of Christ by Peter Lewis
Experiencing God's Forgiveness by John Ensor

7. Reread a good book on the Cross each year.

8. Read Charles Spurgeon

It was said of Spurgeon: *No matter where he began in Scripture he always took the shortcut to the Cross.*

9. Whatever verse you are reading or studying ask yourself, *What is the relation of this verse to the Cross.*

In it's context every passage possesses one or more of four redemptive foci. Every text is predictive of the work of Christ, preparatory for the work of Christ, reflective of the work of Christ, and/or resultant of the work of Christ. **Bryan Chapell**

10. Study the Old Testament in relation to the Cross.

Recommend the following book:

The Gospel and Kingdom; A Christian Interpretation of the Old Testament by Graeme Goldsworthy

11. Study the holiness of God and the doctrine of sin.

Remember the doctrine of sin is a means not an end. The doctrine of sin is a means (and a necessary one) of appreciating justifying grace and appropriating sanctifying grace.

Recommended reading:

The Holiness of God by R.C. Sproul

The Enemy Within by Kris Lundgaard

12. Begin worship each day with Cross centered songs and hymns.

13. Memorize Cross-centered hymns.

*Twas I that shed the sacred blood;
I nailed him to the tree;
I crucified the Christ of God
I joined the mockery*

*Around the cross the throng I see
Mocking the Sufferer's groan;
Yet still my voice it seems to be,
As If I mocked alone.*

*Of all the shouting multitude
I feel that I am one;
And in that din of voices rude
I recognize my own.*

- Horatius Bonar

*In evil long I took delight
Unawed by shame or fear;
Till a new object struck my sight
And stopped my wild career.*

*Alas, I knew not what I did But now my
tears are vain;
Where shall my trembling soul be hid
For I the Lord have slain.*

*I saw one hanging on a tree
In agonies and blood;
Who fixed his languid eyes on me
As near his cross I stood.*

*A second look he gave which said
I freely all forgive;
This blood is for thy ransomed paid
I died that thou mayest live.*

*Shall never till my latest breath
Can I forget that look;
It seemed to charge me with his death
Though not a word he spoke*

*Thus while his death my sin displays
In all its blackest hue;
Such is the mystery of grace
It seals my pardon too.*

*My conscience felt and owned the guilt
And plunged me in despair;
I say my sins his blood had spilt
And helped to nail him there.*

*With pleasing grief and mournful joy
My spirit now is filled;
That I should such a life destroy
Yet live by him I killed.*

- John Newton

14. Begin prayer each day confining yourself to giving thanks for the Cross and the effects of the Cross in your life.
15. If possible, listen to Cross centered preaching as you commute each day.
16. Arrange extended times of unhurried worship and study about the Cross.
17. Review your conversion testimony often and never grow familiar with the grace you've experienced.
18. Recognize your need for the Holy Spirit and the gift of illumination.

*There has not only been an objective, public act of divine self-disclosure in the crucifixion of God's own Son, but there must be a private work of God by his Spirit, in the mind and heart of the individual. If we should express unqualified gratitude to God for the gift of his Son, we should express no less gratitude for the gift of the Spirit who enables us to grasp the gospel of His Son...Unless the Spirit enlightens us, God's thoughts will remain deeply alien to us. **Don Carson***