



# FOCUS ON FAITH

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## KALEIDOSCOPE

I can still recall that as a child whenever my parents took me to visit my grandparents' home I used to play with a kaleidoscope. These days, in our technologically advanced society, many youngsters wouldn't have a clue what a kaleidoscope is but the intricate patterns and light refractions were a constant source of wonder and amusement to me. The way the arrangements of shapes could be manipulated as you twisted the outer mechanism and how the luminosity affected what you saw, to me as a child was nigh on miraculous. Of course, simple pleasures please simple minds – hopefully I've grown up a little since those days!

But people are a little like kaleidoscopes. We react to situations and we're changed by circumstances around us in a variety of ways. For some of us the glass is always half empty but others of us live life on the basis that the glass is half full. I was reminded of this earlier today as I saw someone who for years has been fighting arduous health problems, still able to smile and worship God with enthusiasm. It made me wonder how I would cope with the kind of difficulties she's had to face and whether my faith would be as strong.

**A kaleidoscope creates patterns from similarly shaped and coloured items but God uses individually crafted pieces to build His big picture.**

We're made up of intricate patterns of behaviour, thoughts and complexities of backgrounds, personalities and experiences. Nobody ever promised life would always be plain sailing and none of us is exempt from hard knocks. However the way we deal with difficulties will always mark out those who look on life as an adventure as opposed to those who look upon it as something to be endured.

And nothing is probably more involved, intricate and complex than our motivations. For example, what is it that you dream about or wish for in your life?

For some it will be looking to help people less fortunate than themselves – their driving force is to 'right the wrongs' and tackle the inequalities of poverty, discrimination and social injustice.

For others it will be financial security, a happy home life, a successful career or some other tangible benefit. Whilst these things are important and I'm not suggesting you shouldn't want or work for them, in three of the four Gospels it's recorded that Jesus asked the poignant question, ***"What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?"***

A friend of mine says, *"Nobody ever sees a Securicor van following a hearse"* – you can't take it with you. We can 'get lost' in the pursuit of success and the benefits that it brings. We can lose our health as we struggle to beat the pressures of constantly achieving. We can forfeit our

families – often the very people ultimately we're trying to provide for – as we work all the hours there are in order to stay one step ahead. We can lose our sense of worth as, almost inevitably, a setback occurs or someone gains the boss's favour and is promoted ahead of you. In the same way though we can even lose ourselves in trying to defeat the magnitude of unfairness and inequality there is in our world.

It's interesting to me that God knows our desires and intentions – what drives us and inspires us. And He's in the business of harnessing those aspirations whilst still enabling us to maintain our own unique individuality. A kaleidoscope creates patterns from similarly shaped and coloured items but God uses individually crafted pieces to build His big picture.

We all have a part to play and I believe that as we get back to the nub of what the Bible teaches – to love God with everything we have and are and love other people with the same kind of intensity as we love ourselves – that we will find fulfilment and purpose.

But in order to love God we have to know Him – to have a relationship with Him. The Bible says that Jesus is the ***'exact representation'*** of God so in order to know God we have to have a personal relationship with Jesus. And it will be out of our love for God that we can begin to love ourselves properly and then love other people with the same kind of intensity that led Jesus to sacrifice His life so that we could enjoy eternal life with God.

Together – as we submit ourselves to God and one another – we can create a beautiful, complex, colourful scene – patterns of behaviour, actions and motivations that bring benefits now and in the future.

If you are interested in finding out more about God's purposes for your life, log on to **[www.lifting-jesus-higher.org.uk](http://www.lifting-jesus-higher.org.uk)** which provides information on local Churches together with contact details, plus other Christian resources and activities.