

## **Fatal Distractions – part 1**

There are loads of distractions at the gym. People who want to talk to you as you're exercising! Me – shut up! Can't you see I have 100 pounds over my head??? Watching other people exercise! This is annoyingly distracting! The secret is to stay focused on what you're doing – not so easy at times! There are so many distractions in a place that is supposed to be finely tuned with serious people, lifting serious amounts of weight in a seriously focused environment! Yet distractions abound to the unwary!

**Distractions: (I'll need these on the screen.)**

- **An object that pulls your attention away from something else.**
- **Something that diverts your attention from its rightful focus.**
- **Something that attracts your attention and draws you in different directions.**
- **Anything that entices you to shift your focus from a meaningful venture.**
- **Something that captures your attention and makes it hard to pay attention to your primary task.**
- **A distraction is something that lures you away from an original focus.**

**Fatal: Something that has the power to either kill you or to seriously impair your ability to function. We're using the term fatal to describe a distraction which is serious enough to bring ruin and significant consequences.**

- **This series is all about fatal distractions that can derail your life.**
- **Distractions that could affect your ability to function in an emotionally healthy environment.**
- **This series is all about distractions that could wreck your future, disrupt a great plan, spoil a great friendship, ruin your reputation and destroy the trust others have in you or interfere with your success, prosperity or emotional wellness.**

Let me explain; fatal distractions are distractions that have the power to ruin a marriage, cause family disunity, end a promising career, overturn an educational goal, ruin a friendship or be a deciding factor towards a slide in mental health. This series is about distractions and how they have the power to derail your future. We've heard countless stories about people's lives ended by frivolous distractions.

- **This new series is about identifying distractions that can disrupt your spiritual life, your church life, your educational life, family life, your married life even your professional or business life.**
- **This series is about detecting distractions that could leave you disillusioned, in disarray, cheated off, burnt out or leave you suffering.**
- **This new series is about familiarizing ourselves with what could have the potential to derail our plans for a future and a hope.**
- **This new series is a modern day warning about the power of distractions that have the power to lead you to the devastating consequences of bad decisions and foolish behaviour.**
- **This new series is about distractions that take your eyes off the prize. It's about an attraction that leads to distraction resulting in destruction.**

Some distractions are harmless. Answering a phone call may seem harmless that is unless you're driving a car. Some distractions appear "noble" but are actually distracting you from the more important tasks of life. Then there are fatal distractions. Scrolling through your social media accounts may seem harmless until you discover you've wasted hours instead of being diligent with productive work at hand. Distractions are a shift in focus from the primary task to an activity deemed to be minor, marginal or even trivial.

Some distractions are harmless, like an unplanned walk along the Norfolk Broads as some needed relaxation and family time. Maybe a date night with your spouse at an intimate restaurant just to

spend time together. These kinds of distractions can bring closeness, healing to your soul and provide you with rest and relaxation from a crazy schedule. Some distractions are good for restoring your soul.

But other distractions can be fatal – they can destroy your marriage, destroy a significant relationship, get you sacked from work so you lose your job. Some distractions can sabotage your studies and you might fail your exams and have to repeat a year or a course or a subject. Some distractions have the power to destroy your good name.

Maybe you call yourself a Christian, a follower of Jesus, but you find your life filled with annoying and detrimental distractions. Maybe you're a procrastinator and just love distractions as they keep you from mundane jobs in your life. Maybe you're one of those people with a short span of attention and find yourself running down rabbit holes to escape the reality of your life.

Maybe these distractions look like they have a life of their own. That they have been especially designed for you. These distractions seem to have some intelligence behind them as if someone is plotting to derail your devotion and your relationship with Jesus and His church. If you've felt like this - You'd be right.

Jesus said in **John 10:10 NIV**, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

**2 Corinthians 2: 11** says "... we are not unaware of his schemes and to not allow him to outwit us."

The Devil, our enemy, is an expert at seeking to derail our experience of following Jesus, living a life worthy of Jesus and experience the blessings God desires for us. Our enemy is skilled at diverting our attention causing us to lose focus. The enemy is practised at distracting us making something appear more attractive than it really is. Our enemy is actually a consummate professional at hiding behind the distraction that derails your life.

This is the very nature of distraction. Making something appear more attractive than in fact it is. It is a distraction that looks so good that we discount the consequences of our choice to involve ourselves. It is a distraction formulated in Hell and by Hell to derail you and keep your focus from the important issues of life. These fatal distraction are part of Satan's scheme to "steal, kill and destroy!" It pays us well to be aware of his devises.

Believe me – you don't even need to be a Christian to attract the enemy's attention. The Devil, is not your friend. The enemy of your soul is a thief who sole motivation is to destroy you and the image of God you carry. As a thief he wants to steal every good thing you might have in your life. He wants to kill every great relationship you've ever had and to destroy every bit of your future. He is not a friend and he does not have your best interests at heart.

