

HOW TO KEEP FOCUSED THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

Mark 1:32-38, ***“At evening, when the sun had set, they brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. And the whole city was gathered together at the door. Then He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him. Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed. And Simon and those who were with Him searched for Him. When they found Him, they said to Him, “Everyone is looking for You.” But He said to them, “Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.”*** Another translation says, “For that is why I came.”

They accused the Lord Jesus of all kinds of vile things, but no one ever accused Him of being too busy or unapproachable, uptight or upset. Our modern society values busyness. In our culture, the busier we are, the more important we appear. Being preoccupied and consumed with our own personal affairs is considered an admirable trait. Our role-models in business, and even in the church, are often self-absorbed personalities who care little for those around them. But Jesus wasn't like that! Even though He was fully focused on that He had come to do, He always found the time to care for others. Jesus moved in serenity and tranquility - the completely opposite to what we value in our society, but what we secretly desire. How did He do this? If we can find out how Jesus was able to always be Himself, and at the same time fulfil the plans and purposes of His Father, it will help us to stay focused without becoming disagreeable and unapproachable. As we read through Mark's Gospel, we find that Jesus' life focused on three things...

(1) The Father's Will

When talking about His relationship with His Heavenly Father, Jesus said, ***"Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner"*** (John 5:19). *'I'm not doing My own thing,'* Jesus said. *'I'm not pursuing My own pleasure, chasing after My own ambitions. My life is about one thing - what I see and hear the Father doing and speaking - that I do. Concerning My own will? I have none.'* This was seen nowhere more clearly than in the Garden of Gethsemane, when Jesus prayed, ***'Father, if it be possible, let this cup of My suffering pass from Me. Nevertheless, not My will, but Thy will be done,'*** (Mark 14:36).

(2) The Father's Heart

Regarding His earthly ministry, Jesus was able to say, 'I always do those things which please the Father' (John 8:39). Note, not simply keeping His commandments and following His instructions, but pleasing Him. It's one thing if our children to obey us. But it's something altogether different if they hear our heart and want to please us. That is the way Jesus was. He always heard His Father's heartbeat.

(2) The Father's Time

'Son, they're out of wine,' Mary said, implying He do something. 'Mine hour is not yet come,' Jesus answered. 'This isn't the right time' (John 2:4).

'Lord, come quickly,' Mary and Martha said. 'The one you love is sick,' (John 11:3). Yet Jesus wouldn't go until the time was right. He waited for His Father's timing before moving in any direction. What did this do? It freed Him completely from every other demand. We often feel confused because we're always trying to figure it out... "Should I do this or that? Should I go there or stay here?" We get involved in things and think that because we're busy we're accomplishing a lot. Jesus didn't do that. There was a tranquility and a serenity about Him because He was focused entirely on one thing, and that was, pleasing His Father.

Once we've imitated Jesus and are focused on these three things - the Father's Will, the Father's Heart and the Father's Time - we need to Prepare and Participate in order to bear fruit. Yes, preparation and participation is key if you are to fulfil God's purpose for your life.

Preparation

Often God talks to us of new arrangements - whispers, dreams, intuition, a knowing - calling us to take new steps in preparation for His plans. But are we listening? Do we take the required actions? Do we get to stay focused and participate the way Jesus did? For many of us there is much reservation (even fear) about getting ready to do God's will. With others there are feelings of unworthiness - being not good enough, not humble enough, not holy enough! But if God has faith in you, who are you to doubt yourself? If He believes in you, who are you to say, "I am not able?" Preparation can sometimes seem laborious. Yet, even in our preparing we are honouring God. Remember, none of us can learn through another's journey. Our season of preparation is uniquely our own. Why? Because we are being individually prepared for His glory. ***"That He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory"*** (Romans 9:23).

Participation

The Lord not only prepares us for His glory, but that He partners with us as well. This means that the relationships we're developing, the children we are parenting, and the places we work in, will not be blessed without our partnering with the Lord. He has chosen to use you and me as His partners in what He desires to do here on earth. This article appeared in a local newspaper... Dateline: Johannesburg. "A couple saved a 7-day-old puppy from the belly of a python after they heard a faint yelping inside of the snake and forced it to cough up their pet," a newspaper reported. "Magda and Henny Botha were quoted as telling the Star newspaper that they heard their terrier barking frantically outside its kennel on their farm 15 miles west of Krueger National Park. When they rushed outside, the python was curled up inside the kennel. The puppy was gone, but they heard faint yelps from inside the snake's stomach. Botha said that while his wife held the snake by the tail, he shook the head up and down and rubbed its bulging stomach. The snake's jaws opened and out came the puppy. Mrs. Botha massaged the puppy's chest and moved its front legs until it began to breathe again."

A man and his wife partnered together to free a little puppy and save it's life. I don't mean to be facetious, but I see a real parallel with what we're called to do. Can hear the faint yelp of people in Walton, people who are trapped by the devourer, the serpent, the devil. They are caught up in all kinds of stuff, deceived by what the world has to offer them. And here's our Hero, Jesus Christ, who will take the head of that serpent and begin to shake it as Genesis foretold He would (Genesis 3:15). Our job, then, as His co-workers, is to join with Him, binding the work of the enemy, allowing families and our communities to be free. Do you hear the faint cry of people caught in the grasp of the enemy?

If you do, will you say, 'Yes, Lord, I will partner with You through prayer and intercession. And with a razor-sharp focus and a determination in my heart, I will obey You'. If that be your heart, if that be your prayer, your life will begin to take on the peace and purpose, the stability and tranquility, the very flavour and **focus of Jesus**. God wants us to go forth prepared, but then He wants us to participate (partner) in the most important work of all, that is, setting the captives free!

If you want to stay focused throughout 2013, begin to see the year through His eyes, listen to the world with His ears, and love everyone with His heart. The moment you decided to do that, the Holy Spirit will equip you and strengthen you for every task! You will feel like a different person because you will be more like Jesus.