

Focus your Life

... Do you feel overwhelmed with all that you have going on right now? The issue may be a failure to concentrate on God's mission. Instead of recognizing that his plans take priority over our plans, so often we fill our lives with other things—often very good things. If we eliminate the busyness that doesn't contribute to God's call on our lives, we can truly focus and simplify our lives. We see this biblically in the lives of Jesus and Paul.

When people around him wanted Jesus to do their will instead of God's, he refused. "And when day came, He departed and went to a lonely place; and the multitudes were searching for Him, and came to Him, and tried to keep Him from going away from them. But He said to them, 'I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose'" (Luke 4:42-43, NASB).

Later, when faced with a cruel death, rejection, and heartache, Jesus resolved to head to Jerusalem, knowing what would happen as essential to his mission: "Now when the days drew near for him to be taken up, Jesus set out resolutely to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51).

Despite the fact that Jesus failed to heal everyone, save everyone, or meet all the needs of others, at the end of his life he was able to say, "I glorified you on earth by completing the work you gave me to do" (John 17:4).

We, too, must determine to fulfill our God-given calling. That means there will be things left undone around us, things that God isn't calling us to do. We have to walk so closely with him that we recognize the difference and act accordingly.

... When we center our lives around our individual missions, as Jesus and Paul did, we must let some other opportunities and activities go. If we understand that God empowers us where he sends us, we realize that focusing on our callings maximizes our influence. I do more to affect others when I am about the work that God has specifically designed me to do than when I am doing anything else, as good as it may be.

In general, we decline opportunities outside our calling. They may be wonderful places to serve; they may have huge needs; but they are there for someone whose mission matches. In contrast, we agree to those openings that suit our unique calling.

When I am offered a place to serve, I look at my mission to see if the responsibility is in line with my gifting, experience, and burden. If not, I don't accept it. Calling helps prioritize the way I spend my time.

Applying this may involve something small, like saying no to cooking dinner for a new mom, or it can mean choosing to invest my time studying to teach rather than going door-to-door to evangelize. Once I began working full-time on a church staff, I realized that I could no longer take meals every time there was a cry for help; I also knew that God had plenty of other women available, and he didn't need me.

At this point you may be thinking that your present working situation isn't conducive to your mission. You may find yourself in a position that doesn't quite fit your gifting, yet you are stuck there because of circumstances beyond your control. Instead of thinking "job" when you consider focusing on your calling, think influence. How does your mission to influence the world intersect with the position you hold? Are there people there who need your encouragement and spiritual discernment? How can you fulfill your calling where you already are? God's kingdom plans may require you to be employed where you don't find happiness, where there is not a great fit for your gifting and burdens. A sense of purpose may come, however, when you learn to see every circumstance as your opportunity to complete your mission. Look for those opportunities and watch God at work.