



Staying Connected To God In A World Full Of Distractions

ECCLESIA CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST

BIBLE ENRICHMENT STUDY

8 FUNDAMENTAL WAYS TO OVERCOME DISTRACTIONS AS A BELIEVER

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KEY VERSE: Hebrews 12:1 King James Version

12 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

Hebrews 12:1 NIV

12 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

INTRODUCTION. As Believers, if we are going to be successful in our walk with God, and in accomplishing our goals, we must learn how to **overcome distractions** and stay focused in the midst of a distracting world. The steadfastness of the Old Testament “witnesses” speaks to believers today of the rewards of staying in the race, of never giving up (1 Corinthians 9:24; Philippians 3:14).

A marathon is a strenuous test of fitness and endurance. **The race set before us requires faith, stamina, commitment, and discipline in order to live faithfully (1 Corinthians 9:25–26; Philippians 3:12–14; 1 Timothy 6:12).**

The race demands that we do away with “everything that hinders”—sin and whatever else threatens our relationship with God (Hebrews 12:1). Anything that will slow us down or trip up us must be cast off. The apostle Paul says “to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:22–24). With the encouragement of those who have gone on before, we rid ourselves of thoughts, attitudes, and habits that impede our progress (Romans 12:2; Titus 3:3; 1 Peter 1:14).

Seeing that the race God set out for us is a lifelong marathon, we must commit ourselves to run to the very end. A daily regimen of prayer, worship, reading God’s Word and examining our lives for impediments will help. We will persevere by maintaining a Christlike attitude even in the midst of trials (1 Peter 2:21; 4:1; 1 John 2:6).

WHAT ARE DISTRACTIONS?

The Webster's dictionary defines the word *distraction* as something that directs one's attention away from something else. Simply put, distractions are meant to shift our focus.

SOURCES OF DISTRACTIONS

Distractions can come in the form of people, things, specific places or environments, circumstances, thoughts, or temptations.

Distractions can come from all angles – in ways we least expect, from people we don't expect, at times we aren't expecting. And they can end up costing us time, happiness, peace, relationships, money and success.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT DISTRACTIONS?

Distractions from everyday work, goals and life in general can be frustrating, and can even cause major setbacks. However, things that distract us from God can be extremely dangerous.

As Believers, when we start to lose sight of God, His Word, and His plan for our lives, it can lead us in the wrong direction towards sin, missed opportunities, missed blessings, and discipline from God. Losing sight of God also causes us to live in fear, anger, worry, frustration, and doubt.

Let's look briefly at five main things that are mentioned as distractions in the Bible.

THE CARNAL THINGS OF THE WORLD

One of our primary distractions by far, are the carnal things that the world we live in has to offer. Which is why both Paul and John warned the first century believers about being distracted by the customs and behavior of the world:

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

Romans 12:2 NLT

Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world. And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever.

1 John 2:15-17 NLT

OUR FLESHLY DESIRES

Because the carnal world in which we live offers so much in the way of temptations, it caters to our fleshly desires which is also another big distraction:

Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death.

James 1:14-15 NLT

The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure. 1 Corinthians 10:13 NLT

OUR THOUGHTS

Another major source of distraction are our thoughts – all the craziness that can sometimes go on in our heads. Unfortunately, we can't control every thought that comes into our minds. However, we CAN control what we do with the thoughts once they surface.

As Believers, we should always redirect our mindset towards things that glorify God:

And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.

Philippians 4:8 NLT

Since then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

Colossians 3:1-2 NIV

OTHER PEOPLE

The bible speaks of people being a huge source of distraction as well. And sometimes, it's even on purpose:

So Sanballat and Geshem sent a message asking me to meet them at one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But I realized they were plotting to harm me, so I replied by sending this message to them: "I am engaged in a great work, so I can't come. Why should I stop working to come and meet with you?"

Nehemiah 6:2-3 NLT

Sometimes we allow what people think about us, or the approval we seek from them to distract us. In this case we should work to adapt the mindset that the Apostle Paul had:

Obviously, I'm not trying to win the approval of people, but of God. If pleasing people were my goal, I would not be Christ's servant.

Galatians 1:10 NLT

I am saying this for your benefit, not to place restrictions on you. I want you to do whatever will help you serve the Lord best, with as few distractions as possible.¹ **Corinthians 7:35 NLT**

OUR CIRCUMSTANCES

Very often our circumstances can also be distractions in our lives. We can easily get so caught up in the trouble, pain, or misfortune we are experiencing that we lose sight of who God is and His sovereignty and power over our situations.

