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THE POWER OF ONE HOUR

FOCUS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE in your life. When you focus for a set amount of time, this difference elevates into becoming an impact. When discipline joins focus, you can change your world, and ministers need to be world-changers.

I have always had a passion to change the world. I believe when God calls you, He gives you an insatiable passion to want to make a difference with your life. When you are making a difference, peace abides. When you are not, discontentment abounds.

Discontentment in ministry occurs for many reasons. The seed of discontentment is born when our lens becomes blurred. What we see and how we see things will determine so much about life. It will also determine whether or not you are changing the world.

In this busy, fast-paced, high-tech, schedule-driven world, we can lose our focus very easily. In other words, the lens can become very blurred. This is why we strive to formulate the discipline of focus.

I cannot control various events and decisions made in Northwest Arkansas, any more than I can control them in Washington, D.C., Atlanta, Dallas, Tokyo, London, or Jerusalem. I cannot determine the attitudes of the people in my own church, or better yet, even my own staff team.

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IN
YOUR LIFE AND MINISTRY
IF YOU FOCUSED FOR
ONE HOUR DAILY ON ONE
THING ALONE?

What I can control is my focus. Even when I may not want to or feel like it, I am convinced that I can bridle and train myself to focus.

What would happen in your life and ministry if you focused for one hour daily on one thing alone? What would happen if your focus was so tight for that one hour that it was as piercing as a laser beam? I believe you would begin to discover the power of one hour.

LET ME TELL YOU A STORY

When I was in college, I received one of the greatest challenges in life and ministry I have ever received. It was not in a classroom for theology or ministry, even though I was challenged there. The challenge did not pertain to my dating life or my financial status. The challenge came from a man of God.

I traveled with a friend to the Dallas and Fort Worth metroplex to attend a Bible conference. My friend's dad was on the speaking circuit for conferences such as these. He called his son and told him that he could get us in the presence of a man

of God if we desired. We were hungry and thirsty for God, so the decision was easy.

Following the late dismissal of that worship session, a man of God who had preached that evening denied himself and went to dinner with a couple of young preachers. As we ate dinner that night, he mentored us. He answered many questions and just loved us with biblical and practical truth.

Just before we left, I asked him this question: *“If you could tell me one thing I could do as a minister that would really make a difference, what would it be?”* I really thought he would tell me about some ministry or repeat to me some sermon he had preached. He did not.

Without any hesitancy, he made a statement I have never forgotten to this day. He looked at me from under his bushy eyebrows with piercing eyes and said: *“Ronnie, if you could begin to spend one hour a day with God, there is no telling what God will do with you.”* He did not call it what I call it, but he introduced me on that late night to the principle of “the power of one hour.”

I was young and dumb, but hungry and thirsty for God. I did not have any better sense than to implement that principle immediately. I am so glad the Holy Spirit enabled me to do so. I have learned the power of one hour.

A DEFINING MOMENT

What the Lord gave me that night was a defining moment. That moment has impacted and made a difference in my life as much as anything in these years of ministry.

It became a defining moment for me personally even to this day, for my family in every way, for every church I have served, especially the people of God I have shepherded for these 20 years consecutively, and for the ministry God has given me across the world. Without that moment, I probably would have become shipwrecked because of the challenges of the ministry. I promise you that I would have become very disillusioned with life and ministry. My ego and drive would have been like a car out of control on an icy road. The lens through which I viewed everything would have become very blurry.

Through the years, this hour with God has taken on all kinds of appearances and levels of maturity. Even though it occurred in various ways while in college and during my early seminary days, it was while working on my master's and doctoral degrees that it became stamped on my heart to take place in the early morning. Even though my full-time pastorate was one hour from the seminary I was attending four days a week, I was faithful to observe the power of one hour.

This defining moment not only defined me, but also defined my ministry calling and church. You can give your life to a thousand issues daily. You must give yourself to God daily.

As a minister, I am not talking about sermon preparation time. I am talking about letting God speak to your life through His Word. I am talking about you becoming the prayer warrior God wills you to become. I am talking about you letting God lead you into some deep moments with Him that will impact everything you do. You know, change your world.

I have discovered through the years that the degree to which God changes me will usually be the degree to which I change the world. I cannot expect to change “the world” until I let God have more than ample opportunity to “change my world by changing me first.”

Five days a week, my day begins far before dawn as love for God, His Word, my needs, ministry, and discipline call me to my initial hour with God. If travel occurs, it usually interrupts the early morning to a degree. On Friday and Saturday, I try to sleep in later, just to ensure my body is prepared for my Super Bowl each Sunday which is the Lord’s Day. Regardless of the day or the location or the challenge, I do not compromise the power of that hour I spend with God.

THE STEAM ENGINE

Rest assured, it is not legalism to me. I am a man in which grace abounds. This is not about me feeling like I am spiritual, and doesn’t serve as one more thing I must check off of my daily task list. No, this is about God showing me many years ago that my walk with Him would be like the steam engine of an old locomotive train.

