

3 Distraction Busters for a Focused Prayer Life

3 Distraction Busters for a Focused Prayer Life

By Kim Butts

It may happen during worship, or in our daily quiet time. We've all experienced it and been frustrated by it – distraction! It is the number one enemy of our attempts to worship, to pray and to listen. How often do we find our thoughts wandering to events of the past or future, or to things which need to be done, etc. when we should be giving God our full attention? Jesus spoke to the Pharisees of His day: “You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, ‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far away from me’” (Matthew 15:7-8).

Sometimes we come into the presence of the Lord lightly – even when we attend church. We don't realize that when we enter into His presence, physically and spiritually, He expects us to come before Him sanctified, set apart from the world. In Leviticus 10:3, Moses says to Aaron, “...It is what the Lord spoke, saying, ‘By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, and before all the people I will be honored.’” We should approach God with carefulness and thoughtfulness because of His glory and majesty – because of who He is.

Have you ever found yourself thinking of other things while you are praying? The Bible warns us against this in Ecclesiastes 5:2: “Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in

heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few..."

David Wilkerson, in his article "Distractions in the Holy Place!" says, "What a babble of praises Christians pour out – so little of it connected to our hearts! What a river of thoughtless hallelujahs and songs are mouthed by people whose thoughts ramble away like wild horses." When we do not approach our Lord in holiness, and when we do not practice reverence before Him, we will begin to enter His presence carelessly or thoughtlessly. According to Wilkerson, this can lead to "spiritual death." "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare in the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4:12-13).

If your distraction is most evident when you are in church, it is probably because you do not experience intimate prayer and worship with the Lord Jesus at home. Our prayer and worship is devoid of life because we have separated ourselves from the Life-Giver!

When we are distracted and our minds depart from our prayer and worship, there is no life in either one! We don't, as Wilkerson says, "get spiritual credit just for planting our body in a pew," or placing ourselves in a posture of prayer if our hearts and minds are far removed from the presence of Christ. Why should we expect God to hear prayers we mindlessly utter, or worship that is merely mouthing words we read or sing without paying attention to what they say?

How do we deal with distraction? Here are three Distraction Busters to help us:

- 1. Learn to bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ!** When our minds wander during prayer and worship,

it is usually our flesh trying to get our attention in some way. We shift our focus from Jesus to other things. Here are some scriptures to commit to memory which will help in this area: "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5); "Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature" (Romans 13:14). We CAN take captive our thoughts, and with the help of the Spirit, we are able to resist the temptation to think on other things rather than centering our thoughts on the Lord.

2. **Don't ALLOW the enemy to distract you – be aware of his schemes!** Satan would rather you did anything else other than pray, and he certainly doesn't want you to worship! He will plant thoughts in your mind to draw your mind away from God, because he fears the power of prayer and dedicated worship. The devil will also try to make us feel unworthy to come before God by planting guilt in our minds over sins, or to make us feel despair and defeat over the burdens in our lives. James, knowing that we would be attacked by the enemy at such times offered the solution: "...Resist the devil, and he will flee from you..." (James 4:7). In the name of Jesus, tell the enemy that he has no control over your life, and declare before him that Jesus Christ is Lord! When you keep your thoughts centered on Jesus, you will defeat the schemes of the enemy.
3. **Don't allow yourself to neglect the Lord and His Word.** "Does a maiden forget her jewelry, a bride her wedding ornaments? Yet my people have forgotten me, days without number" (Jeremiah 2:32). Hebrews 2:3 says, "...How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?" Our salvation is our most prized possession; however, we are

constantly neglecting, or carelessly setting God aside for what we mistakenly think are all of the “important” things of this world. It is crucial to keep our minds, hearts and eyes fixed on Christ: “Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart” (Hebrews 12:1-3). The more time you spend in the Word of God, the more you will grow to love the time you spend there. The Word becomes your “tent of meeting” with your Father.

Wilkerson says the following: “If you don’t worship God with all your mind and heart, little by little neglect will creep in and you’ll begin to worship merely out of habit...test yourself by God’s Word: 1) Do you come boldly and regularly into the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus? (Hebrews 10:19); 2) Do you consistently draw nearer to God in full assurance of faith? (Hebrews 10:22); 3) Do you hold fast to Him, without wavering? (Hebrews 10:23); 4) Do you assemble together with other believers? Or have you forsaken assembling with the saints? (Hebrews 10:25)

Do you worship Him daily, with all your heart? Do you dig into the Word of God as if your life depends on it? Or do you go for days without opening your Bible, without praying to Him in your secret closet?”

Don’t allow distractions to rob you of intimacy with God. Give the Lord your very best in prayer and worship and then watch Him work in your life in powerful ways!

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