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A research study that was conducted by a reputable organization close to a decade ago found that 4% of this generation would follow Christ. That number is alarming—but to be honest, the first time I heard it I don't know if I truly believed it. I mean, we definitely used it for a cool sermon series and I think we even had a t-shirt made up. However, I don't think anything really changed about our ministry, and nothing much ever came out of the knowledge that this number was a possibility, other than throwing it at people who weren't doing life and ministry the way I thought they should.

In preparing for this study that number came back into my head, and just out of curiosity I decided to do some math. Guess what I found out—based on my best estimates, and even giving a few churches a little padding on their probable enrollment, exactly 4% of the students in our community go to church. I say, “go to church,” because you have to realize that not every church-going kid knows Jesus, so we are actually not even hitting the 4% mark. Granted, based on a variety of factors (community size, demographics, the importance of the church in your community, geographic location, etc.) your numbers may come out a little higher or even a lot higher. But whether you are at 4% or 90% doesn't matter; the reality is there are still lost students, and adults for that matter, around us, and we do not even seem to care—at least not as much as I believe we should. The reality is that the knowledge that someone does not know Jesus and they are living without hope, without purpose, and will spend an eternity in Hell if they die, should keep us awake at night and consume us throughout the day. But somewhere along the way this fact that 4% of this generation—or whatever the number is—will follow Christ barely even gets our attention. We have lost our ability to care and, more importantly I believe, we have lost our desire to FIGHT. Why do I use the word FIGHT? Because Jesus said, “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.” Granted, Jesus was literally talking about dying for the sins of the world, but we have the same standard. If we truly love the world around us, we should be laying down everything to make sure they know Jesus and follow Him. We should be scratching, clawing, and fighting for the lost souls around us. That's what this study is about—re-awakening our hearts to fight for a lost and dying world around us so that they can come to know Jesus and make Him known. Here is a quick rundown of what we will be fighting for or against:

LESSON 1: FIGHTING FOR FOCUS

LESSON 2: FIGHTING FOR YOUR IDENTITY

LESSON 3: FIGHTING FOR THE GOSPEL

LESSON 4: FIGHTING HELL

LESSON 5: FIGHTING FOR TRUTH

My hope is that through this study the passion of you and your students will be re-awakened and you will FIGHT every single day to ensure that every student in your community comes to know Christ.



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LESSON 1: FIGHTING FOR FOCUS

We are going to start off by doing a little research project and...OH NO...some math. I want you to figure out approximately how many churches are in your town. If you are in a major metropolis, you may want to cut that down to your neighborhood or suburb (often these numbers can be found on a real estate or chamber of commerce website). Multiply that number by 20 to figure out approximately how many students in your community go to church, as the average student ministry has 20 students (feel free to add some students if you know for a fact that some churches in your area are larger). Next, figure out how many students are in the school district(s) your church reaches. The student enrollment counts can usually be Googled and found on the district websites. Divide that number by 13, then multiply it by the number of grades in your student ministry. For example, if you have 6th-12th grade in your student ministry you would multiply that number by 7. Now hang on to those numbers for a moment.

A study was conducted a few years back by a very reputable research organization that projected what percentage of students in your generation would follow Christ. Anyone want to take a guess on what that percentage was?

If you guessed 4% you were correct. Think about that. Only 4% of your generation will be committed followers of Christ. That means that 96% of your generation will die and go to Hell if this trend holds true.

Now those numbers may not bother you (more on that later) or maybe you don't believe them; so with that in mind let's do some more math. Take the approximate number of students who go to church in your community and divide that by the approximate number of students in the grade levels your ministry targets. What number did you get?

When I did this it came out to right at 4%. Yours may be 10%. Yours may be 50%. But unless the number comes out to 100%, it means you are not doing enough.

How do those numbers make you feel?

How does the math you did for your community make you feel? Why?

Why do you think things have gotten to this point?

What do you think needs to change?

I will tell you what I think needs to change. As followers of Christ, we have gotten so caught up in this life and the many things it offers—along with the many things the world tells us to care about—that we have lost our ability and desire to fight.



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That doesn't mean go out and punch people; it means being burdened by the fact that the world around us is lost and hurting and being emboldened to sacrifice whatever it takes to reach them.

This Bible study aims to correct that problem. In each lesson, we will dive into exactly what we are fighting for and/or against, but for now I want to lay the groundwork for why I use a strong word like fight.

Read John 15:13.

“Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.”

In this passage, Jesus is literally foretelling His death on the cross. But while we will not die on a cross, I think this standard of love in our lives rings true. If we are truly going to love the world around us, we are to lay everything down for the purpose of letting them know they are loved by Him and by us and making sure they come to know Him. No matter the cost, we should scratch, claw, sacrifice, in essence FIGHT, to see that every person we come in contact with knows they are loved and comes to know Christ. But clearly we are not doing that; less than 50% of Christians ever share their faith. More than 67% of students will leave the church between the ages of 18-22. And we just keep going along with life and church as usual.

