

Finding Clarity

Jesus had an incredible day. He started by teaching in the synagogue. Then he visited and healed a friend's mother-in-law. That evening, the entire town gathered at his door with all their sick and demon-possessed folks. He healed many people with various diseases and drove out demons.

Quite a day! Invigorating, unforgettably intense and likely spiritually, emotionally and physically exhausting.

The next morning when everyone woke up, they began to look for Jesus. After the miraculous night before, they likely longed to see Jesus do even more. But Simon and his companions couldn't find Jesus. He was gone!

As Mark writes, "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place where he prayed" (1:35). Jesus had chosen to pull away. He likely needed space to catch his breath, give thanks, enjoy intimacy with Father and Spirit, process what had happened, guard his heart from the expectations and praise of others and listen closely for whatever God was calling him to next.

When Simon found Jesus, he didn't find a frazzled, frenetic, frayed or fatigued Jesus lost in a mental fog. Instead, he found Jesus with great clarity, surprising focus and deep confidence. In Mark 1:38 Jesus said to Simon, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." For Jesus, his next steps were clear, and he was ready to lean into his calling—even though this direction may have surprised or even disappointed others.

Pulling away for prayer and perspective wasn't a one-time event for Jesus. It was a regular rhythm, even though he was very busy! Prayer is not a luxury for quiet seasons. It's a rhythm that can radically and positively change your (and my) head and heart space—especially in the midst of crisis and difficult leadership seasons.

This rhythm and practice of pulling away can take various forms and it can be done in limited time. Here are some practical ideas:

Go for a walk or exercise – I'm a runner and pulling away can mean going on a run to quiet and clear my head. I try to step away from my work every afternoon and take 15 minutes to walk around the block.

Silence – With so much media noise, silence can refocus you. Rather than starting the day with your newsfeed, take 3-5 minutes of silence as you start your day and add short windows of silence during your day.

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Scripture – We need a steady diet of God’s Word, and this discipline is even more important in times of crisis. Don’t let the news, social media cycle or workload deter you from engaging God’s Word. One simple idea is to focus on one verse of Scripture and return to it several times that day. Write it on a post-it note, and put it on your laptop screen or car dashboard. Pause at lunch to read Scripture

Restore – Former U.S. Defense Secretary and former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell led at the highest level and served in many challenging roles and situations. In extremely stressful settings, Powell regularly made incredibly difficult decisions about complex problems that literally impacted the lives of many people and entire nations.

Surprisingly, he has publicly shared that one of way he learned to cope with the pressure was by tinkering with old Volvos. In several postings, Powell would have some old Volvos towed to buildings on the military base. After a long day in difficult meetings or even commanding a war, he would break for an hour and tinker with his cars. As Powell said, “...there was nothing that was greater fun for me or more relaxing than a zero-sum problem with the car.” Spending time working on a carburetor would clear his mind, give him a sense of accomplishment and allow him to return to his role with renewed focus and energy.

What could you do to clear your head today? It may be the difference between having clarity, focus and confidence or not.

About Dr. Steve Brown: Steve is husband to Lea and dad to three teens - Luke, Ainslea and Lauren. Based near Vancouver, BC, Steve develops Jesus-centered leaders as President of Arrow Leadership, an organization focused on developing Jesus-centered leaders. He’s the author of "Leading Me - Eight Key Practices for a Christian Leader’s Most Important Assignment", "Great Questions for Leading Well" and www.sharpeningleaders.com.

He loves communicating, coaching, and creating resources for leaders. Steve also teaches at Tyndale Seminary’s Doctor of Ministry Program.



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