Would you use your imagination for a moment? Imagine a locomotive train of years ago. You had the steam engine, the cars, and the caboose. Life and ministry is filled with many of the cars on that train. The final car, the caboose of life, is usually as they say, “the tail that wags the dog.” Somehow it disengages from the other cars, or if you are not careful, becomes more significant than the steam engine itself.

By design and verified in history, where the steam engine went, the cars followed, even the caboose. The power of the steam engine was tied to one thing: the power of the wood or coal that was shoveled in to keep the engine burning effectively.

Your personal walk with God becomes your steam engine in the train of life and ministry. When disarray and disorder are occurring, your walk can keep you aligned enough to keep the cars on the track of life, heading in the right direction. Sometimes you sense they are off the track and they are, but how you view what is happening will be determined by one thing: your perspective. You know, the way you see things.

Your personal walk with God that receives focus on the first hour of the day, every day, will help you keep the lens clear. What will it take? Focus and discipline.

REALITIES

Reality television is huge in media markets today. It just cuts through the stuff and gives you the actual reality that is happening. People are sick and tired of plastic ministers building plastic churches. This is why authenticity is now the buzz. Get real with me.

Reality #1

Your walk with God determines everything about your life. This does not mean that life will not have moments of suffering or challenge. Suffering will always be a part of life. What it does mean is that the degree to which you walk with God will determine the degree of everything else you experience in life.

Through your walk with God, you will keep perspective. Through your walk, you will eventually know where the Lord is leading you. Through your walk, you will have the power to endure the challenges of church life today. Through your walk, you will gain insight and wisdom for decision-making. Through

SATAN IS OUT TO DESTROY MINISTERS AND CHURCHES. IT IS OUR WALK WITH GOD THAT CAN BE THE ARTILLERY TO WIN OVER HIS DEMONIC FORCES.

your walk, you can live above the temptations and ethical challenges of our culture. Through your walk, you will be able to win over the flaming missiles that are hurled toward you by Satan himself.

Satan is out to destroy ministers and churches. It is our walk with God that can be the artillery to win over his demonic forces. As your walk with God goes, so goes the rest of your life.

Reality #2

As you deepen your walk with God, He will broaden your influence. This does not mean you will be the next Billy Graham, Rick Warren, T.D. Jakes, or Joel Osteen. God alone determines whom He raises up, not us. We cannot manipulate Him in any way.

What we can do is deepen our walk with Him. Usually when this occurs, there is something that happens with our influence. God seems to open doors in our relationships, opportunities, and ministry. He seems to be able to trust us with more because He knows He is our life, and our walk with Him is superior to all other people, places, or things.

You cannot expect God to do the miraculous if you are not focused on your personal walk with Him. You cannot expect God to do something *through* you if you are not allowing Him to work *in* you every day of your life.

God expanding your influence does not guarantee a bigger ministry or church. You have missed it if you equate the two. It means that wherever you are serving you are not only

being faithful, but fruitful.

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You are being fruitful *beyond* the level of your giftedness, *beyond* your church's resources, and living in the supernatural lane of ministry. If you want to see what God will do through you, it all begins with what God is doing in you.

Ministers forfeit their leadership, influence, and ministry when they do not spend time with God daily. Honestly, you even forfeit your paycheck. If your love for God and His Word does not exude enough through you that you desire to make a difference, then reality should tell you that this needs to change in your life.

You cannot control the world, or even various facets of your world. What you can do is focus in on one hour every day that will give you the potential to see things the way God does as He empowers you to live and minister supernaturally.

Reality #3

The power of one hour transcends into every segment of life. Even though I have concentrated on the power of one hour with God and what it will do in your life and ministry, do not forget this principle crosses over into every segment of life. *Do not settle!* You can become more in your life.

If you give yourself to doing anything for one hour a day consistently, you have the potential to become an expert. You have the potential to become proficient in something that you may know little about today.

Just think how great you would feel physically if you gave yourself five days a week to one hour of exercise. The reality is that 30 minutes a day, five days a week consistently with the proper diet can send you into a new orbit physically. The result will not only be that you will feel and look better, but it will also have impact in every area of your life. This is why focus and discipline are both essential.

Imagine what you could learn if for one hour a day you e-mailed, called, and surfed the web, just to learn about great churches and what they are doing to set them apart. Wherever you are serving, that ministry can be impacted by the knowledge you gain from other churches. Of course, you do have to filter it through your own culture and personal giftedness, but your church *will* become more effective.

What do you want to know more about? What do you want to become better at doing? Apply “the power of one hour” principle with focus and discipline and you will be amazed at what occurs.

While learning and living this lesson, I believe you will change your world. The power of one hour with God that occurs with focus and discipline consistently will create a ministry world full of adventure and spiritual power. Remember, there is nothing like it in the world.

Remember: *“So, couldn’t you stay awake with Me one hour? Stay awake and pray, so that you won’t enter into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak”*
(Matt. 26:40–41).