

It Is Written

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Staying Focused or Being Distracted?

By Brian Meade

Staying focused on the task at hand requires that we put our full attention to what we are currently doing. The enemy of keeping our focus is often called a distraction—and Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines it as, “*to draw or direct (something, such as someone's attention) to a different object or in different directions at the same time.*”

When we're driving down the road in an automobile, we should not be constantly drawn away from the road for unnecessary distractions. There is the danger of letting our cell phone, the radio, the temperature controls, or even that mocha latte from Starbucks distract us from being a safe driver.

The National Safety Council reports that cell phone use while driving leads to 1.6 million crashes each year. Nearly 330,000 injuries occur each year from accidents caused by texting while driving. 1 out of every 4 car accidents in the United States is caused by texting and driving.

The application of this is obvious to us in the spiritual realm, and with even greater consequences. When (or if) we lose our focus, it can have the potential to ruin our spiritual productivity and thus, can ultimately lead to our condemnation in the Day of Judgment.

In the parable of the sower in Luke 8:14, Jesus makes the spiritual application for us when He said, “The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity.”

Jesus teaches us that the seed, when planted in the thorny heart, will not produce any fruit to maturity because they are too worried and concerned about the things of this world only. In Mark's parallel account of the sower parable, Jesus says, “...and the desires for other things enter in...” (Mark 4:19). It can very well be that some people are just too concerned about making money to the point that that is their number one goal in life! They will voluntarily work as many hours as possible and overtime too, just to chase the “almighty dollar.” To them, that is the only pursuit that really matters in this life, and have no time for spiritual pursuits. Some will be more concerned with keeping up with their material goods of this life— they are always cleaning and washing their automobiles, slaving to keep their house immaculate, mowing their grass, raking the leaves, and maybe working on a new project to improve their home. These things are not bad in and of themselves, but if people choose to neglect their spiritual life to do these things— it becomes a distraction! It is often that people will choose Sunday as a day to catch up on yard-work and never dream of going to church to hear God's word. Or they choose Sunday as a day to go fishing, boating, camping, and recreating with the family at the lake. These are not bad things to do with our family, but there is a time and place to do everything.

Some want to pursue fun and entertainment over the things of Christ kingdom. Their goal in this is pleasing self and is somewhat hedonistic in nature. To them, going to church services is not fun or entertaining, therefore it is

neglected completely! Even Christians have been known to put on the spiritual blinders of worldliness and have paid the price in being unproductive and unfruitful in Christ's kingdom. That is a dangerous thing to do since Jesus tells us plainly to be fruitful in our service to Him. Notice in John 15:2, “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.” God wants and expects all Christians to bear much fruit in the kingdom

(John 15:8; Titus 2:14).

Distractions are to be Avoided.

Paul the Apostle taught us to avoid distractions in what we do for Christ in 2 Timothy 2:4, “No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.” Paul is basically telling Timothy to do as soldiers do when they are active in the service as a soldier. As we know, a soldier who is fighting the enemy has to have complete focus on the battle at hand. If there is something that is drawing away his attention away from fighting the enemy, he will be an easy opponent for them to defeat. That’s why soldiers of today can’t be reading the newspaper, looking at photos of the wife and kids, or talking on their cell phones when the enemy is attacking! Can you imagine the ineffectiveness of such an army that is more concerned about worldly affairs of this life than winning the battle?

But God wants us to be effective soldiers who will win many battles over temptation, sin, religious error, and worldly behavior or conduct. The only way we can really be effective and productive in Christ’s service is to stay focused on our mission to save souls, be a good example to others in zeal, and grow as a Christian should. To do this and please the Lord, we must avoid any distractions that will only hinder us.

“Is This The Same Peter Who Denied Jesus THREE TIMES?”

By Jarrod Jacobs

Recently, I received the following question in response to a video I did where I taught from I Peter 3:1-7. As I thought about an answer, I know a simple “Yes” would suffice. Then I wondered if this would have been the kind of reaction Peter got to his preaching when he was alive.

Perhaps someone who heard Peter preach on Pentecost might have thought, “Is this the same Peter who denied Jesus three times just a month and a half ago?” Might some apostle, in a moment of weakness, have wondered the same thing as Peter opened the door to the kingdom that the world might know salvation (Acts 2:38; Matt. 16:16-19)? We do not read about things like this in the New Testament, but because people are people, I am sure that this was not an original question our viewer asked me.

What about Peter? Might there have been times when he might have asked this of himself? Might he have wondered, “Who am I to preach the truth? I denied Christ three times!” I know Paul felt guilt over the sins of his past (Acts 22:4-5, 26:9-11; I Corinthians 15:9; I Tim. 1:12-15). Surely, it would not be a stretch of the imagination to think these types of feelings would haunt Peter from time to time as well.

Yet, I believe the actual point to be made here is to be reminded that regardless of one’s sin, there is salvation and forgiveness to be found in Christ (Mk. 16:16). The blood of Christ makes salvation possible (Matt. 26:28). In so doing, Christ has made a way by which all men, including Peter, can be forgiven of sin. We do not have to live in the past, nor is it right for people to bring up past sins when we have found forgiveness in Christ.

Yes, the same Peter who denied Christ three times was the same one who wrote two epistles bearing his name. However, because of the forgiveness of Christ, Peter can forget what he did and move beyond the sins of the past. We need to do the same.

Friend, what sin(s) have you committed in your life? Does your sin define you? I hope not. Forgiveness is found in Christ and a new life awaits you where you can be free from sin if you will just obey what the Lord has commanded (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38)!