

CHURCH OF THE HIGHLANDS

Study Guide

Jesus at the Center

Chris Hodges
December 14, 2025

Major Points

- 1 Jesus can be included in your life without being the focal point of it — and that misalignment is the root of dissatisfaction and brokenness.**

Colossians 1:17

- 2 Work consumes our best energy and emotions, but it was designed to be a gift, not a god.**

Psalms 127:2

- 3 Wealth promises fulfillment but always leaves you wanting more; hope must be placed in God, not in uncertain riches.**

1 Timothy 6:17

- 4 Relationships and family are blessings, but when we make them the center we put pressure on people to be something only God can be.**

Psalms 127:1

- 5 Pleasure and hobbies make life enjoyable but were never meant to fulfill your deepest needs — only God can do that.**

Luke 12:20-21

- 6 Reordering your life requires two steps: inviting Jesus to His rightful place and involving Him in every area, not just Sundays.**

Proverbs 3:6

Key Quotes

“Maybe your life's not broken. Maybe it's just not set up right.

at 11:18

“Work is a wonderful gift. It's just a terrible God.

at 14:18

“Money promises you a lot, but it keeps you actually always wanting more.

at 18:29

“If you put all the pressure from my happiness on my spouse, and then if she doesn't make me happy, then I'm not happy. I made her something that only God can be.

at 23:30

“Pleasure makes life enjoyable, but it was never meant to be the thing that can fulfill your life.

at 25:54

My life will never make sense until I make Jesus the center of it all.

at 31:49

Discussion Questions

1. Pastor Hodges says 'Maybe your life's not broken — maybe it's just not set up right.' What area of your life feels off right now, and could it be a matter of reordering rather than fixing?

2. Pastor Hodges used the nativity scene to illustrate how we arrange our lives around different priorities. Which figure — the shepherd (work), the wise men (wealth), Mary and Joseph (relationships), or the animals (pleasure) — most closely represents what has quietly taken the center of your life?

3. Pastor Hodges shared that even while leading the church in 2007, he let work take too much from his family. How do you recognize when something good in your life has crossed the line into becoming an idol?

4. Pastor Hodges said that putting expectations on your spouse or family members to make you happy is asking them to 'be something that only God can be.' How has this dynamic played out in your own relationships, and what would change if you released that pressure?

5. Pastor Hodges closed with two action steps: invite Jesus to take His rightful place and involve Him in every area of life. What is one practical, specific change you can make this week to move Jesus from 'somewhere in the picture' to the center?

Word Studies

κύριος kyrios

Greek

Lord, master, one having authority. When applied to Jesus, it denotes His supreme sovereignty and rightful authority over all of life — not merely a title of respect but a declaration of total allegiance and submission.

Usage: 717 times

συνίστημι synistēmi

Greek

To hold together, to cohere, to consist. Used in Colossians 1:17 to describe how Christ is the sustaining force that keeps all of creation from falling into chaos — He is the glue of the universe.

Usage: 16 times

εἰκῶν eikōn

Greek

Image, likeness, representation. In Colossians 1:15, it describes Jesus as the visible representation of the invisible God — not a mere reflection but the exact embodiment of God's nature made accessible to humanity.

Usage: 23 times

Cross References

Matthew 6:33

Jesus' direct command to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, promising that all other needs will be added — the positive counterpart to the sermon's warning against misplaced priorities.

Exodus 20:3

The first commandment — 'You shall have no other gods before me' — establishes the biblical foundation for the sermon's thesis that nothing else belongs at the center of life but God.

Ecclesiastes 2:10-11

Solomon's firsthand testimony that after pursuing work, wealth, and pleasure without limit, everything was meaningless — a direct Old Testament parallel to the four idols Pastor Hodges identifies.

Philippians 3:8

Paul counts everything as loss compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus as Lord — modeling the radical reordering of priorities the sermon calls for.

Jeremiah 2:13

God's indictment that His people committed two sins: forsaking Him, the spring of living water, and digging their own broken cisterns that cannot hold water — a vivid image of placing anything other than God at the center.

Further Reading

- **Counterfeit Gods: The Empty Promises of Money, Sex, and Power, and the Only Hope That Matters**
by Timothy Keller
- **The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry: How to Stay Emotionally Healthy and Spiritually Alive in the Chaos of the Modern World**
by John Mark Comer
- **Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City**
by Timothy Keller

Scripture References

REFERENCE	TYPE	TIME	CONTEXT
Psalm 127:2	Read Aloud	13:30	<i>In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling f...</i>
1 Timothy 6:17	Read Aloud	18:20	<i>Command those who are rich in this present world n...</i>
Psalm 127:1	Read Aloud	22:30	<i>Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders lab...</i>
Luke 12:19-21	Read Aloud	27:30	<i>And I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of grain ...</i>
Colossians 1:15-17	Read Aloud	30:00	<i>The Son is the image of the invisible God, the fir...</i>
Romans 10:9	Read Aloud	31:00	<i>If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' a...</i>
Proverbs 3:6	Read Aloud	32:00	<i>In all your ways submit to him, and he will make y...</i>