



*Micah Kavedzic*

Having been raised in rural Idaho, I find small town life in BiH (Bosnia-Herzegovina) with my growing family to be a great fit. For the last eight years, I have served with Operation Mobilization (OM) and currently work as the training coordinator for OM Balkans, helping prepare new workers in the process of learning and adapting to their host culture as well as their ministry.

*BIBLE READING: Jeremiah 32:36-41*

It is so easy to become distracted. In the Old Testament the Israelites were incessantly distracted by pagan culture and false gods. In today's times I feel that I am distracted by having too many options. It's like I am faced with a huge smorgasbord of food: meats in sauces and uncountable side dishes. I can hardly make a choice for fear that I might miss out on something better. Similarly, the process of deciding what to do with my time, gifts, and energy is accompanied by unwelcomed guilt: I should be more involved, more successful, more of a blessing to others.

This is not the way that God desires for us to live—like children in a room full of new toys, running from one thing to the next without really enjoying anything, ultimately leaving behind a big mess. In Matthew 10:5-6, Jesus sends out his twelve disciples with a very specific ministry focus: the “lost sheep of the house of Israel.” What a relief! I don't have to help *everybody* and be involved in *everything*. It is OK if certain opportunities pass me by as long as I am being faithful in the area that God has called me to serve.

Like the Israelites, I will fail time and again to allow the fear of the Lord to guide my heart. But just as he was faithful and merciful to call them back to himself, so the Lord is with me when I become distracted in my own life.

*SONG: Jesus, Be the Center (Michael Frye)*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, today I seek singleness of heart. I seek your way. May my life reflect a centeredness and focus that only comes through awareness of who you are and openness for what you have for me today. Amen.*

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*BIBLE READING: Psalm 86:11*

*Ako Bog da.* Having lived in the Balkans for nearly eight years, this is a phrase that I have become accustomed to. It means “by God’s grace,” or more literally, “if God allows it.” But this is not a phrase marking belief and hope in the work of God’s hand; rather, it signifies the fatalism that runs so strong in this part of the world. Having been raised in a culture that places importance on independence and self-sufficiency, I have come to find the “little engine that could” mentality to be very out of place here.

While I am not about ready to jump on the fatalist wagon, I do appreciate the way in which this culture has helped me become aware of my unbalanced approach to the Christian life. I say that I have surrendered myself to God, and yet I continually try and take the reins back from him, declaring that I can handle things myself. Determination and will-power have never been enough—and they never will be. The only way that I will truly experience singleness of heart is through surrender.

May we be aware of the ways in which we try to maintain control in our lives rather than surrender to the One who really has the power to have true control. May we know what it means to live by the grace of God.

*SONG: Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*  
(Robert Robinson)

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Father God, I praise you that I can rest in your arms. I thank you that you have my best interest in mind. Teach me what it means to surrender so that I may know victory. Amen.*

—Micah Kavedzic

*BIBLE READING: 2 Chronicles 30:6-12*

There once was a little river that faced many obstacles: a rock, a wall, a forest. And as the river pushed through each obstacle, he grew stronger. Eventually he came to an enormous desert, but no matter how hard he struggled, the river could not push through. Only by humbling himself and surrendering to the sun could he be lifted up, transformed into a huge cloud, and carried right over the desert, where he was then able to bless the fields on the other side with his rain.

Last year a local TV special aired in which individuals from the three main ethnic groups within BiH (Bosnia-Herzegovina) sat down to talk about the future of young adults within their country. All of the participants agreed that definite change is needed in BiH, but no two could agree on what that change should look like. They all clung tightly to the general opinions and points of view of their own ethnic groups. There was no room for compromise, no real hope for change.

When we hold on incessantly to our own ideas, we risk missing out on the blessings that God may have for us and others. The passage in 2 Chronicles 30 reveals two groups of people: those who clung to the old way of living and those who humbly embraced the commands of the Lord. The blessings of unity and peace do not come of their own accord, but rather from humbled hearts that allow the hand of God to guide and lead them.

*SONG: Surrender (Marc James)*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord and Master, reveal the areas in my life which I stubbornly keep from you. I ask for your hand upon my heart that I may be filled with a spirit of humbleness and follow your ways. Amen.*

—Micah Kavedzic

*BIBLE READING: Ezekiel 11:19*

In the early 1990s, BiH (Bosnia-Herzegovina) experienced a civil war. Even now, twenty years later, there is hardly a day that goes by in which the war is not remembered or remarked upon in some way. As I get to know the people around me better, I become more familiar with their pain and their sufferings. Not only have they experienced hard things in life, but they *continue* to experience hard things in life: little work, deep rooted prejudices, poor economy.

