



Apple Valley Church of Christ

Seeking and Saving The Lost...

We are honored and blessed to have you worshipping with us today and we extend our warmest welcome. Our service is modeled after the New Testament pattern of worship. If you have questions or concerns please express them to us. We are all here to serve.



Health: Zandra, Ebony, Wanda, Leola & Larry, sister Irma, Sylvia & Patrick, Thom & Mary Elizabeth, TC, Lenard, Rebekah, Prince, brother and sister Carlisle, Carol and her mother Loretta, Lorena's cousin Amani.

Also: Shannon's well being. Paul Brass' well being. Brother Willis' family as they mourn his passing.



Today's Services

Singing, Prayer, Singing, Scripture reading, Preaching, Invitation Song, Communion Song, Communion, Offering, Announcements, Closing Song, Closing Prayer.

FAITHHOPELOVE

God's Plan of Salvation

Hear	Romans 10:17
Believe	Mark 16:15-16
Repent	Luke 13:3-5
Confess	Matthew 10:32-33
Baptism	1Peter 3:21
Live Faithfully	Revelation 2:10

Schedule of Services

Sunday AM Bible Class	10:00 AM
Sunday AM Worship	11:00 AM
Sunday PM Worship	5:00 PM
Wednesday PM Bible Class	7:00 PM

Lord Deliver Me From Distraction

by Jon Bloom

Since the fall of man, people have had trouble staying focused, but we live today in an age of unprecedented distraction. Many are reading this on some electronic device, so I don't need to elaborate.

Lots of experts are talking about the negative effects this is having on us. Many of us feel it: the buzzing brain, the attention atrophy, the diminishing tolerance for reading, especially reading books.

We're becoming conditioned to distraction, and it's harming our ability to listen and think carefully, to be still, to pray, and to meditate. Which means it is a spiritual danger, an evil from which we need God's deliverance (Matthew 6:13).

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The Causes of Distraction

Distraction, at least the dangerous kind I'm referring to, is shifting our attention from something of greater importance to something of lesser importance.

Our fundamental and most dangerous problem in distraction is in being distracted from God — our tendency to shift our attention orientation from the greatest Object in existence to countless lesser ones. The Bible calls this idolatry.

This fundamental attention shift disorders us in pervasive ways. We find our tendency to be distracted from the more important to the less important cascading down, detrimentally affecting our relationships and responsibilities. So, at the deepest level, we are distractible because of our fallen, selfish nature; we have evil inside us.

But not all our distraction problems are due to our resident evil. Some are simply the result of the futility infecting creation (Romans 8:20–23). This futility can infect our biology as well as our environments. All of us have faulty brains and bodies, and so some of us battle distraction more than others due to factors like ADHD and other mental or physical illnesses. Environmental factors like poor nutrition, unhealthy family systems, and cultural/technological forces (such as the constant stream of media) can also affect our ability to focus.

All these factors mix together in most cases, making it nearly impossible to tell how much sin, fallen biology, or environment is to blame for our distraction. But if we ask God, he will deliver us from evil, whatever the cause, by using these powerful foes to our advantage, helping us see what our hearts love, and pressing us by his grace into greater levels of humble faith and self-control.

A Heart Revealer

When we are regularly distracted by something, we need to take

note. Our attention often runs to what's important to us. So, distraction can reveal what we love. This happened to Jesus's friend Martha.

Martha was busy in the kitchen while Jesus taught in her home. When Martha complained that her sister, Mary, wasn't helping because she was sitting at Jesus's feet, Jesus replied,

"Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:41–42)

Martha was distracted from Jesus. By what? By serving her guests. Why? Because she was anxious. Anxious about what? Anxious about feeding everyone, and in all likelihood anxious about what everyone would think of her and her household if she didn't do it well.

But Martha didn't recognize her distraction until Jesus helped her see her heart. She thought she was doing the right thing by serving everyone. But Jesus pointed out to Martha that her values were disordered. She had shifted her

attention from the greater importance to the lesser.

So, in our busyness, we must ask, what is the real distraction? What does our heart desire? Are we choosing "the good portion," seeking the great "one thing" (Psalm 27:4), or something less?

A Fight That Builds Humble Faith

Distraction is a frequent reminder of our frailty and limits, that we indeed are not God. And since we are given to such unjustifiable, and frankly ridiculous, levels of pride, this is very good for us. Distraction humbles us and forces us to ask God for the help we so desperately need.

And it can build our faith. God is not nearly as interested in our efficiency as he is in our faith. Do you remember how he let enemies harass Nehemiah and his Jerusalem wall-builders, slowing down the work (Nehemiah 4)? Similarly, God lets us battle inefficient distraction to build our dependent faith in him. That's what God is building in all the inefficiencies of our lives.

If we see the Spirit-given graces of humility and faith growing in us through our struggles against distraction, we will count it among the "all things" we give thanks for (Ephesians 5:20, KJV).

Building the Muscle of Self-Control

God also uses distraction to strengthen our self-control. Christian self-control is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23). And like nearly all the Spirit's fruit of sanctification in us, they are cultivated through the primary, decisive gift of the Spirit and our secondary but indispensable intentional hard work.

It's helpful to remember that we strengthen self-control similar to how we strengthen muscle: through resistance. Muscles do not grow stronger without pushing against resistance. Neither does self-control. There's no getting around the hard work of applying ourselves and figuring out what works best for us. But if we prayerfully and faithfully apply

ourselves, the Spirit will empower our efforts and we will see our capacity for self-control increase.

Now, just as with physical strength and ability, some are graced with greater ability to focus than others. If you're one of those people, then good stewardship of this gift looks different than it does for less gifted people. Like a gifted athlete, you are made to excel. Seek to maximize it, for "to whom much [is] given, of him much will be required" (Luke 12:48).

If you're a person who, for whatever reason, has a more difficult struggle with distraction, you need not feel condemned (Romans 8:1). For you, good stewardship looks like fighting distraction as best you can. Push yourself. You may not be able to do what others can do, but God will only hold you accountable for the measure of grace given to you (Romans 12:6).

Whatever It Takes

It's right for us to see certain distractions as evils in themselves. Every one is a time-tax we pay, a tax for which there is no refund. Time spent simply means we have less to spend. Every distracted minute is an unrecoverable minute, now frozen in the permanent past. It is right to seek to make the best use of our time in these evil days (Ephesians 5:16).

And yet, we also do not need to be more paralyzed by this than by any other struggle with sin or futility. Our Father wants us to grow in the grace of faith-fueled focus, and will, through Christ, cause our difficult struggles against distraction to work for our good (Romans 8:28). He will, through his Spirit, use them to free us from idolatry and pride and to help us grow in self-control. So, in confident faith we can approach his throne of grace with this prayer:

Whatever it takes, Lord, increase my resolve to pursue only what you call me to do, and deliver me from the fragmenting effect of fruitless distraction.