Something has to change. We, as a church, have to re-awaken to our calling and FIGHT for the world around us. We will talk about the many things this means throughout this study, but we will start with this: we must fight for focus.

NOTE TO LEADERS: Answers may vary but as long as they are biblically accurate, allow them. We will clear up/simplify the specifics in a bit.

What are Christians called to do?

What do Christians actually do?

I'm assuming the two lists didn't match up. If this is the case, why do you think that is?

I'll tell you the number one reason that I think this is the case:

If we as the church are going to rise up and reach those around us for Christ, we must fight for focus.

Typically, as Christians, we show up on Sunday, Wednesday, or at camp, hear a great message and learn something, then get pulled in every other direction as soon as we leave that place. And where has that gotten us? Just refer back to the numbers at the beginning of this study to find out.

I want to help you clearly and concisely understand what we as Christians are to focus on, and then give you a practical step for how to accomplish this focus.



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Read Matthew 22:34-40

“Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ‘Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?’ Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Matthew 22:34-40

After reading this, what two things do you think that we as Christians are called to focus on?

If you said loving God and loving people, then you are correct. In this passage, Jesus is being challenged by the teachers of the law to see if they can trick and discredit Him. But in turn, Jesus gives them the perfect answer and makes things very easy for us. Jesus is basically saying that everything ever taught and written in scripture boils down to this: loving God and loving people. That is all we have to do. That is supposed to be our focus. So what do those things look like?

1. LOVE GOD.

Do you love God?

You would probably say yes, and I would believe you. But now read the verse below and answer that question again.

Read John 14:15

“If you love me, keep my commands.”

Please know that we will never be perfect. But if we are truly going to say we love God, that perfection of keeping His commands should be our goal and focus and, again, we should fight to do whatever it takes to make that happen.

Which commands do you struggle with keeping the most?

We all have struggles, but oftentimes they become second nature to us and we don't even think about them anymore. Through taking some time to identify and confess them, we can begin the process of fighting to overcome them. Making a mistake doesn't mean you don't love God anymore, but continuing in sin and disobeying God's commands without caring does show that we don't truly love God anymore. None of us would want that, especially since we have now clearly seen the effects on the world around us from Christians not focusing on things like truly loving God and instead just going through the motions of life.



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2. LOVE PEOPLE.

Think about a person whom you know who truly cares for you and loves you. This could be a parent, a sibling, a grandparent or someone else, depending on your life situation and stage.

How do you know they love you?

I know there are many answers to this, but I'm betting there are a few that come up again and again. People who love you ensure that your physical needs are met. People who love you say encouraging things to you and lift you up when you are down. People who love you spend quality time with you. People who love you teach you how to do the things that are necessary for you to be successful in life. People who love you also care about your spiritual wellbeing. Even though I know some of you have parents who don't go to church or even discourage you from going, the ideal situation is that they would support you in it, and I'm sure that at some level they do whether they would admit or not. These are just some of the things we want in order to know that someone truly loves us, and we are called to do this for others because the world around us needs to know that they are loved, and through this love they will be drawn to Christ.

How well are you doing at loving your neighbor? Where do you struggle? Do you think that through your life your neighbors know that God loves them?

If the answer to the last question is no, it's probably because you have forgotten to focus on this principle. You have failed to see that every connection and relationship has a purpose. You have failed to realize that God has you where you are and has even given you the class schedule you have for the purpose of making Him known. Instead, you just focus on what you want, surviving another day, and making sure you are "happy". And what happens? A lost world around us walks around feeling alone, unloved, and wondering whether God is real, why they need Jesus, and why the church even exists.

Let me show you another way we can lose focus on loving our neighbors.

Read Matthew 5:43-45.

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'⁴⁴ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."

Often times we spend our time trying to focus on figuring out who is our neighbor and who is our enemy. When tragedy strikes, we try to figure out who is to blame. When we see someone struggling, we try to figure out how it was their fault. When there is a global or even local political issue, we try to figure out which side is most like us so that we know who our enemy is. But that is not supposed to be our focus. We are called to love God and



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love people, and that means all people. Even if you want to say that someone is your enemy it doesn't matter, because Jesus has called you to love them too.

How does this play out in your church? In what areas have you chosen an enemy that you don't have to love?

Do you see how that has negatively affected your ability to focus on the calling God has placed in your life? This is an epidemic in the church. It's not a new struggle, it just seems more prevalent now. And because of it we have lost our effectiveness in the world. Stop trying to decide who to love and when, and just do it in the hopes that they will experience life change in Christ.

Now at this point you may begin to see the connection between the two commands. Jesus said, "The second is like it..." You can't really have one without the other. If you love God, you obey His commands. One of those commands is to love people. So when you love people you are actually loving God. See Matthew 25:31-46

None of this could be more truly seen than in the command that we are to focus on that sums up both of these:

3. MAKE DISCIPLES.

Read Matthew 28:16-19.

"Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'"

Making disciples is where we follow the example Jesus set with His disciples. He called them to follow Him, He did life with them to show them how to live, and then they turned around and did the same thing with others.

