

FOCUS Mark 1:32-39

What would our lives be like if you and I could get more focused?

Instead of running around from here to there, here to there, trying to do everything, what if we could be more focused?

I love my iPhone because it's simple, and easy to use. Steve Jobs of Apple Computers was a big believer in focus. When he came back to Apple Computer in 1997, it was a mess. They were making all kinds of products – computers, accessories, 12 different versions of the Mac. Jobs said, “We’re going to focus on only 4 products—a laptop and a desktop for personal use, and laptop and a desktop for professional use. That’s it.” And that emphasis on focus and simplicity has led to some amazing products like the iPod, the iPhone, and the iPad.

There’s power in focus. Look at the lights in this room. If you were able to focus these lights, they would become laser beams. The way they are, they light up the room, but focused, they could cut through steel.

What would our lives be like if you and I could get more focused?

Today we’re looking at a Scripture from Mark chapter 1 – this is early in the ministry of Jesus. And what we’re going to see is how Jesus got his life FOCUSED.

Mark 1, verses 32-34:

³² That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. ³³ And the whole city was gathered around the door. ³⁴ And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons...

Mark 1:32-34a, New Revised Standard Version

What we see here is **PRESSURE**.

Picture the scene. It’s the end of the day. The sun is going down. Jesus and his disciples are sitting down for the evening. They’re thinking, “Aah! Time to relax.” They start to kick their shoes off, prop their feet up...But Jesus hears a sound outside. He says, “Boys, keep your shoes on.” He stands up and opens the door. The disciples look out, and there’s the whole city coming after them. Hundreds of people with urgent, pleading looks on their faces. And they all want something from Jesus:

“Master - heal my son!”

“Rabbi - heal my daughter!”

“Jesus - here’s my brother, he’s demon-possessed!”

Jesus, give me,
 Jesus help me,
 Jesus, Jesus, Jesus,
 Pressure, Pressure, Pressure

Raise your hand if you’ve ever had a day like that!

- You get to work and there’s 10 messages on your voice mail and 100 emails in your inbox
- You’re trying to answer those, and then a customer comes in with an emergency and you put out that fire
- And then your boss comes in and wants something
- And then the phone rings, and you deal with that, the phone rings again, you deal with that
- And at the end of the day, you realize that you never even started what you came to work to do!

PRESSURE!

- So you go home, and one of your kids needs a diaper change
- And then the other one yells, “Where’s my uniform, I ‘ve got a game tonight”
- And that’s when you remember the wet laundry that you left in the washing machine three days ago
- And while you’re throwing the uniform in the dryer, the pot on the stove starts to boil over
- And before you can grab it, the phone rings
- And then somebody’s at the door

--And then one of your kids yells, “Hey is that stuff in that pot supposed to be all over the stove?”

PRESSURE!

How do you handle it?

Well, look at how Jesus handled it – verse 35:

³⁵ In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. –Mark 1:35 NRSV

How did Jesus handle the Pressure? Through **PRAYER**.

Now, notice a few things about how Jesus prayed:

First – when did he pray?

³⁵ **In the morning, while it was still very dark**, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. –Mark 1:35 NRSV

BEFORE the busyness, Before the demands, Before the pressure, Jesus gets FOCUSED on what life is really about!

**Before he did anything, Jesus got focused.*

When I was in High School, I took TV Production at the Weaver Center in Greensboro. I remember whenever we got ready to shoot a television show, the first thing you had to do was focus the cameras

**Before you do anything, you have to get focused.*

When my kids were still at home, we had a telescope – we used to go out on clear nights and set it up and look. We saw the moons of Jupiter, and the rings of Saturn. We looked at the Orion Nebula, and the craters on the moon. But before you can see any of those marvels with a telescope, the first thing you had to do was use the little sighting scope to find the planet, and then start turning knobs to get the thing focused.

**Before you do anything, you have to get focused.*

So, *when* did Jesus pray? Early in the morning.

Now notice this: WHERE did Jesus pray?

In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to **a deserted place**, and there he prayed.

Jesus prayed alone and in silence.

Solitude and silence are absolutely necessary if we're gonna get focused. I mentioned focusing a camera and focusing a telescope. Well, silence and solitude are how you focus your SOUL.

Even if it's just for a few minutes – we have to get away:

- Away from the TV
- Away from the radio
- Away from the phone
- Away from Facebook
- Away from Twitter
- Away from Snapchat, Vine, and Instagram
- Away from the noise and distraction

Henry Nouwen said, *“Without solitude, we remain victims of our society and continue to be entangled in the illusions of the false self.”*

If you want to get focused, you have to do what Jesus did and get alone with God and PRAY.

Now, what resulted from Jesus' time alone with God?

³⁶ And Simon and his companions hunted for him. ³⁷ When they found him, they said to him, “Everyone is searching for you.” ³⁸ He answered, “Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.”

So here we see **PURPOSE**.

This is amazing. All these needs, all these hurting people -- all these people who need help--everyone is looking for Jesus -- and what does he do? He just WALKS OFF!

Was he without compassion? Was he uncaring? **No**. He just knew what his purpose was. Jesus' life was FOCUSED on what God wanted Him to do.

Now if this had been me, I couldn't have done it. I would have been all stressed out trying to please everybody! I would have thought, “I can't leave, somebody might not like me!” But Jesus was able to look at all those competing demands and say, *“This is what I am going to do -- This is why I have come.*

JESUS KNEW HIS PURPOSE!

And there's a second thing Jesus received from His time alone with God – Look at v. 39:

³⁹ So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

POWER.

Power

- to preach the Gospel
- to cast out demons
- to make a difference
- to handle all the needs and demands

Listen: Life is stressful. And you and I can't do it in our own power. We need to seek the power of God through prayer.

Do you know why you and I are always running out of gas spiritually and emotionally? It's because we never take time to fill up.

I remember when I was 16 years old in Greensboro. I was driving a bunch of my friends in my '64 Ford Falcon. We were leaving Four Seasons Mall, coming up Pinecroft Road, turning left onto High Point Road. And right in the middle of that huge intersection, I ran out of gas. All that traffic had to stop while my friends and I pushed the car off to the side of the road.

If only I had taken the time to fill up.

I was reading yesterday about one of the major causes of crashes with small private planes. It's not storms, or lightning, or engine trouble. It's running out of gas. It's a pilot who tries to go too far, tries to do too much, and runs out of power. And I'm afraid that a lot of us are trying to go too far, and do too many things, and we're running out of power.

SO—

Jesus was under **PRESSURE**.

He dealt with the pressure through **PRAYER**.

Through Prayer, he got focused on his **PURPOSE**.

And he received **POWER** to deal with the demands.

Now: How do you and I do that?

Here's an idea: Start with praying 5 minutes every day. Same time every day. Same place, if that's possible. 5 minutes. Don't start by trying to get up at 4 am and pray for 2 hours – that'll last a week at most. And once you commit to this, don't skip a day and pray 10 minutes the next day. The goal is consistency.

You may say, "I don't know how to pray!" Well, let me give you a pattern that I learned as a child that I still use to this day:

P – R – A – Y

Praise – thank God for the good things in your life.

Repent – confess your sins—with brutal specificity— and receive God's forgiveness.

Ask – for yourself and others.

Yield – give yourself to God, perhaps by praying, "Not my will, but yours be done."

SO – 5 minutes a day -- P-R-A-Y. Let's try it, and let's see if our lives can get a little more focused. Let's see if we can find the purpose and the power that Jesus had.

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