

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR *Real Life*

97. Our Focus Matters When It Comes to Distraction

You are listening to episode 97 of the Encouragement for Real Life Podcast titled, "Our Focus Matters When it Comes to Distraction." Hello, and welcome to the podcast today! I'm thrilled we get to journey through this short while together as we find hope and encouragement for our real lives today! Thanks for tuning in! Distractions in life are everywhere, aren't they? We've discussed many of them in past episodes. This is something I'm sold out on in helping women like you and me overcome distractions in our lives so we can live the abundant lives Jesus came to give us. So much so, I'm writing a book about it which will be released in October of this year. But the truth I'm learning over and over when it comes to distractions is this: our focus matters. This is the subject of today's episode, and through a story in the Bible, we will begin to understand just how important our focus is. So, without further delay, let's get right to it.

Each morning I'm asking God to teach me what I need to yet learn about distractions, and let me tell you, I'm learning a lot. I call it my 40 days of living undistracted, and today I'm on day 7. I pop in on Instagram every now and then to share some of what I'm learning. Over the weekend, God led me to an account in the Bible that puts in perspective how serious distractions in life are, and how important it is we learn how to overcome them. This story also enlightened me with a powerful truth.

Our focus matters.

You might be familiar with this story. It's found in the book of Matthew, chapter 14. Jesus had just fed 5,000 men, not including the women and children in the crowd, with just five loaves of bread and two fish. He sent the people to their homes and the disciples into a boat to go to the other side of the lake. Jesus went up into the hills by himself to pray.

This is when it gets interesting.

Beginning in verse 22 it reads in the NLT, Meanwhile, the disciples were in trouble far away from land, for a strong wind had risen, and they were fighting heavy waves. About three o'clock in the morning Jesus came toward them, walking on the water. When the disciples saw him walking on the water, they were terrified. In their fear, they cried out, "It's a ghost!"

But Jesus spoke to them at once. "Don't be afraid," he said. "Take courage. I am here!"

Then Peter called to him, "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water."

"Yes, come," Jesus said.

So, Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. But when he saw the strong wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink. "Save me, Lord!" he shouted.

Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. "You have so little faith," Jesus said. "Why did you doubt me?"

When they climbed back into the boat, the wind stopped. Then the disciples worshiped him. "You really are the Son of God!" they exclaimed.

So, let's unpack this a bit.

There are so many lessons for us here.

The winds and waves are battering the boat and the disciples are straining against them. Jesus comes to rescue them; except He's not coming to them by boat or by swimming. No, He's walking on the water. Because He's Jesus. He can do anything. Of course, they are frightened. I mean, have they ever seen a man walk on water before? Have you, or have I? No wonder they think Jesus is a ghost. Plus, I'm guessing it was hard to see on the lake with the wind blowing and the waves crashing.

Of course, Jesus tells them not to be afraid. And don't you just love how this translation reads he says, "Take courage. I am here!" We're going to come back to that in a minute.

Yet, Peter isn't so sure. In verse 28 he says, "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water." So, Jesus says to come.

Peter climbs out of the boat and walks on the water toward Jesus. Can you just image that for a moment? Walking on the water to Jesus? Imagine Peter's thoughts, his apprehension which likely turned to excitement, his realization of, "I'm actually walking on the water!" I can't even begin to guess all his thoughts, but I like to imagine them!

But his walking on the water quickly ends when, did you catch this," he saw the strong wind and the waves." Peter took his focus off of Jesus and put them on the wind and the waves. The distractions. It was then he became terrified and began to sink.

I can relate to Peter.

Maybe you can, too. How often am I excitedly walking with Jesus, which sometimes feels like I'm walking on water, focusing on Him, not having a care in the world, happy to know He's leading me and guiding me. When all of a sudden, I see the winds and the waves of this life. The unpleasant circumstances, the negative comments of another, the bad news, or the reminder of a health issue. And all of a sudden, I, like Peter, get scared and begin to sink. All because I took my focus off of Jesus.

Friend, our focus matters. More than we realize or understand.

The enemy of our souls doesn't want us close to Jesus. He doesn't want us to walk out God's call on our lives. He wants to keep us ineffective and unimpactful. So, he will do anything he can to keep us distracted from Jesus and from what's important. Whether that's wind and waves, or unpleasant circumstances, or a person's negative comment. He wants us to be fearful and to sink, and he certainly doesn't want us walking on water toward Jesus.

Yet, I can't help but wonder, what if Peter would have kept his focus on Jesus? How far would he have walked on that water? What would have happened when he got to Jesus? What would Jesus have said

and what would He have done? I also wonder would have happened if I would have kept my focus on Jesus, instead of putting it on the distractions of my life, instead?

Distractions aren't just annoying or bothersome. They are much more than that. They pull us away from Jesus and the life He calls us to live. The abundant life He came to give us. And as long as we're focused on distractions, we'll never get to experience truly walking on water with Jesus.

Then in verse 31 Jesus immediately grabs Peter out of the water and then rebukes him in a way asking, "You have so little faith," and questions him, "Why did you doubt me?" He says and asks the same things of us when we let distractions snatch our focus away from Him.

I desire for my faith to be big and strong and to never waver, don't you? And I never want to doubt Jesus, either. You too?

So, how do we overcome life's distractions?

These verses give us some answers.

1. Be willing to get out of the boat.
Did you notice Peter is the only one who asked to come out of the boat and walk on the water to Jesus? No one else was willing, but he was. Sometimes we need to let go of the distraction of comfort to follow Jesus into what's uncomfortable.
2. Keep our focus on Jesus.
Our focus matters. Where we focus, we will follow. If we focus on Jesus, we will follow Him. If we focus on the waves, well, we'll sink.
3. Ignore the distractions.
Distractions will always be present when we step out of the boat. They will either try to pull us back to the comforts of the boat or to affect us with fear or uncertainty. If we're going to walk to Jesus, we must ignore them and keep our focus straight ahead.
4. Trust Jesus who called us out of the boat.
If Jesus calls us out, we have nothing to fear. No distraction can thwart Jesus's plans and purposes for our lives. When we trust Him fully, He will lead us and guide us. And if we at all stumble, He will be right there to catch us

Yes, our focus matters.

Let's put it back where it belongs and keep it there. On Jesus.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. Hebrews 12:1-2a NLT

The distractions will continue to come, but we don't have to allow them room in our lives. Let's keep walking on the water toward Jesus. Amen? Amen!

We're taking this conversation over to our Encouragement for Real Life Community on Facebook. Come on over there to be encouraged and inspired when it comes to focus this week. The link to this group is in the show notes.

Also, if you were encouraged in this episode or found some hope for your real life today, would you consider leaving a rating and/or review? This helps others find this encouragement too. Subscribe to the podcast so you never miss an new episode.

Thanks for being here, friend. Stay focused! God bless you.

Links in this episode:

[Matthew 14:22-33](#) NLT

[Hebrews 12:1-2a](#) NLT

[Encouragement for Real Life Community](#)

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