

Glory
Allen Power
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Matthew 17:1-9

Opening: Do you struggle with staying focused? Show of hands: Group 1 – “I can focus my attention with no real problems.” Group 2 – “Sometimes focus is a problem.” Group 3 – _____? God has given humans an amazing gift called “selective attention” (Not selective hearing 😊) (Illustration: Annie’s birth – all I saw was my new daughter.)

What happened to me in that moment was a combination of “*selective attention*” + “*emotional salience*.” In emotionally powerful moments:

- The brain assigns maximum importance to one subject (my new daughter)
- Everything else becomes background noise
- Memory becomes vivid and centered on that one object

I didn’t *decide* to ignore everything else...my brain said: “*This is what matters most right now.*” Everything but Annie faded because I was emotionally focused on her.

In today’s text, Jesus’ inner circle of Peter, James, and John, had an experience with Him that caused them to see Him literally in a new light. They didn’t just see Jesus in His humanity, they saw Him in His glory and their view of Him was changed forever.

The Point: Some of us struggle with trying to remove distractions so we can know and love Jesus more deeply. Spiritual focus isn’t about removing distractions but seeing Jesus clearly. When Jesus is seen in His true glory, everything else fades from focus. As the hymnwriter said, when we turn our “*eyes upon Jesus...the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.*” Our job is to stay focused on Him.

(NLT) — 1 Six days later Jesus took Peter and the two brothers, James and John, and led them up a high mountain to be alone. **2** As the men watched, Jesus’ appearance was transformed so that his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as light. **3** Suddenly, Moses and Elijah appeared and began talking with Jesus.

- This event is recorded in all three synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke).
- Verse two says Jesus’ appearance was “transformed” or “transfigured” by God’s glory. “*His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as light.*”
- Old Testament students will think of Moses in Exodus 34:29–35, when his face shone after being in God’s presence on Mount Sinai—but Moses reflected God’s glory, while Jesus radiated glory that was His own.
- Jesus was not becoming something new, His divine glory which He had given up when he came to earth (Philippians 2:6–7) was being revealed to these three.
- Verse three: Suddenly Jesus was talking with Moses and Elijah. Of all the Old Testament characters, why do you think God placed Moses and Elijah here?

- Jesus said in His sermon on the mount (**Matthew 5:17 NLT**) — 17 “Don’t misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose.
- One Commentator made an interesting observation: “*So here, on this one mountain, is the first author of Scripture (Moses), the last author of Scripture (John) and the one of whom the Scriptures speak: Jesus himself.*”ⁱ
- This is why we say from what the Holy Spirit inspired Moses to write in Genesis to what John wrote in Revelation, all of scripture points us to see Jesus.
- Luke’s account tells us Moses and Elijah were “*were speaking about [Jesus] exodus from this world, which was about to be fulfilled in Jerusalem.*”ⁱⁱ
- Verse four: Impulsive, excitable Peter just couldn’t contain himself!

4 Peter exclaimed, “Lord, it’s wonderful for us to be here! If you want, I’ll make three shelters as memorials—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”

- Why was Peter’s outburst understandable? How do we sometimes feel that way?
- Peter had good intentions. He wanted that “mountaintop moment” to last, but Jesus didn’t come for the glory on the mountain, He came for a cross on a hill.
- Thankfully, the Heavenly Father speaking from Heaven bailed Peter out.

5 But even as he spoke, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy. Listen to him.”

- The Father affirmed what He had spoken at Jesus’ baptism (Matt. 3:17): “*This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy,*” but He added something significant for the inner circle—and for us today: “*Listen to Him.*”

6 The disciples were terrified and fell face down on the ground. **7** Then Jesus came over and touched them. “Get up,” he said. “Don’t be afraid.”

