

Fatal Distractions - PT.II
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Message Series: Fatal Distractions
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What distracts me? Well the preparation of this message nearly had me late for my haircut!

You heard about my experiences at the gym last week! What distracts me? My computer when an email comes in while I am involved in a project. An interesting news article. An interesting commentary on some exotic location! Sometimes it's my phone. There are hundreds of notifications, calls and text messages or social media notifications! They are intrusive and can lead to me wasting several hours!

On a more serious note; there is the story of a prominent Christian leader's moral fall - disappointed - saddened - damaged lives. Impact on family, friends, colleges and the church at large. You don't need to be a Christian to understand the power of such consequences. You don't need to be a believer in God to understand how such distractions can derail your marriage, your family and your life.

Most people, church people or non-church people, desire to have a successful marriage not stained by unfaithfulness. Most people want to conduct a successful courtship not marred by infidelity or sexual immorality. Most people want a marriage and a family with integrity not distracted by other people but an exclusively intimate relationship with each other not tarnished by betrayal.

I'm not judging these people - my heart goes out to them. In fact I have a heartfelt desire to show grace and mercy to help bring redemption. I have no appetite to punish as I fear the distraction has caused enough punishment in itself. I'm a pastor not a policeman, a pastor not a judge and jury. As a pastor I want to help you minimise the impacts of fatal distractions on your life and our families, our married couples and our young people as they seek out their life's partners.

Distractions abound - some harmless like a minor addiction to the card game FreeCell while other distractions can be fatal simply because of their far reaching consequences. Derailing your commitments to living a morally upstanding life is one such instance. But there are many.

We've all felt the pull of distractions. Some get you side tracked from your main focus that day. Other distractions get you side tracked for the rest of your life! Some distractions are harmless wasting a few minutes other are enormous wasting a whole life and a hard earned reputation.

The Bible tells a story of one of the most famous Kings of Israel, his name is David of "David and Goliath" fame. He was a good king, loved God and God described him as man after His heart! He wrote many of the Psalms and was well known as a devoted worshipper of God and extravagant in his praise of God. He was incredibly generous as he gave of his great wealth towards the building of the Temple. So this story is both interesting and puzzling. It had not only immediate implications but dogged his life until the end of his life.

2 Samuel 11: 1 - 4 NIV, "In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem. One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, and David sent someone to find out about her.

The man said, “She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite.” Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her.”

1. It seems David was already in a distracted mood. It was the time for Kings to go to war. He sent someone else. His mind and his heart were troubled. Interesting how our mental or emotional state can become a distraction to our routines and every day activities.

The truth is he should have been somewhere else - but he found himself at home while his army was out fighting a battle for the heart and soul of his country! Our emotional life is worth taking care of as it can be a gateway to distractions and lead to further distraction as is the case with King David. The scripture from last Sunday is pertinent.

Proverbs 4:23 (NIV), “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” Your heart is the centre of your emotions - interesting how we are called upon to guard this central emotional engine of our lives from distractions. David didn’t do that and it had fatal consequences.

2. “One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful.” David wasn’t sleeping well - he was distracted. Interestingly this event took place at night. I’m reminded by the quote that “... character is who we are in the dark - when no one is watching.”

Night time insomnia can be a sure sign you have some unresolved issue to process and they can cause us to be distracted. Anxiety is a distraction to our heart and our mind. In this distracted state of mind David got up walking around the roof at night.

What he saw should have alerted him to turn around and walk in the other direction. But his focus was drawn away from sorting out his own issues. He became distracted by something that was drawing him away from his primary focus as king. He saw a beautiful woman. Those words have been the downfall of many throughout the ages!

<https://duckduckgo.com/?q=the+woman+in+the+red+dress&atb=v178-1&iax=videos&ia=videos&iai=Hw88MWoqenQ> - “The woman in the red dress.” The Matrix

3. Natural and god given desires can, if not properly controlled and appropriately directed by our values have the power to derail our lives. What we see here in the story about David and Bathsheba is a biblical warning to take care of these kinds of amorous distractions.

To prove his innocence before God Job spoke these words in **Job 31:1 NIV**, “I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a young woman.”

Even King David’s Psalms speaks about the wisdom of controlling what we see with our eyes. **Psalms 119:37 NIV**, “Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word.”

From the historical account of David we know it didn’t end well for David. Not even his elite status and position in authority could protect him. Bathsheba got pregnant. David contrived a plan to have Uriah killed in battle so he could then marry Bathsheba. He got caught! It turned into a national scandal which diminished David’s ability to lead the nation. If you succumb to this distraction your ability to lead with integrity will also diminish your ability to lead with a good reputation intact. What are the clear applications for us as we leave this story today?