In some ways it would be easier just to live beside them, exchanging greetings, rather than hear all of their stories—to keep relationships from going very deep. But how is that any different than having a heart of stone? When we share our lives with others, we enjoy the good things and we walk alongside one another through pain.

God promises to give us a heart of flesh: living, breathing, feeling, tender to his guiding hand. But being sensitive is not always easy. As the Velveteen Rabbit learned that to become “real” is not comfortable, so it is with us. As our hearts of stone are turned to flesh, we become more aware of the pain around us. Rather than run from that hurt, let us embrace it and walk through it, allowing God’s love to work in us and through us, bringing healing that is possible only in him.

*SONG: He Touched Me (William J. Gaither)*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Healing King, help me not to run from the pain that is around me, but to use it in bringing true healing in my life and the lives of those around me.  
Amen.*

—Micah Kavedzic

*BIBLE READING: Ephesians 6:5-9*

In some way, shape, or form, we are all bound. Maybe it's to our general situation in life, to work, or to family obligations. But being bound is not necessarily a bad thing; often people freely choose to live bound to others, through marriage or having children. Unfortunately, something that is freely and joyfully chosen at one point in a person's life may not feel like freedom and joy later on. Yet Paul specifically addresses this when he calls us to obedience from a sincere heart.

But why? Why is it that merely "keeping the peace" is not good enough? If I don't rock the boat, then why does it really matter if I'm being sincere or not? Paul answers this question with the reasoning that in everything we do, we serve our true master: God. Furthermore, this same master holds us accountable and will reward us for our actions as well as our motives.

But there is more to the answer than simply receiving a good reward later on. Matthew 6:22 states, "If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light" (KJV). It's not just about what awaits us in the future, but a life right now that is full of light: illuminated, guided, at peace. This blessing can be experienced right now through obedience and a sincere heart.

*SONG: Nearer, My God, to Thee (Sarah F. Adams)*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, you see straight into my heart. Raise awareness of the ways in which I try to fool you and often fool myself. Lead me on the journey to a singleness of heart and sincere obedience.*

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*BIBLE READING: Acts 2:40-47*

The picture of the first believers painted at the end of Acts 2 seems very much like a fairy tale. Having grown up in the church, and now working with local churches and missionaries in the Balkans, I have seen numerous disputes and difficulties break out in the midst of those who proclaim to live a life in Christ. Despite our best intentions, we lose focus, and beauty like that in Acts 2 turns into deep hurts and divisions. This is not only apparent here and now, but it was a reality in the early church as well. As you read through Paul's writings, you'll discover just as many interpersonal issues as we face today.

But let us turn back to the bond that so strongly held the first believers together: mutual fear of God, daily worship, sharing food, and simplicity of heart.

Singleness of heart is not something that begins and ends with just one individual. It spreads, it grows, it is contagious. It enables groups of people to live in unity, celebrating each others' differences and practicing forgiveness. It allows us not to assign to others what should be God's role. Only God is perfect and good, which means sooner or later, we will be disappointed in the people around us. And certainly we will disappoint others as well. Singleness of heart paves the way for the agape love that is needed to live as the first believers lived, "praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people" (Acts 2:47).

*SONG: Bind Us Together, Lord (Bob Gillman)*

*PRAAYER SUGGESTION: All-knowing Father, ready my heart for your love; ready my heart both to celebrate and to forgive my brothers and sisters; ready my heart to be a living testimony of who you are.*

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*BIBLE READING: John 17:20-23*

It's a common enough story: a follower of Christ who desires to live a life in God and yet is disillusioned with the church. How do I speak into this person's life? They clearly don't need to hear another voice of judgment and condemnation. What are the words of truth that need to come from my lips? Or am I called simply to listen?

Jesus clearly understands the pain of this situation as we can see in John 17. Love and oneness fill his prayer for all believers. God is love; this we know. But what we don't always think through is that God can be love because he is Three in One. Within himself he can both give and receive love. When we are in Christ, we are welcomed into this loving unity along with every other follower of Christ. This, however, comes with responsibility not only to experience love with God, but to live out love with others.

These thoughts don't necessarily answer the question of how to respond to the disillusioned believer, but they do help remind us of why church is important. It is about love: giving love, sharing love, growing in love together. If this was important enough for Jesus to pray about two thousand years ago, it is certainly important enough for me to continue praying about how to apply it in my life today.

*SONG: Let My Life Be Like a Love Song (Brenton Brown and Tom Slater)*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: God of love, I praise you for the ways in which you have poured your love into my life. May that be the source for my returning your love and sharing it with others.*

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