

Who Gets Your Attention First?

What gets your attention first thing in the morning?



- The annoying noise screaming from your alarm clock?
- The stare of Spot the Wonder Dog, whose eyes are communicating, "I should probably go outside so we don't have another 'incident'"?
- The laughter of your kids, the crash of a breaking glass, and a quiet, "Uh-oh"?
- The smell of coffee?

It doesn't stop. Throughout the day, things scream for your attention.

- The continual onslaught of text messages and emails.
- The drone of the TV
- Someone stopping by with the question, "You got a minute?"

I believe it was Leonard Sweet who described our culture as a culture of attention deficit disorder. This is not referring to those who have been medically diagnosed with ADHD, but the temptation our culture throws at us to flit from one thing to the next.

- We settle in on a task and PING!—a text message is calling, "Hey, look at me!"
- One news channel continually runs a banner: BREAKING NEWS. Everything is breaking news to them, but that banner gets me everytime. *"What? Breaking news? I'd better stop and see what's happened."*
- Channel surfing is both a symptom of FOMO: the fear of missing out and an inability to stay focused on one program.

I'm not immune. I channel surf and I am currently reading four books and listening to a fifth. Don't be impressed; it largely grows out of a desire to frequently change subjects (i.e., not focus too much on one thing).

Whether we want them to or not, people, things, and tasks are continually vying for our attention. We can't help that, but let me ask a more pointed question:

What do you *give* your attention to? A lot of things can be raising their hands, screaming like six-year-olds, "Pick me! Pick me!" but it's our choice who we give our attention to.

SIDE NOTE TO THOSE WHO MULTI-TASK. Multi-tasking is a myth. Research has shown multi-taskers are no more productive than the rest of us; in many cases, they are less productive. The key is to focus on one thing. Multi-tasking is just another way of saying we flit from one thing to another.

The poet John Ciardi said, "We are what we do with our attention."

We wake up with things calling for our attention, but the absolute best thing we can do—first thing in the morning—is give our attention to God. That's what Jesus did.

"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he got up, went out, and made his way to a deserted place; and there he was praying" (Mark 1:35).



If Jesus made the Father His primary focus in the morning, maybe we should too. I made a decision years ago not to turn on a TV or computer until I've given my attention to God's Word. Over a bowl of raisin bran, I read Scripture. I pray. I journal. On days I commute into Nashville, I spend half my drive listening to Scripture and the other half praying.

It makes a world of difference in the rest of my day. When we focus on God first, it keeps us rightly focused through the rest of the day. St. John of the Cross was a 16th-century mystic who described prayer as giving our loving attention to God.

Who gets your loving attention in the morning?

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