- Here is where I want us to focus our attention on how this applies to us:

8 And when they looked up, Moses and Elijah were gone, and they saw only Jesus.

- “*...they saw only Jesus.*” I realize those words simply describe, factually, what happened, but they jumped off the page to me as an important truth.
- When we studied Matthew 14 about Jesus walking on the water I said, “*When you see Jesus clearly for Who He is, you will worship Him.*” (Matthew 14:32)
- Last week: “*When we clearly see Jesus, we will follow Him whatever the cost.*”
- After Jesus’ inner circle saw Him in His glory, their view of Him was changed forever. What do you think changes in a person’s life when they truly see Jesus for who He is?
- So, how can we see Jesus in His glory? Remember Jeremy’s sermon last week in John chapter one? John later wrote about this experience in **John 1:14 (ESV)** — **14** And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

- Here is another connection between Jesus and Moses. In **Exodus 33:18–20 (ESV)** — 18 Moses said, “Please show me your glory.” God said, “I will pass by and reveal my goodness and mercy but my full presence is too overwhelming for any person to see and live. You’ll have to hide in the cleft of a rock only see me from behind as I pass by.”
- Here is the encouraging truth for us: because Jesus died and we are clothed in His righteousness, His followers can know Him personally and experience His presence through His indwelling Spirit as we grow to be more like Him.
- The word **transfigured** (*metemorphōthē*;) means “changed in form”;ⁱⁱⁱ That same Greek word is used in these verses:
 - **Romans 12:2 (ESV)** — 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind... (emphasis mine)
 - **2 Corinthians 3:18 (ESV)** — 18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. (emphasis mine)
- Jesus was transfigured by revealing His glory; we are transformed by reflecting His glory. How can Christ-followers do that with the help of the Holy Spirit?
- Warren Wiersbe wrote: *“We do not have to wait for heaven to share in this ‘transfiguration glory.’ When we surrender ourselves to God, He will ‘transfigure’ our minds (Rom. 12:1–2). As we yield to the Spirit of God, He changes (transfigures) us ‘from glory to glory’ (2 Cor. 3:18). As we look into the Word of God, we see the Son of God and are transfigured by the Spirit of God into the glory of God.”^{iv}*
- When we fix our eyes on Jesus in all His glory, we don’t become glorious like Him by nature—but we are gradually changed to look more like Him in character.
- That is what can happen this side of Heaven, but even more exciting is what we see in 1 John chapter three. John writes that one day in eternity we will see Jesus fully and we will “be like Him, because we [will] see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2).”

9 As they went back down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, “Don’t tell anyone what you have seen until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”

- We said Jesus gave up His glory to come to earth. It would be returned to Him in the resurrection.
- In His High Priestly prayer Jesus prayed: *“And now Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.”* (John 17:5)

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- **Hebrews 12:2 (NIV)** says we run the race of the Christian life by *“fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith...”* We need to see “only Jesus.”
- Illustration: Zoom and Teams calls with a blurred background and “speaker” view vs “gallery” view. Good luck focusing on the speaker and ignoring everyone else!
- The goal of following Jesus isn’t a distraction-free life—that’s not realistic.
- The goal is a Christ-focused life—where His glory is so clear everything else finds its proper place.

- Let's get practical. It can be a real challenge to stay focused to see Jesus clearly. When life starts to feel cluttered or noisy and you lose your focus on Jesus what helps you personally refocus on Him?
- Here are some Practical Ways to Stay Focused on Jesus
 - Read Scripture daily — especially the Gospels (that show Jesus clearly)
 - Slow down and reflect — ask, “*What does this show me about Jesus?*”
 - Turn truth into prayer — respond, don't just read
 - Use worship music/hymns to refocus your heart
 - Guard time with God — make it a priority, not leftover time
 - Don't try to eliminate every distraction—keep returning focus to Jesus.
 - When things are tough during the day, pause and “see Jesus.” He cares.
 - When we experience moments of joy, pause and “see Jesus.” Thank Him.
 - When tempted and frustrated, pause and “see Jesus” What would He do?
 - Remember the Father's voice on the mountain? Not only should we to turn our eyes to Jesus (focusing on His love, grace, and majesty), we must turn our ears to Him—listening to His commands and obeying Him.
- When Jesus is seen in His true glory, everything else fades from focus.
- As the hymnwriter said, when we turn our “*eyes upon Jesus...the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.*”
- This week let's “fix our eyes” so we can “see only Jesus.”

ⁱ Campbell, I. D. (2008). *Opening up Matthew* (p. 105). Day One Publications.

ⁱⁱ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Lk 9:31). Tyndale House Publishers.

ⁱⁱⁱ Barbieri, L. A., Jr. (1985). Matthew. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 59). Victor Books.

^{iv} Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 61). Victor Books.