

Focus In

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” John 13:34-35 (NIV)

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.
Romans 12:12 (NIV)

At the start of the New Year, I had lunch with a group of friends and we talked about resolutions as we ate our soups and salads. One friend shared that she had recently read a thought-provoking devotional that suggested praying for a “focus word,” and then using that word as a prayer and life guide for the year. Her word for the year was “love.” This led me to consider “love” as it is explained in the Bible and to wonder if it should be my focus this year as well.

Throughout the Scripture we are told to “love one another.” In some parts of the Bible we are given more detailed instructions. I Corinthians 13 breaks it down for us: even if we have great gifts, great faith, and great knowledge—but no love, it all means nothing. We are told that “love is patient, love is kind, it does not envy”—challenging instructions for the best of us. But, when we see this in action, we know that God’s love is at work.

Just the other day I went to the hospital which adjoins our university campus for lunch. It was quite crowded in the cafeteria; there was a sea of scrubs, along with staff, patients, and visitors. In the middle of this commotion, a hospital employee prayed over a man. He had his hands on the shoulders of the man he prayed for and both heads were bowed. God’s love radiated. This scene

moved me and heightened my awareness of God’s love demonstrated all around me.

Witnessing this also led me to my own focus word for the year: prayer. In prayer we can truly experience God’s love. In Scripture we are told to pray for our enemies, to believe we will receive whatever we ask for in prayer, and to be faithful in prayer. I believe in the power of prayer.

I have witnessed the hope that prayer can bring. One of my non-library roles at my university is to lead our Circle Up prayer time one day a week in our chapel. Whoever feels drawn can come for a specific ten-minute period in the afternoon to pray. I have been blessed to pray with students, faculty, and staff and see the immediate hope that prayer brings when concerns and heavy burdens are lifted up to the Lord. With prayer as my focus this year, I hope to stay in a prayerful state throughout the day. I yearn to be close to God and in tune with God’s plan.

So, what will your focus be this year? Perhaps it is difficult for you to choose only one. But I invite you to pray about it; the exercise itself can bring you closer to God. Imagine our different focuses of love, prayer—or perhaps justice, humility, discipline, worship, or caring—impacting the world as we function together as the body of Christ.



—Becky Fisher

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