Doing this—sharing the Gospel with others and then showing them how to follow Christ—is how we truly show that we love God and love people. Because at the end of the day, no matter what needs we meet, if we don't help people fill the spiritual void in their life caused by sin that can only be filled by a personal relationship with Jesus, we are not truly loving them. And I think we can all agree, based on the numbers we saw at the beginning of this lesson, this is something that definitely needs to change.

So how can we do all of this? How can we begin to fight to keep our focus on loving God and loving people, and ultimately sharing the Gospel? I think there are two big steps we can take:



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4. WE LOVE OTHER CHRISTIANS.

In all this talk about reaching people for Christ, I don't want you to forget that we are called to love each other too. Even if we don't go to the same church or agree on everything, that doesn't matter. We are all focused on the same goal, reaching people for Christ, so instead of focusing on petty differences or shunning people when they mess up, we instead need to hold one another accountable to fulfill our calling. We need to encourage each and lift each other up. We need to call people out and apply some tough love when necessary. We need to pray together. We need to work and serve together. We need to plan strategically together about how to reach our families and schools for Christ. We need to meet each other's physical needs so that the work we have been called to can continue. In short, we need to love each other. This happens in small groups in your church, but you also need to have a group of Christians at your school you can connect with so that you have a system of love and support there as well, and can stand firm with when things get tough. The great thing is that the Christian life can be tough but we don't have to do it alone.

5. WE FIGHT.

You are going to hear me say this again and again, but this is truly how I feel; we need to perceive the Christian life. Every day is a battle in which we want to do all we can to reach others.

Read Matthew 5:29

"If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30 And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell."

Jesus clearly knew that sin is a big deal and that it can easily destroy, so in this passage He clearly states how important it should be for us to avoid sin.

You see, sin is anytime God commands us to do something and we don't do it, or when we are commanded to avoid something and we choose to do it anyway. This sin takes us from our purpose in life. The sin could be something like labeling someone our enemy and choosing not to love them all the way, viewing pornography, or having physical addictions. This sin causes us to lose focus on what Christ is calling us too. Even good things can become sin; for example, you might be in a club or on a team. God wants to use that time and your talent and passion to influence others for Christ. But if you make it all about you and just worry about being successful or fitting in, it becomes sin because you are not fulfilling the purpose God has given you.



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There are lots of distractions, sins in the world that can pull our focus away, and if they are pulling you away you need to get rid of them. If you struggle with pornography, get rid of the computer in your room or even your phone. Do you not have time to pray because you are binge-watching Netflix? Cancel your account. Can't stop having sex with your boyfriend or girlfriend? Break up with them. Don't care about reaching the world around you for Christ because all your passion and desire to accomplish things gets fulfilled in Black-ops, Madden, Call of Duty, etc.? Get rid of your video games. Social media taking up too much of your time or causing you to say hateful things about others or to them? Or maybe just seeing all those "happy" photos discourages you. Delete your Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and whatever else you have. You will survive without these things as long as you love God and love people, but if instead you choose the lesser things of this world instead of the greater things of God, our world will not survive. We'll be lucky if even 4% of your generation follows Christ.

There is a lost and dying world around you. Fight to be focused on God so you can reach it. Get rid of the sin. Get rid of the distractions. Pray that God restores the fight inside of you and then go out and fight the good fight to the finish. Speaking of that...

6. FIGHT TO THE FINISH.

Read Philippians 2:8

"And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death-- even death on a cross!"

It seems like every day there is a new big issue in the news or a new cause to be passionate about and buy a t-shirt for. Don't let yourself be pulled in every direction. Yes, we will support some of these causes (disaster relief, human trafficking, poverty, etc.) but it should be for the purpose of letting people know they are loved and making Christ known. Yes, we will feed the hungry and provide clean water, but for the purpose of letting others know how they can never hunger and thirst again. No matter where life takes you, loving God and loving people has to remain your focus. If you commit to start something in your community—a tutoring ministry for example—see it to the finish. Don't quit when it gets hard or jump to the next exciting thing the next week. If you commit that you will reach a friend for Christ, don't stop praying for that friend, inviting that friend to church, and sharing the Gospel with them until they get saved. We cannot be ADD Christians. Do you know they say it takes up to seven years for a person of the Islamic faith to become a Christian? That takes commitment. That takes Focus. That takes fight. Do as Jesus did—stay committed to the specific thing God is calling you to do until the work is complete, no matter what it takes.



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LESSON 1 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

NOTE TO LEADERS: This is a very discussion-based study. The discussion questions should lead the students to nail down some specific next steps so that this doesn't just become another feel-good event, but instead actually brings about change.

1. What needs to refocus in your personal life so you can FIGHT for a lost world around you?
2. What needs to refocus at home with your family so you can FIGHT for a lost world around you?
3. What needs to refocus at school so you can FIGHT for a lost world around you?
4. What needs to refocus in your life in the community so you can FIGHT for a lost world around you?
5. How do you think your student ministry needs to refocus so you can FIGHT and reach more than 4% of your generation?
6. What are the next steps you are going to take?