

# The Key to Keeping Focused - Mark 1:32-38

by Jon Courson

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*Jesus' life was characterized by focus and serenity, and He achieved this by prioritizing the will, heart, and time of the Father, and we can do the same by following His example and prioritizing prayer and focus in our lives.*

**Scripture:** Mark 14:36

**Topics:** "Daily Prayer", "Gods Will"

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## Description

Jon Courson emphasizes the importance of following Jesus' example of focusing on the Father's will, heart, and time, rather than being consumed by busyness and societal values. Jesus prioritized pleasing the Father, hearing His heartbeat, and waiting for His timing, which led to a life of tranquility and serenity. Courson highlights the necessity of daily prayer to gain direction and prioritize peace and serenity in our lives, emphasizing that prayer is both communion with God and a commandment from Him.

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## Transcript

They accused Him of being a glutton and a winebibber, of being born illegitimately and casting out demons by the power of Satan. But no one ever accused Jesus of being busy or unapproachable, uptight or upset.

Our culture values busyness. In our society, the busier one is, the more important he is. But in reality, deep within our hearts, we know that barely making it here, narrowly making it there is not the way life was meant to be.

Jesus moved in serenity and tranquility -- opposite of what we value in our society, but what we desire innately. How did He do this? As I read Mark's Gospel, I am increasingly convinced that Jesus' life focused on three things . . .

### The Father's Will

In talking about His relationship with His Heavenly Father, Jesus said, 'Truly I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise,' (John 5:19). 'I'm not doing My own thing,' Jesus said. 'I'm not pursuing My own pleasure, toying with My own hobbies. My life is about one thing: What I see and hear the Father doing and speaking. 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).

### 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) -- not simply keeping His commandments and following His instructions, but pleasing Him.

It's one thing if my kids obey me. But it's something altogether different if they hear my heart and want to please me. That's the way Jesus was. He heard His Father's heartbeat.

### 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 feel frazzled because we're always trying to figure out, 'Should I do this? Should I go there? We see opportunities open before us, and we think that because we're busy, we're accomplishing a lot. But so does the chicken running in circles whose head has been cut off. People who don't know any better might look at him and say, 'Wow! Look at all he's doing. He's really living.'

In reality, however, he's in the process of dying because he's disconnected from his head. So too, when you and I lose contact with our Head, Christ Jesus, watch what happens. We'll run here and sprint there; do this and attempt that -- but although the world may applaud us, in our hearts, we'll know something is inherently wrong.

Jesus didn't do this. There was a tranquility and a serenity about Him because He was focused intently on one thing singularly: pleasing His Father.

When I wake up every morning, I don't have to go through mental gymnastics or philosophical acrobatics concerning the question of whether or not I should brush my teeth. No, as did most of us, I decided a long time ago that I'd brush my teeth every morning. And because of that, I don't spend my day thinking about the question of doing so. The same should be true of spiritual disciplines.

Many people think the practices of Christianity are legalistic and confining. Not true. They're freeing and liberating, for concerning whatever we say, 'This is a non-negotiable priority in my life,' we are free from wondering if it will fit into our schedules.

The recent winner of the all-city handball championship in Portland was unusual because, at 37 years of age, he was relatively old for a handball champion. It was also unusual because he didn't start playing the game until he was 35. But more unusual than his age or his newness to the sport was the fact that as a Vietnam vet, having lost his right arm, he played handball with only one hand. When asked how he had won, he pared his answer down to one word: Decisions. 'Every time the ball comes towards my

opponents,' he said, 'they must decide right hand or left hand. I, however, am absolutely sure which hand I'm going to use. There's no debate.'

I like that! When you simplify your life concerning certain non-negotiables, you no longer ask, 'Should I pray this morning? Should I go to Bible Study on Wednesday?' Should I be in church Sunday night? -- for the decision has already been made.

The question then arises, 'How do we discern the will, time, and heart of God?' Watch what Jesus does in our text . . . After teaching the multitude in Capernaum, after healing the sick, and casting out demons, Jesus rose early the following morning to pray.

Meanwhile, His disciples realized that everyone was looking for Him. In my imagination, I hear them saying, 'Wow! Good job, Jesus! You came through perfectly! Everybody wants You now. Now You can establish Your Kingdom -- in a beach town no less!' But Jesus said something remarkable when He said, 'Let us go into the next towns.'

