

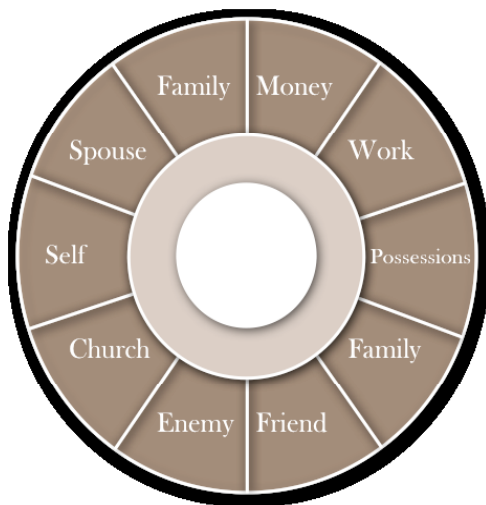
What's At The Center of Our Lives?

Proverbs 3 Louie

Everyone lives from the center of their lives. The question is, what's at the center? Proverbs tells us what our center will be if we are wise:

Proverbs 3:5-6 - Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

Both believers and unbelievers realize the importance of having a center, but they don't agree on what that center should be. The chart below lists many of the things that people put at the center of their lives. Whatever is at the center of our lives will be the source of our 1) security, 2) guidance, 3) wisdom and 4) power/influence.



- **Security** represents your sense of worth, your identity, your emotional anchorage.
- **Guidance** means source of direction that governs moment by moment decision making and doing.
- **Wisdom** is your perspective on life, your sense of balance, your understanding of how the various parts and principles apply and relate to each other.
- **Power** Is the faculty or capacity to act, the inner strength to accomplish something. It is the vital energy to make choices and decisions.

A few examples of how this works:

If you are Pleasure Centered:

- **Security** - You feel secure only when you're on a pleasure "high." Your security is short-lived, anesthetizing, and dependent on your environment.
- **Guidance** - You make your decisions based on what will give you the most pleasure.
- **Wisdom** - You see the world in terms of what's in it for you.
- **Power** - Your power is almost negligible. You have very little influence on others except to push them to have fun.

This is very practical, because whatever is at the center leads in every facet of our lives. We must have a commitment to learning in order to develop character.

If you are Spouse Centered:

- Security - Your feelings of security are based on the way your spouse treats you. You are highly vulnerable to the moods and feelings of your spouse. There is a deep disappointment resulting in withdrawal or conflict when your spouse disagrees with you or does not meet your expectations. Anything that may impinge on the relationship is perceived as a threat.
- Guidance - Your direction comes from your own needs and wants and from those of your spouse. Your decision-making criterion is limited to what you think is best for your marriage or your mate, or to the preferences and opinions of your spouse.
- Wisdom - Your life perspective surrounds things which may positively or negatively influence your spouse or your relationship.
- Power - Your power to act is limited by weaknesses in your spouse and in yourself.

Spouse-centered couples are codependent on each other for life itself. They are so taken up by the horizontal relationship with each other that they lose sight of God. And the infinite is where the finite gets its meaning.

The apex of creation is when God brought Adam and Eve together to care for the earth and to reproduce. Soon after, the fall took place within the context of marriage. Adam abdicated leadership and Eve took control. But redemption also takes place in the context of marriage. The 2nd Adam (Christ) gave everything to save His bride. And each marriage is an opportunity to show that picture to the world, as the husband lovingly leads and sacrifices, and the woman trusts in the Lord rather than controlling and manipulating.

If you are Friend Centered:

- Security - Your security is a function of the social mirror. You are highly dependent on the opinions of others.
- Guidance - Your decision making criterion is "What will they think?" You are easily embarrassed.
- Wisdom - You see the world through a social lens.
- Power - You are limited by your social comfort zone.

Friend-centered individuals will often hold back their true selves out of fear that they might be rejected. Friends are a gift – never make them an idol.

If you are Money Centered:

- Security - Your personal worth is determined by your net worth. You are vulnerable to anything that threatens your economic security.
- Guidance - Profit is your decision making criterion.
- Wisdom - Money-making is the lens through which life is seen and understood, creating imbalanced judgment.
- Power - You are restricted to what you can accomplish with your money and your limited vision.

