

The Power of Attention – part 2

Opening scripture: Acts 3:1-8

V.4-5 - *⁴ And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, "Look at us." ⁵ So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them.*

Recap from last week: This is the scripture that launched us into last week's message regarding the power of attention.

Sometimes we limit the potential of what God could do in our lives simply because we are distracted. We miss God-ordained moments, we miss a life-changing word, we let miracles pass us by because of our inattentiveness.

We spoke about the fact that we live in a hurry, busy, surrounded with way too much white noise around us, too many distractions and interferences. We need to slow down, tone down (those other voices) and calm down – *Be still and know I am God.*

The power of attention

Acts 14:8-10 - *And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother's womb who had never walked. ⁹ This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed, ¹⁰ said with a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet!" And he leaped and walked.*

This man's condition is similar to the one in Acts 3. And exactly like in Acts 3, the major key to this miracle (apart from faith) was attention:

V.9 – *This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing...*

There is no distraction here, only attention – from both the man and from Paul. They're fully engaged in the moment.

One is hearing attentively and the other is observing intently. One, because he hears, received faith (faith comes by hearing); the other, sees faith in the man, and a powerful miracle then takes place. They engaged fully in that God-moment and all the blessing intended for that moment was not wasted but manifested.

How different that was from Martha. Jesus came right into her house (it doesn't get any better than that). However, she missed all the power and blessing of that visitation because she was distracted with many things.

What distraction does

Luke 10:40 – *But Martha was distracted with much serving... **V41** - ... Martha, Martha you are worried and troubled with many things...*

Martha's mind was distracted, worried and troubled... with many things. She made the unconscious choice of allowing pressure over priority. Jesus should have been her priority in that moment.

Paying attention to Jesus in our lives should always be our priority. We should resist the urge to succumb to pressure and the many things that distract our minds.

Hebrews 12:2 AMPC - *2 Looking away from all that will distract to Jesus, Who is the Leader and the Source of our faith...*

We have to acknowledge the fact that we live very distracted lives. Our focus is constantly being hijacked by different voices, disruptions of every kind, the pressures of life, digital technology – that omnipresent, constant invasion of notification sounds, adds, tweets, emails and the compulsion that so many of us feel to immediately attend to them – and while at it, checking also Facebook, Instagram or any of the other 212 major platforms.

None of those things are adding significant value to our existence. Whatever the sources of our distractions, the truth is 'distraction' is not working for us. It is not working to bring us closer to God or even to each other. We live more anxious than any other generation before us, we live more disconnected and we live more absent from the moment.

Daniel Goleman wrote, *"The more distracted we are, the more shallow our reflections, and the more trivial they are likely to be"*

As a society, our western culture has certainly become shallower. Spiritually speaking I believe that there is that risk also - that distracted believers will also have a faith that is more shallow, superficial – lacking the depth and the experience of a real encounter with God.

Action points

As I mentioned before, I believe we can limit the potential of what God could do in our lives, because of our distractions. We miss God-ordained moments, we let miracles pass us by because of our inattentiveness. I want us to look at one last passage so we can take home some action points.

Matthew 9:18, 23-25 - *8 While He spoke these things to them, behold, a ruler came and worshiped Him, saying, "My daughter has just died, but come and lay Your hand on her and she will live." ... 23 When Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd wailing, 24 He said to them, "Make room, for the girl is not dead, but sleeping." And they ridiculed Him. 25 But when the crowd was put outside, He went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose.*

There are plenty of distractions in this picture,

- There's a big crowd of people inside this man's house
- There were preparations for the funeral
- The crowd was noisy and wailing
- There were flute players

- Some in the crowd went from wailing to ridiculing Jesus, because of what He said.

There was a lot happening in that moment – and nothing conducive to the miraculous outcome we see at the end of the story.

Sometimes our lives are just as busy, inattentive, just as filled with confusion and conflicting voices. That is never the state that can lead us to a miraculous encounter.

There was no room for Jesus. He only went into the house in verse 25. But here's what Jesus did and what you and I need to do:

1. **Jesus addressed the crowd**

What is it that is 'crowding' your life right now? What are the many things filling your mind today? Address the distraction, identify what is interfering with your relationship with God. Don't ignore what you need to address.

2. **Jesus spoke to the many voices.**

This was a 'noisy crowd'. There was music and there were voices. There were voices wailing and there were voices mocking Jesus. One of the most important keys to a focused life is to tone down all the noise and voices around us, and to focus on the only voice that really matters: His voice.

3. **Jesus dismissed the crowd – *Make room!*** The NLT says, *Get out!*

V 25 says that when the crowd was put outside Jesus went in. For Jesus to truly come in, some things may have to go. Take inventory of what needs to go and ...let it go! Some things are worth letting go so we can gain Christ.

Philippians 3:8 NLT -Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