And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith? "So, don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?' These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all

your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

Matthew 6:30-33 NLT

HOW TO OVERCOME DISTRACTIONS

Regardless of what your goals or plans are (spiritual, physical, financial, personal), these eight tips will help you to stay focused and overcome distractions along the way.

IDENTIFY WHAT DISTRACTS YOU

You must start by identifying specifically what it is that distracts *you*. As I mentioned earlier, not everyone is distracted by the same things.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

Hebrews 12:1 NIV

In order to fix the problem, we must identify the problem. And we do this by identifying everything that hinders or distracts us from our goals.

ELIMINATE WHATEVER DISTRACTIONS YOU CAN

Not all distractions are physical things, but once you identify what your distractions are, start by eliminating the ones that you can. When it comes to spiritual growth, the bible tells us that we simply need to get rid of some things:

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

Ephesians 4:31 NIV

CHANGE YOUR ENVIRONMENT

Sometimes to overcome distractions we must change our environment. This could mean staying where you are and making changes or adjustments to your current environment to make it a distraction-free zone.

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. (Mark 1:35 NIV)
Mark 1:35 NIV

HAVE A DAILY TASK LIST

Even if you are opposed to making a list or having a schedule, it is unavoidable if you want to truly stay on task and accomplish your goals. A verse I like to keep in mind is:

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.
Colossians 3:23 NIV

MONITOR YOUR THOUGHTS

So often we are our own biggest distraction. Sometimes it's what is going on inside our heads that is stealing our focus. Stress, worry, anxiety, fear, doubt, anger or frustration can easily set in and distract us.

External distractions are one thing, but it's those internal distractions that if we don't get a handle on, can cause us the most harm. Therefore, it is very important as Believers to spend time **reading God's Word daily**.

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.
Isaiah 26:3 KJV)

If we stay focused on God, by reading His Word and talking to Him constantly in **prayer**, He can help to free our mind from negative mental distractions.

REAFFIRM YOUR GOALS DAILY

A big part of staying focused and overcoming distractions is reaffirming your goals daily. If we lose sight of what we are aiming for, we set ourselves up to fail before we even get started.

A great illustration of this, is a passage where Moses was teaching the Israelites about the importance of learning the Word of God:

These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and

when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates.

Deuteronomy 6:6-9 NIV

BEWARE OF THE DEVIL

Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.

1 Peter 5:8 NLT

No matter what you set out to do, you can count on the devil to try his best to distract you from serving God. The bible tells us to be alert for this very reason.

If the devil can manage to distract us with temptations and problems, he will keep us from being productive and accomplishing what God wants us to do.

And of course, the best way to stay alert is to stay focused on God and His Word. When you do this, you equip yourself to resist the devil and he will literally leave you alone (at least for now).

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

James 4:7 NIV

RECOGNIZE AND TAKE ADVANTAGE OF “GOOD DISTRACTIONS”

Lastly, it is very important to recognize and take advantage of *good* distractions when they come. Good distractions are those that steal your focus in a positive and healthy way. They can even revitalize your energy, allowing you to refocus with a clearer mindset. These good distractions typically come in the form of taking breaks to do something that will give you a positive boost.

Examples include meditating, taking a walk, singing a song, laughter, writing, listening to music, eating a snack, reading, playing with your kids, etc.

Let's look at another passage of Scripture:

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called

Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Luke 10:38-42 NIV

Don't get so caught up in your goals that the goals themselves become a distraction from what is MOST important in your life – God!

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO REFOCUS

At one point or another, all of us are going to get distracted. The good news is that it's never too late to get back on track and redirect our focus back to God, or our goals.

Even if we let our distractions steer us off course, ruin relationships, set us back months or years with our goals, cost us our money, or our peace – God is still there for us! He is there to give us the strength we need to try again and move forward.

So be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise. Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days. Don't act thoughtlessly but understand what the Lord wants you to do.

Ephesians 5:15-17 NLT

Dear children, keep away from anything that might take God's place in your hearts.1 ***John 5:21 NLT***

Let us seek God through His Word and constant prayer, so that with His strength we can be the focused and productive Believers He has called us to be!

Adapted from In the Mirror of God article.