1. **Recognise your emotional highs and lows and put in place appropriate strategies.** We all need plans to deal with our mental health when it is under siege.

Anxiety is real and we are all faced with situations and circumstances of life that cause us to be uneasy and to worry. Every day we are faced with the stuff of life that weighs us down. So we need strategies to help us not be distracted. For instance, it is never a good idea to make a decision when your emotions are fluctuating up and down.

All of us face the things that keep our hearts and minds turning around with seemingly no rest. Restlessness is a sign we are processing data to arrive at a good conclusion. Recognise when your heart is restless and processing. Please recognise when your emotional or mental health is under pressure. Realise we have the power to choose one thought over another.

Philippians 4: 6 - 7 NIV says, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

2. **Not everything you see you should have.** It sounds funny when we put it this way. Your choices in life are regulated by your values, your devotion to God and His word and what you know to be right and wrong - we call this our conscience.

I believe conscience is God created part of our hearts operating procedures. It is a faculty created by God to give us an innate understanding of what is good and bad, right and wrong. Conscience is placed in our hearts by God. It is our moral compass.

Obviously David did not listen to that still small voice of his conscience. He acted in contradiction to it and paid the price of his fatal distraction. He gave in to his sexual desires allowing the distraction to draw him away from his role as leader of his country and his actions led to dire consequence. Not everything you see you should have. What was called upon by David was restraint and constraint not to just take what was not his.

Your conscience is that moral sense of right and wrong, viewed as acting as a guide to your behaviour. The bible says we can have a clear conscience, a guilty conscience, to act in good conscience, a weak conscience or a seared conscience. Your conscience leads you to make good moral choices or our conscience is desensitized and we act inappropriately.

1 Timothy 4: 1 - 2 NIV, “The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.” What is a seared conscience? The word seared literally means cauterized - sealed, desensitized, burnt closed. Through repeated exposure to evil, a person's sense of right and wrong become numb to the point that a person can no longer easily distinguish between good and evil.

1 Timothy 1: 19 NIV, “Hold on to faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and so have suffered shipwreck with regard to the faith.” It's the shipwrecked part that concerns me here. I've seen too many people experience a shipwreck of a life as a result of giving in to distractions which led to bad decisions.

3. **Moral distractions can have devastating consequences.** I don't need to paint the picture. We've all seen marriages destroyed because of unfaithful behaviour. We've seen the devastation that takes place when someone commits an act of immorality. We watch with shock as marriages fall apart. We've seen on the news as people's

reputations are destroyed, the families fractured and people hurt because of unscrupulous sexual behaviour.

We've seen the hurt in the eyes of children who have been the unwitting victims of others actions against them. We witness the worldwide epidemic of sexual trafficking and the impact it has on our society not to forget the impact on those enslaved by men with no conscience.

Immorality has a devastating impact on people. **1 Corinthians 6: 18 - 20 NIV**, explains why. "Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your bodies."

Interestingly the scripture says to flee or run away from sexual immorality. Why not resist it? The scripture explains the better strategy - just run away from it - turn and walk away. As they say, "Resistance is futile." The very nature of this distraction requires us to turn and run.

All other sin sins are committed outside the body but sexual sin is committed against the body - this means there is a more impacting consequence. Sexual sin carries with it more severe and ruthless consequences. It does require me to be a graphic describer for you to understand the devastation that takes place.

We are all subject to moral distractions. We are all tempted in this way. We all see things that stir us deeply and seek to draw our attention to a fatal distraction. But we can overcome and we can find success. In our desire to stay on the right track and not be derailed we have to fix our eyes on the prize. You may not be a church goer and but our prizes are similar. We want a healthy marriage, we desire a healthy family we want great relationships with our significant friends.

As a person of faith my desire go a bit further and provide another level of motivation. IN the words of Paul I want to live a life worth of Jesus and to live honourable and honour God with my body and all that is within me.

In the words of the writer to the **Hebrews 12: 1 - 2 NIV**, "And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith."

With Christ as our star attraction we see Him in all of His power and His majesty. We find Christ as our motivation to steer clear from fatal distractions and to instead firmly fix our eyes on Him.

It's not hard to imagine the strength we receive by our devotion and commitment to following Jesus and His word. It's not hard to imagine the power we receive by walking on the straight and narrow. It's not hard to imagine the stability we see in our marriages as we are led by God's word, a clear conscious and a fixed direction. It's not hard to imagine that as we deal with distractions we will live a better and more successful life.

Knowing Christ has helped me to deal with the power of distraction. Know Christ will help you too. And knowing Christ will help in so many other ways as well.