

FOCUS



On Wednesday I headed out for a lumber-mill in Newport to pick up some scraps of cypress to make a few bird houses. You may not recall, but trust me, Wednesday afternoon Knoxville was drenched in a pre-tropical deluge! The wipers were whipping, trying to defeat the never-ending rain and road-runoff. Carefully, I positioned my glasses, as I peered into the light filtering fog and heavy rain. I kept saying to myself, “Focus, Joe, now focus!”

Focus is not only an issue for our eyes and brain. Even more so, it is a necessity for the soul. The apostle Paul provided more than a little God-truth to help us know how we flourish through to the finish. It takes focus. Paul had an “aim in life.” 2 Timothy 3:10. He was convinced that the aim was to “please the one who enlisted him.” 2 Timothy 2:4. And the apostle never diverted his gaze from this purpose. Don Sweeting in his book, How to Finish the Christian Life, wrote that his life’s motto was, “***But one thing I do...***” This phrase, of course, is the prelude to “*forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*” Philippians 3:13-14. These verses and many more call us to “stay focused.”

I don’t know about you, but I find staying focused more difficult in my retirement years than when I was popping out 50-60 hour work-weeks. Then I had little choice as to what I would do with my time. Now, I have “things” to do – a lot of competing “things”. So do you. Some of them are fun. Some of them are, let’s be honest, repetitively boring. But we do them. We’re busy. Still, let me encourage you; we can stay focused on “this one thing.” We can still press toward God’s upward call in Christ Jesus. We can. We must.

Now to stay focused, a few things are necessary. First, we must stay steady. When I pull my binoculars to my eyes – if I’m bouncing around, nothing I see stays focused; nothing. It’s a blur, at best. I need to stay steady to stay focused. And the only way, the absolute only way I know how to do that with my life is to be grounded, constantly, in and on Christ! Don Sweeting wrote that “the Christ-centered life”... is one in which we... “focus more on loving Christ than on avoiding sins.” We are grounded in Christ when we are expectantly walking daily with him. As the song goes, “Here in the power of Christ I’ll stand!” Steady!

Secondly, to stay focused, we have to move beyond feelings. When we play a musical instrument, we need to “feel” the music. When we take a golf swing or shoot skeet, we need to “feel” the shot. But, while emotions are important to our spiritual lives, feelings often fluctuate more than your heart rate at a thriller-movie. Focus is a matter of our will. When Paul said that we aim at what is honorable, (2 Corinthians 8:21) he used a word that means making provision for it. It’s intentional “under control” aiming.

So, as we stay grounded in Christ and willfully aim at our goal, we must ask for and then pursue the tasks that cumulatively make it possible for us to carry out our mission in Him. Let me ask you, can you mindfully envision what God has called you to do? Stay focused on that! Can you see how the details of your life and the passion of your life entwine in the purpose for your life?

As I was writing today, Russ Hodder came to mind. I met Russ over 20 years ago. At the time, he was a middle-years man who had already spent 20 years regularly setting up an easel along the beaches and parks in southern California where, through the talent of sketching, he would tell others about Jesus. Russ is still at it. He is 74 and for fifty years has been telling young and old about Jesus, and I must add, with amazing effectiveness.



Truthfully, I don't get it. I could never do that. But he does... It's his focus in a finishing-well life.

Let's remember this, we won't finish well living the scattered life. You may be in your 50's or 90's. No matter your physical age, keep honing your passion and gifts for the purpose Christ has for you. Focus!

And if you wonder about your God-given gifts and how to use them— let us at 2RC-Encore help you. During this season, it is difficult at best to engage with others in ministry. But it is possible. Really, it is! Focus!

-Joe Bubar

Views from the Bridges...

(Encore's ministry is broken into eight sections – or "bridges." Some of them are listed below)

Care Bridge:

Bridge Widening

The Encore Care Bridge is merging with the 2RC Care Visitation Team to provide Encore members the opportunity to visit people in hospitals, nursing homes, and other locations when our members and neighbors are unable to attend 2RC services and functions. We are also looking for other ways to connect during these unusual and difficult times since in-person visitation is not possible at this time. If you would like to join in the service of this Bridge or know of someone that would benefit from these activities, please reach out to David Fowler (fowler.david.e@gmail.com), the Care Bridge leader. During these difficult times, this is one way we can strive to stay connected and be supportive of one another.



Praying Bridge:

One advantage the Encore Prayer Bridge has is it is totally unaffected by Covid (actually, for me it frees up more time to pray). My heart is to have our prayer team and Encore members utilize this opportunity we have to offer prayer support and encouragement to each other. I would love to see members share any prayer needs they might have with our group of prayer warriors, a small group of people who have a heart for Retirees and their specific needs. So far no prayer requests have been submitted. It's easy to make a request, just email me with the request at jane@thecalfees.com and I will post it on Realm. If you are having trouble using Realm just let one of the Encore leaders know.



In Him and for His Glory,
Jane Calfee

Serve Bridge:

Two weeks ago, a handful of people from the Serve Bridge tackled painting and cleaning at the Children's building of the Bearden Campus. Even though we had coffee and Pops Donuts to enjoy, we actually got some helpful work completed. This part of the Bearden Campus is just about ready for its intended purpose of reaching and discipling kids in the Kingdom!



