

Sermon Notes

ONE

ONE CHURCH: Part 21 “Focus Gives Clarity”

February 21, 2021

Karl Helvig

Acts 23

Introduction

Complexity complicates things.

Life is complicated.

Complexity is like a **white out**.

Focus gives clarity in the midst of complexity.

Paul
Ananias
Soldiers

Acts 22:30–23:11

gnōtai asphales – to know with certainty

Roman Law
Roman Authorities
Jewish Law
Jewish Theology
Jewish Authorities
Competing Versions of the Story

Paul had clarity of focus.

They are all standing in the room with him. This challenging circumstance is actually a compelling opportunity.

Do you know the focus of your life?

How might your focus bring clarity to your experience of complexity?

Confusion - What should I do?

Avoidance - Pass the problem to someone else.

Delay - I'll make a decision later.

Your Move

When you experience the challenges of complexity, having a clear **focus** will provide **clarity** in the midst of confusion.

How do I find greater focus?

Homework:

JOURNALING - Each of us has a number of different spheres in which we live our lives. These spheres include our family, our vocation, our hobbies or interests, our physical/emotional/mental health, our finances, and others. Choose two or three of the spheres of your life in which you believe you would most benefit from greater clarity of focus. Spend some time journaling answers to these questions for each of these spheres.

What is confusing or unclear for me in this area?

Why do I want clarity? What is my real motivation?

If I could wave a magic wand and suddenly have focus in this area of my life, what would that look like? What benefits might I expect? What challenges do I fear?

What is one thing I could do now to start moving toward that kind of focus?

SCRIPTURE STUDY - Two options

1) For Paul, the resurrection was the centerpiece of his mission. He wanted to tell people that Jesus had been dead, but now he was alive again. Here are several scriptures in which Paul talks about the resurrection. Read them and answer the questions below as you observe the ways Paul describes the significance of the resurrection.

Romans 1:1-6; Romans 6:1-7; I Corinthians 15; Philippians 3:1-14

Why does Paul talk about the resurrection in each passage?

What is the significance of the resurrection in each passage?

What themes stand out to you as you read these passages?

Based on how Paul describes the significance of the resurrection in his life, how might the resurrection become more significant in your own life?

2) One place to start when looking for greater focus from God in your life is to consider what gifts God has given you. There are lots of different ways to identify what those gifts are, but here is one simple place to start. The New Testament has a few places where a list of God-given gifts is written out. Take some time to read through these scriptures, then ask yourself these questions.

Romans 12:6-8; I Corinthians 12:8-10; Ephesians 4:7, 11-13

(Note, the meaning of some of the gifts listed is self evident. Others are a little more confusing. Try not to let yourself get distracted by the nuance of definitions. Rather, think about what God is telling you and what your life experience confirms for you.)

Which of these gifts is most evident in my life?

What stories or experiences from your past confirm this gift in your life?

When have you had someone else confirm this gift (or other gifts) in your life?

Who are some trusted companions in your life that you could ask whether they see this gift in your life?

What would it look like to put even more focus on using this gift God has given you?

What is something specific you can do this week to more fully use this gift?

PRAYER - Over the past weeks, we have asked, "Do you know the sound of God's voice?" If God spoke to you, would you know it was God talking? If that seems like a strange question, consider listening to CCC's new podcast, Centered. There, you will learn ancient practices that will help you push aside distraction, find quiet, and over time learn to hear God's voice. Our new Centered website, ccc-centered.org, is also live. There you will find original artwork that is integral to each podcast episode. For our D/HH community (and everyone, really), the website itself provides the same full experience as the podcast.

Study Guide

ONE

Part 21: Focus gives clarity Acts 23

Introduction:

Where in your life are you experiencing the greatest complexity? What are some of your normal responses in the midst of challenging circumstances like these?

Karl said there are three common responses to complexity:

Confusion

Avoidance

Delay

Share a time when you personally responded in one of these ways?

Read Acts 23

Paul finds himself caught between the Roman and Jewish authorities while his life is also being threatened by an angry mob. Take a moment and talk about what it would have been like for Paul to experience this dangerous and chaotic moment. Describe the thoughts or emotions he might have had throughout this series of events.

Karl said that focus provides clarity in the midst of complexity. For Paul, focus came from the words Jesus spoke to him, “You will proclaim my good news to the Gentiles and their kings, and to the people of Israel. I will show you how much you must suffer for my name.” How are these words from Jesus providing clarity to Paul in this circumstance?

In the midst of complexity, when have you experienced clarity that came from focus?

Have you ever had to make an important but difficult life decision and found that God provided the clarity you needed to make the decision?

Your Move:

In the past few weeks, we have been talking about finding the ONE Focus that God gives our lives. Would you say that you definitely have a clear focus in life, that you think you have a focus but it is still fuzzy, or that you honestly can't say you have a clear focus?

What do you need to do to find greater clarity of focus in your life? Are any of the response activities from the sermon good options for you to consider?