



BIBLEWAY MINISTRIES

MAKING A DIFFERENCE—THE BIBLE WAY



Clear Focus Avoids Harmful Distractions

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Although he may sometimes use external assaults on our lives to affect our bodies, finances or even our relationships, the devil's most successful attacks often involve distractions. They can be as simple as a cell phone which monopolizes our time away from the Word of God, or as complicated as our job, friends and sometimes even family.

The Apostle Peter said, "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world." (1 Peter 5:8-9)

To be sober-minded is to be clearly focused and alert. The term used for "adversary" literally refers to an opponent in a lawsuit. This is no ordinary opponent. He is the devil — literally, one who is a slanderer and accuser. Hence the need to stay focused.

The word "devour" means to consume or eat up greedily. When distractions consume us, our focus is redirected from God to earthly difficulties, which often lead our minds to our fears and doubts. As a result, we worry and — worst of all — forget the power of our God. The devil knows when this happens, he can eat us up.

We are all subject to distractions. Because our God is aware of their danger, He has provided us with the means to overcome. Peter shared that means of overcoming is to "Resist [the devil], firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world."

Other believers are experiencing the same kinds of suffering or distractions as we are. But here is

the great news: The same God who began the work of changing us into His Son's image will complete it, in spite of these difficulties.

Peter continued, "And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you." (1 Peter 5:10)

Peter chose his words carefully. The original word the ESV translates as "restore" is translated as "perfect" in the KJV, which means to make adequate or sufficient for something. God wants to perfect us during the testing process of our distractions.

He also wants to confirm us. Well now, what does that mean? It means to cause someone to become stronger and steadier. Our Heavenly Father wants to strengthen us.

The word "strengthen" means to cause one to become more capable and less weak.

All of this serves to establish us in the faith. When surgeons use their scalpels, they cause pain. However, in the aftermath of the surgical procedure, healing takes place and the part of the body that received the surgery becomes physically stronger. When God establishes us, He uses the pain of our distractions to form us into the image of His Son! When we refocus on the things of God, He not only brings us through the surgery, but He also reminds us how much He cares for us!

- Dr. L.W. Edwards



Tuning Out Distractions

It was to be a majestic evening. On Friday, October 18, 1991, the world-class Chicago Symphony presented the final concert in its year-long celebration of the symphony's one hundredth year. For the first time in United States symphony history, the present conductor and two former conductors of an orchestra stood on the same stage: Rafael Kubelik, Georg Solti, and Daniel Barenboim. To mark the historic occasion, patrons received souvenir clocks as gifts at a centenary celebration dinner before the concert. As Daniel Barenboim sat down at the piano and Georg Solti lifted his baton to begin Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto, a great sense of drama filled Chicago's historic Orchestra Hall. And the beauty of the music took over.

A few minutes later, however, at 9:15 pm, the music began to unravel. Out in the auditorium a little beep sounded. Then another, and another. Little beeps were sounding everywhere. Barenboim and the symphony plowed ahead, but everyone was distracted and the music suffered.

Finally, after the first movement ended, Henry Fogel, the symphony's executive director, walked on stage to explain what had happened. The manufacturer of the souvenir clocks had set the alarms to go off at 9:15.

Everyone had to check their clocks in with an usher. By the time the concert had finally resumed, the momentum of the evening had been thrown off. The valuable timepieces which were meant to accent the event had become distractions which stole the show.

Not all distractions are bad things. Fancy alarm clocks have their place — try waking up on time without one — but it's not in Orchestra Hall. Distractions are often good things that become problems when we make them the main thing. That's when their noise drowns out the melody of our lives and the music suffers.

Distractions and the Main Thing

Those who attended the concert had one goal: to enjoy the orchestra's performance. The other festivities were a bonus. Similarly, followers of Jesus have one goal in life: to honor Him. (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). Everything else is a bonus:

- Food
- Shelter
- Clothing
- Money
- Transportation
- Family
- Technology
- Social media

- Our hobbies
- Movies
- Games
- Work
- Recognition from others
- Others' approval
- Romantic relationships
- Marriage and sexual fulfillment

Each of these things have their place in life. They are good things until we allow them to steal our time and attention from things that are more important. A few cases in point: Time on social media can interrupt time with God in prayer or in His Word. We may give our best work to our manager during the week, only to give God our leftover worship (or nothing at all) on Sunday. The pursuit of a romantic relationship can cause us to neglect our relationship with God. Even the well-meaning desire to connect with others and build relationships can turn into self-centeredness and the constant, crippling fear of what others think. It's easy for good things to become distractions when we make them the main thing.

Reset to Refocus

Like the Chicago Symphony Orchestra at their ill-fated concert, sometimes we need an intermission — a mental reset — to get our lives back in tune. I've found spending time reading God's Word, specifically the Psalms, is a great way to do this. This practice helps me apply truth to my feelings and circumstances so I prioritize what matters most. With a fresh perspective of my priorities, I can better identify my distractions and refocus. . . .

And sometimes even distractions help me refocus when I feel overwhelmed. When the to-do list at work becomes overwhelming and everything seems important and competes for my attention, I may spend a few minutes looking out the window or take a moment to pray for wisdom. Sometimes I step away from my desk and take a walk. This brief reset allows me to clear my mind, break my to-do list into manageable chunks and refocus on the most important tasks. (It also reminds me the rest of my work will be waiting for me the next day — no need to do it all today.)

Do you want your life to sing again? Be intentional about how you handle your distractions and remember what is most important. This could be the difference between your biggest encore and another mediocre melody.

- Cam Edwards

