



Experience 37: **Focus**

Tuesday, March 2, 2021

Philippians 4:8-9

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

We've talked about scripture memorization several times over the course of these 40 days of Powerful Worship. When I think about scripture memorization, I tend to think of John 3:16 or another verse like that – strong Biblical truth that's important for me to know and have handy at a moment's notice. Or I think of a verse like the one above, which gives me good advice on how to live my life. It's important to have these scriptures memorized and ready to pull out when I need them, which is often. But when we look at this challenge that Paul is giving to the Philippian church – “if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things” – what if we put that in the context of the life of Christ? What's more praiseworthy, after all, than the way He lived and interacted with people?

Memorizing stories is actually much easier than memorizing psalms or long passages of an epistle. A story has a beginning, a middle, and an end, and if we get to the beginning, our

minds are ready to fill in the middle and the end automatically once we've heard or read the story a few times.

Want to be encouraged by God's power in people's lives? Memorize the story of Jesus calming the storm. Then when you're faced with a situation where you feel overwhelmed, you'll have that story ready in your memory to pull up and encourage you. Feeling defeated by your sin? Try the story of the Prodigal Son. Worried about how you'll pay your bills this month? Turn to the story of Jesus feeding the 5,000. Or the moment when Jesus told Peter where to cast his nets to catch so many fish that the nets almost burst. For every situation we face, there is a story from Jesus' life that

can be the encouragement we need to turn our attention to whatever is "noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable."

There are so many moments from Jesus' life, so many parables that He told, that can provide an immediate shift in perspective when we apply them to something that we're going through. When we remind ourselves of who Jesus is and what He did, we can Focus on the truth of the situation – that God has it all under control, that we can trust Him, that He's present in our challenging situation – rather than focusing on our fears or worries.

Actions to take

- Look through the gospel of Mark (it's very action-packed!) and choose one story from Jesus' life that you like (or that speaks to you). Write the story (with the reference) in your journal. If you'd like, write down why you chose that story. What's encouraging to you in it?
- Each day this week, read the story over.
- Choose one person to tell the story to every day. This facilitates your memorization and has the side benefit of encouraging the person you're telling the story to. Even if you're just telling the story to your dog, you're reinforcing the story in your memory when you say it out loud.
- By the end of the week, that story should be firmly planted in your memory, ready to be retrieved whenever you need something excellent or praiseworthy to think about.