

Six Key Focus Areas You Don't Want to Miss

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Focus is hard right now. For starters, COVID fatigue is real. It is hard to keep focused in the midst of what's becoming a long-term grind. Just tuning out and ducking for cover in the increasingly ugly battles on social media is a real temptation.

There is also a lot going on right in front of us. There's chaos, complexity, change and uncertainty. It can consume us. We can end up zooming in too close and lose the forest for the trees. As you begin to transition toward fall, your focus will be incredibly important.

Let me share six specific focus areas that you do not want to miss as a Christian leader:

1. God at Work –

In my lifetime, I do not think that the entire world has grappled with the same challenge over an extended period of time like we are right now with COVID. While God's ways may be somewhat mysterious, we can be confident God is still very much at work. He is always about His business. Look for, pray for, help facilitate and joyfully celebrate the bright spots of God's work in and around you. What is it about God's character that gives you strength and hope right now? How has God been helping, shaping, and working in this crazy time? Be focused on sharing your answers to these questions. Hearing how God is still at work can bring our world needed help and hope.

2. Pray for America –

What happens in America is incredibly important. It is not just important to Americans but to the world. This fall's upcoming U.S. election is unlike any I can remember. There's COVID plus a climate of deep division and distrust plus incredibly important issues at hand. Prayer for America needs to be a key focus for Jesus-followers everywhere.

3. See the World –

It is important to focus on the challenges right in front of us. There's figuring mask protocol, back-to-school plans, whether to gather or not to gather, how to gather and the list goes on. However, we cannot lose sight of the brutal challenges COVID is bringing to parts of the world with very limited infrastructure and scarce financial resources. Do not miss intentionally praying for and creatively mobilizing resources for God's work through churches and non-profits far from home. This is the time to double down with focus on God's global mission.

4. Self-Care –

Even if you have not been on a plane since COVID started, you can likely remember the flight attendant's direction to put on your own oxygen mask first in the case of cabin depressurization. Though it seems you should first help others, if you do not take care of yourself first, then you will not be able to help others. The impact of the grind of COVID on Christian leaders is very real. There may even be impact that you cannot even see or feel right now. Keep focused on taking care of yourself. Find and guard healthy rhythms of rest and restoration. This grind may be longer than we think, and you need to stay and be healthy.

5. Racism and Injustice –

The murder of George Floyd on May 25 was a catalyst to ignite a groundswell of momentum toward needed and deep change. However, with the passage of time plus the grind of COVID plus the depth of these issues, it can be easy to lose focus and momentum. This would be a further tragedy. The hard work of deep change does take time, but to get there requires persevering focus.

6. Jesus –

My 2020 has included COVID plus an unexpected journey of breast cancer and chemotherapy for my wife, Lea. My go-to verse has been Psalm 16:8. It says, "I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not stumble." I have found that keeping your eyes always on the Lord is easier said than done. The wind and the waves of COVID, life and leadership can powerfully draw, capture, and consume my focus. To keep our eyes on the Lord, we need to choose, by God's grace, to pivot our focus. Our eyes need to focus to the side, to our right hand. The Lord is there. He is with you. He is right beside you. Keep your eyes on Him. Let Him look ahead at the winds and waves. He can deal with them. Focusing on Jesus is the key to not stumbling.