All-Call Bridge (and beyond!):

Operation Christmas Child Shoeboxes

Before Covid-19 changed everyone's plans back in the Spring of 2020, many of our Encore Ministry participants had decided to hand-make items to pack into Operation Christmas Child (OCC) boxes. Well, that didn't happen of course. But the need for OCC boxes around the world has only increased! So, we would like to challenge our Encore groups to participate strongly in the overall Two Rivers Church (2RC) effort to donate these fun-filled shoeboxes. Last year, our church donated over 700 boxes!!



This year, you can help in either of two ways. You can pick up shoeboxes and instructions at 2RC, fill them, and then return them to the church. Or if you are still uncertain about shopping in crowds, you can Build a Box Online at <https://build-a-shoebox.samaritanspurse.org/view/c5cc9677-629c-4d74-a8e5-718579a3743f>. At this link, you can customize a box by age, gender, and even the contents! Thank you for helping with this exceptional ministry! Online or actual boxes must be completed and turned in by noon, November 23.

Joe Bubar
Encore Ministry Leader

Mentoring Bridge:

As you know, students have been greatly impacted by the pandemic, especially those who are seniors this year and are planning for postsecondary education. TnAchieves is looking for mentors to support 2020-2021 seniors who plan to participate in TN Promise. Please read below to find out more information.



“TnAchieves serves as the non-profit partnering organization to TN Promise in 90 of the state’s 95 counties. Mentors spend about one hour per month reminding students of important deadlines, serving as a trusted college resource, and, most importantly, encouraging students to reach their full potential. Many TN Promise students will be the first in their family to go to college and need just a little extra assistance. With less than two months to the December 4 deadline, TnAchieves is in need of more than 3,400 mentors to support local students in the college-going process!

This year, TnAchieves is introducing new opportunities for mentors to engage with students. To ensure mentors can remain connected to their students in this time, TnAchieves CONNECT is being made available to mentors statewide. This virtual mentoring platform will allow mentors and students to continue meaningful, impactful discussions throughout the college-going process. It will also ensure mentors can continue serving students from home and on their own schedule.

Please consider applying to serve with the class of 2021! While the time commitment of mentoring is not significant, the opportunity to have a positive impact on a student’s post-secondary prospects certainly is! Mentors will be provided with a comprehensive handbook and training, along with constant support from the TnAchieves team.

Those interested in serving as a mentor can learn more and apply at <https://tnachieves.org/mentors/>, or by contacting Tyler Ford at [309-945-3446](tel:309-945-3446)/tyler@tnachieves.org.”

Blessings to you and your family,

Rosemary Portwood
Encore Mentoring Coordinator

8 Bridges of Encore

PRAYER: The prayer bridge is designed to provide prayer support for the Encore Community. This includes personal needs and concerns of individual participants and their families, as well as praying for God's direction for Encore Ministry as we move forward. Prayer requests will be posted as received on the Encore Realm Group (Prayer Bridge-6) making it personal to Encore.

[CONTACT JANE CALFEE](#)

CARE: The Care Bridge is designed to provide the opportunity to visit with members of 2RC (or others) who cannot regularly attend church for services and functions. This team will be working closely with the 2RC Care Visitation Team (CVT) that provides short-term visits to people that are in the hospital. We know that your schedules may change frequently but, because of the number of the people interested and will be available for this team, we should be able to cover all needs.

[CONTACT DAVID FOWLER](#)

SOCIAL: The Social Bridge is designed to help retired folks meet new friends and enjoy deeper community through large and small group activities. Entering retirement can be a big transition from regular engagement in a working community to forming new community through activities and volunteering. With more time comes greater opportunity to connect. Our team desires to create environments where friendships and community can develop.

[CONTACT JACQUELINE BURG](#)

SERVE: We desire to help Encore participants engage alongside others from 2RC who are already on serving teams in ministries in the community (Meals on Wheels) or at 2RC (set design, building maintenance, etc.). We will maintain a list of specific opportunities and contacts to connect people who want to serve in whatever environment or setting they feel called or comfortable.

[CONTACT KEN BURG](#)

ALL-CALL: This Bridge is being designed to reach the largest section of our Encore members. The current vision for the All-Call Bridge is to engage participants in service projects that generally take place at Two Rivers Church's Harrison Lane Campus. These projects will typically take place around tables that allow you to simultaneously socialize and serve. We are working at becoming a significant player in the Operation Christmas Child efforts in Knoxville.

[CONTACT RICK & TERRI ROBERTSON](#)

HOSPITALITY: The Hospitality Bridge is designed to show Christ's love to people in the Encore group, church members and people outside our walls. We can achieve this by organizing meals for Encore gatherings, for Encore members who have been ill or are experiencing a death in their family and are not affiliated with a 2RC Group.

[CONTACT LYNNETTE PAYNE](#)

MENTORING: The purpose of the Mentoring Bridge is to connect Encore participants with mentees who need a trusted and experienced person to counsel, train, equip, or advise them. Members of this Bridge-team become vetted to work with such ministries as our 2RC Family Ministries, our 2RC Harbor Ministries, Kids Hope USA, CASA, Bridge Refugee, Generous House, and others.

[CONTACT ROSEMARY PORTWOOD](#)

CONSULTING: Our intention of the Consulting Bridge is to find those challenging places that sometimes slow people down as they enter and navigate through retirement. Challenges like: re-purposing and positioning, finances, gift-ministry alignment, time management, along with others yet to be discovered.

[CONTACT JOE BUBAR](#)

ENCORE MINISTRY

Encore Ministry endeavors to cast a God-sized vision for helping retirees build a Kingdom-based legacy, launch relational environments to go shoulder to shoulder to make a gospel impact, and bond with a fun and supportive community.