MY FOCAL POINT

Despite whatever is happening around me, my focus must remain on God.

KEY POINTS

- As we know, we are not intended to walk this Christian pathway alone. We are part of the "body of Christ," and the body needs to be together, not fractured into hundreds of stand-alone pieces.
- But as much as we know that we need each other, we also know that we have a greater and much more basic need: We need God in our lives. And we need to be assured that our relationship with Him is loving, vibrant, strong and sustaining.
- In the midst of our social and physical distancing, one has to wonder if we may also have included God in our pandemic protocol—subconsciously or unconsciously separating ourselves from Him as our attention has been diverted to other matters.
- This is not unusual. In times of crisis, people tend to fixate on the problem at hand and become oblivious to everything else around them.
- Could it be possible that we may have allowed our focus to fade from giving attention to the King of our heavenly kingdom as we have been dealing with the present crises in our earthly domain?
- If so, this is a call for all of us to very deliberately re-focus our attention where it needs to be: on Jesus, our Lord. He has got to be our focal point.
- The Bible has many examples of people who had a singular focus of meeting with God.
- Exodus 33 tells us about the procedure Moses followed. He pitched a tent outside of the boundaries of Israel's campsite and called it the "tabernacle of meeting." (The back-story to this can be read in chapter 32 and at the beginning of chapter 33.)
- A pillar of cloud representing the presence of God would then descend and hover at the door of the tabernacle as God met with Moses. *Our* time with God is not only important for us, it is important to Him too!
- Acts 3:1 tells us that Peter and John on their way to the Temple at 3:00 p.m. Why? Because it was "the hour of prayer!"
- So, let's ask ourselves this question: What is *my* hour of prayer? What time is it that I know I'll be going to my "prayer closet," or wherever I have designated as my "place to meet with God? (To the Temple, so to speak.) When is it that I have determined to meet with God and commune with Him?
- It is understandable if you may not be able to spend an hour each day in prayer. Even if it is only a focused 15 or 30 minutes that you spend with the Lord, you have identified the specific time each day that you meet with God. This is crucial.
- If you *haven't* already established your time of prayer, you need to do so today. If the demands of life have caused you to be inconsistent in your meetings with God, stop right now and figure out what to do.

KEY SCRIPTURES: Exodus 33:7-11; Acts 3:1; Psalm 16:5-11, 19:1-11, 14

- We can't allow *anything* to destroy our relationship with God!
- King David was Israel's most famous ruler who lived approximately 3,000 years ago. He was the youngest of Jesse's sons and from his youth had the toughest (and most important) job in his family. It was his responsibility to take care of his family's wealth: their flock of sheep.
- But taking care of livestock was a lonely and thankless job. Shepherding forced you to be out in the wilderness for days or weeks at a time.
- David understood the feelings of social and physical distancing we are now experiencing; that was his lifestyle. But some way, somehow, David came to know the God of Israel as someone beyond just the God of his culture, his nation, or his family.
- Even as he fulfilled his responsibilities as a shepherd, he still made time to contemplate and meditate on the word of God and align himself with God's way of thinking (see Psalm 16:5-11, 19:1-11, 14).
- So, the busier and crazier our lives get, the more we need to shut ourselves away with God at our appointed time—the "hour of prayer" we have chosen.
- It doesn't matter where we are on our Christian journey of faith. At all points in our lives we all need to re-focus on Jesus. So, here are a couple of practical steps we can take to help ourselves:
  - We must establish a *time* and a *place* for prayer every day, because nothing supersedes prayer. This is absolutely necessary. Commit to it and do it!
  - Read the word of God—meditate on it, share it with someone else. This is an incredibly powerful tool in helping us keep our focus on God.
- So, let's reposition ourselves to ensure that Jesus Christ becomes, and remains, the main focal point in our lives.

DISCUSSION/REFLECTION TOOLS

1. What is your time to "meet with God" and do you have a set location to do so? How did you come to choose this particular time/location?
2. When life gets hectic, do you make an effort to keep your prayer "appointment"? Why or why not? How do you feel if you do not keep it?
3. What are some scriptures/songs you focus on during prayer time and why them in particular?

PRAYER TIME

Lord, help me to focus and stay focused on You. Let everything else fade away! In Jesus' name.

Start-up: When you start feeling stressed, what do you do to decompress?

WEEK OF SUNDAY, AUGUST 16, 2020

NOTES

Meditate as you read through/listen to this week's message. If it helps, use symbols for your notes.

(Reminds me/Confirms) (New idea) (Think about)

(Do this) (Speaks to my heart) (Must share)

PRAYER NEEDS/THANKSGIVINGS

Go deeper with your Life Group family. CONNECT-REFLECT-DISSECT THE WORD