In truth, money provides no guidance or wisdom, and only a limited degree of security and power. Profit is only a means to an end; don't make it the end. Francis Schaeffer said we must love our neighbor enough not to envy, and love God enough to be content.

Before his death, one of the world's richest men said he would have given his all his wealth to make one of his six marriages succeed. It's one thing to make a living, but quite something else to make a life. -Warren Wiersbe

Financial freedom is not primarily having more money than bills, even though that is part of it. It is where Jesus Christ is Lord of my entire life, including my finances, so that I am not mastered by anyone or anything except Him.

Money is so tied to the heart. That's why Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:21)

If you are Principled Centered:

- Security - Your security is based on correct principles that do not change, regardless of external conditions or circumstances.
- Guidance - You are guided by a compass which enables you to see where you want to go and how you will get there.
- Wisdom - Your judgment encompasses a broad spectrum of long-term consequences and reflects a wise balanced and quiet assurance.
- Power - Your power is limited only by your understanding and observance of natural law and correct principles and by the natural consequences of the principles themselves.
(from *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen Covey)

This is the center which Stephen Covey recommends. We can learn a lot from all of this, and we are certainly not against principles. But what matters most is what /who is behind the principles. Proverbs 3:5-6 is the center for a believer.

Proverbs 3:5-6 - Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

As believers, we strive to be Christ-centered with our lives. What does that look like?

Colossians 3:17 – Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

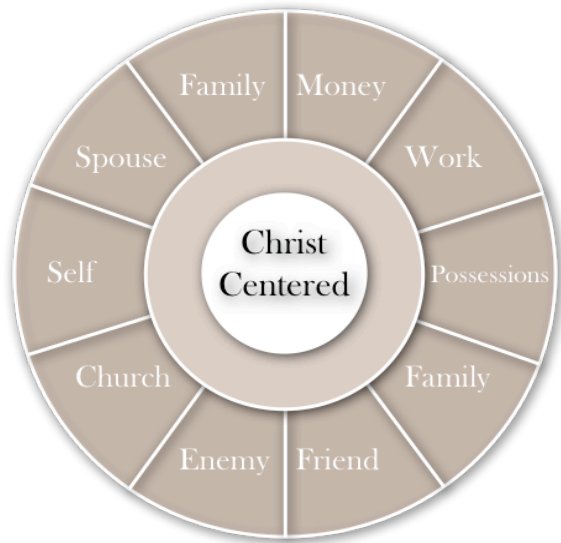
Christ Centered

- Security - Trust is the key word. Christ is utterly dependable. His character makes it impossible for Him to lie. His love is so limitless. He can never be unkind.
- Guidance - Trust is the antidote toward the self-rule of autonomy. His word is a light unto our path. It says He will never leave us.
- Wisdom - Wisdom teaches us how to live in harmony with God's story. 1 Corinthians 1:30 - It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.
- Power - Colossians 1:28-29 - We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.

As believers, our self-image is based entirely on our relationship with Christ. 1) We are the King's sons and daughters, 2) servants, and 3) soldiers. To examine how we are doing in these 3 roles, we can ask the following questions: 1) Sons and daughters: "What is the quality of my worship?" 2) Servants: "Do I know how to access the power of God?" 3) Soldiers: "Do I know the purpose of pain?"

The son's confidence is neither in an impersonal created order subject to his rational control nor in an impersonal code of ethics inherited by tradition from the fathers but in Israel's covenant-keeping God who stands behind the moral order and the heritage and its promises.
- Bruce Waltke

At the end of the day, we do not answer to a principle, but to a person – the Triune God. We will not give account of how we adhered to a tradition or a code of ethics. We look forward to a personal evaluation by a personal God. We live to hear the words “well done”. That's our center!



Prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for sending Christ to be our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Help us to live in the security of His limitless love, to trust His light on our path, to depend on Him for wisdom, and to struggle in His energy which powerfully moves in us. In His name we pray, Amen.

Benediction: As you go forth, may your heart be the residence of God's Word and the realm of His peace. Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to the Father through Him.