The word translated 'town' is an interesting Greek word which in all of the New Testament is used only once. It refers to an un-walled town -- a town with no protection, no identity, but rather just a place on the map. Thus, Jesus was saying, 'Let's leave Surf City and go to Cow Town.'

This amazes me. I mean, if, as an athlete with aspirations to make the pros, you heard that the 49'ers and the Seahawks, the Giants and the Royals all wanted you, would you say, 'What an answer to prayer!' or would you say, 'Let's get out of here.'?

If, as a businessman, you realized every corporation in the career of your choice was on the phone saying, 'Please come and work for us. We need you. Name your salary,' would you disregard their calls?

Didn't Jesus come to reach people? Didn't He come to establish the Kingdom? Wouldn't it be wise for Him to take advantage of the publicity and the opportunity in Capernaum? Wouldn't this be a great moment for 'Christianity'?

Why would Jesus leave Capernaum? The answer lies in the second half of verse 38: 'for therefore came I forth.' As G. Campbell Morgan points out, the place from which Jesus came was the solitary place of prayer (verse 35). As He talked to His Father, Jesus was given direction for the day. Thus, even when demands were placed upon Him or seemingly good opportunities opened before Him, He wasn't swayed.

How often you and I get detoured and distracted by hearing, 'All men seek for you.' We spend time talking about a 'great opportunity' and pursue it -- only to find we're tired. Not so with Jesus. The will of the Father, the timing of the Father, the heart of the Father directed Him to go to the un-walled cities that day. And that's what He did.

The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. (Isaiah 50:4)

Morning by morning, Jesus was awakened to hear the directions of His Father that He might know now to speak during the day. If Jesus needed to pray day by day by day to hear a word, to gain direction so that He might move in priority and peace and serenity -- how much more do we.

Not only is prayer communion with God, but it is also a commandment from God. At least 200 times in the Scriptures the command to pray is given. Thus, prayer is not a suggestion. It's a command. Why? I suggest two reasons . . .

### Preparation

Because life is oh, so short, our Father has a very big job to do in the 70, 80, or 90 years we're here in order to teach us the language we'll be speaking for eternity -- the language of prayer.

Is it because doctors are mean and brutal that they spank babies upon birth? No. Babies come out of closed environment into a whole new world in which they must breathe immediately. Time is limited. So doctors spank them -- causing them to cry out and breathe in. Mission accomplished.

So too, our Father must get us breathing and communicating. So He spanks us. 'Why are You doing this, God?' we sob. Then we inhale. And the process begins in which we are being prepared for the environment of eternity in which prayer is the language spoken. Because our ability to serve in the next billion years depends upon how we communicate with the Father this side of eternity, He says, 'I'm going to have to send you through some difficulty from time to time in order that you will cry out to Me and learn about prayer -- for that is the only way you will be prepared for the ages to come.'

### Participation

And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief. (Matthew 13:58)

The Lord not only prepares us for eternity through prayer, but that He partners with us in prayer. This means that the relationships we're developing, the kids we're parenting, the places we work will not be blessed without our partnering with the Lord. He has chosen to use you as a partner in what He desires to do.

This article appeared this week in the San Francisco Chronicle . . .

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 yesterday. 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 gapped 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. I don't mean to be cute, but I see a real parallel with what we're called to do. I hear the faint yelp of people in Jacksonville and Grants Pass, people who are trapped by the devourer, the serpent, the devil. They're caught up in all kinds of stuff, deceived by what the world has to offer. And here's our Hero, Jesus Christ, Who will take the head of that serpent and begin to shake it even as Genesis foretold He would (Genesis 3:15).

Our job, then, as His Bride, is to join hand in hand with Him, binding the work of the enemy, allowing our families and our communities to be free. Do you hear the faint cry of people caught in the grasp of the enemy?

Will you say, 'Yes, Lord, I will partner with You through prayer, through intercession, with a focus in my life and a determination in my heart to obey You'? If that be our heart, if that be our prayer, our lives will begin to take on the peace and purpose, the stability and tranquility, the flavor and focus of Jesus.

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