As I've already said you don't even need to be a Christian to see how powerful this message series is for us today. We live in a world where we are bombarded by 4,000 to 5,000 adverts a day all vying for our attention. The potential for distraction has multiplied exponentially in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. One of the biggest challenges of our modern world is keeping our focus, staying on target.

I find it interesting that the Bible gives us some remarkable and salient advice that we can literally action in our daily life. These applications are direct from scripture and make for a bases for determined behaviour and thoughtful conduct. So what can you do to lessen the power of distractions and keep on point – staying focused? Get a pen out now – open your app that you can get this powerful biblical wisdom.

**Proverbs 4:23 TPT** “So above all, guard the affections of your heart, for they affect all that you are. Pay attention to the welfare of your innermost being, for from there flows the wellspring of life.”

1. Guard the affections of your heart – this includes our thoughts, our feelings, our will, our appetites, our discernment, and our affections. Guard – protect, safeguard, defend and secure. To guard requires us to know what is worth protecting like our marriage, our reputation, our integrity, our friendships and our faith in God, the focus of our affections.
2. Who or what do we guard from? You need to think this through. Be wise. Be insightful. We have enemies and we have things designed to defeat our best efforts to be successful. We need to be on guard. Not suspicious of people or situations but wise, astute and prudent. We need to be on guard – alert, attentive and watchful.

**1 Peter 5:8, NIV**, “Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”

3. Pay attention – focus, concentrate on, put importance on being focused. Pay attention to the **welfare of your inner most being** – the wellbeing of our emotional health, being aware of our inner workings of our soul, make sure it is well with your soul. Distractions can lead to a slide into mental health issues, mental health issues can exacerbate distractions. Pay attention to the welfare of your inner most being.
4. Remember that everything flows from your inner most being – it is a wellspring of your life. If the spring has been poisoned then what comes out is poison. Remember to guard this most sacred part of you from the enemy’s lies and deceptions.

**Message Translation;** “Keep vigilant watch over your heart; that’s where life starts. Don’t talk out of both sides of your mouth; avoid careless banter, white lies and gossip. Keep your eyes straight ahead; ignore all sideshow distractions. Watch your step, and the road will stretch out smooth before you. Look neither right nor left; leave evil in the dust.”

1. Be vigilant – watchful, be attentive and be on your guard.
2. Watch over – supervise – look after care for and be mindful over your heart. As the most important focus of our attention we are constantly distracted by things that compromise the health of our heart and our affections. Pay attention.
3. Keep your eyes straight ahead – stay focused – this scripture encourages us to look neither right nor left but to leave evil in the dust. Horses have blinkers on so they will learn to ignore distractions.
4. Ignore the side show distractions – this is harder than we think – it requires the discipline to remain focused and single-minded. It’s about a determination to ignore, to not be duped into taking notice or paying any heed to things that are made to be distractions.

Make a covenant with your eyes – with your heart – with your passions – with your morality – with your ethics, with your integrity. So many people think it’s nonsense to abide by some moralistic code of morals or ethics but I’ll tell you what it sure makes sense in the long term.

Betrayal of your marriage agreements and the covenant you entered into has devastating impacts. It begins with a harmless look, but that distraction can lead to a moral failure with the impacts to touch dozens if not hundreds of lives. Ignore the side show distraction. In the words of the song, “I only have eyes for you!”

5. Watch your steps – be mindful – be self-aware of the inner workings of your of your own soul and spirit. Watch where you’re going – be mindful of detours, watch where you’re going – don’t step

in something you shouldn't. Watch your steps – refuse to waste time on distractions and watch your step – because of fatal distractions that could derail your life.

What happens to us when we give in to distractions is we get disconnected from our important focus. Our energy is diverted towards something that was never meant to be our focus. These distractions become fatal distraction with the power to derail our lives and cause nothing but complex issues that slow us down, destroy our integrity, and leave us restless and struggling with our mental health.

No student ever set out to get a poor grade, fail or have to repeat a course or a year. No-one ever intended to get boxed into a dead end job because they couldn't focus on their performance. No parent ever decided to work so much that they ignored their family. No husband on his wedding day ever thought he'd ever be unfaithful to his bride. No wife ever thought on her wedding night she'd ever be disloyal to the love of her life. No one in business ever thought they would lower themselves to lie or steal from the company. No one ever thought they'd betray their friend or spread evil gossip about them.

Our lives can be different when we fix our eyes on the prize. Our lives can be different if we stay the course and stay focus. Our lives can be different if we reject the distraction and keep our hearts set on the goal. Many people find they lack the energy to say no to distraction and here is where Jesus can make the difference – His power in us and through us can give us the energy and strength to say no to the attractive pull of distractions.

**Philippians 3: 12 – 14 NIV**, “I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”

Imagine a life with its primary focus being Jesus! Imagine your devotion to Jesus and His church strengthening you and disciplining you to keep your eye on the prize.

Imagine your life as you successfully defeat fatal distractions. Imagine a life that is committed to pressing on regardless of the things trying to distract you. Imagine if we could cut distractions by 25% or 50% and see the focused and disciplined kind of life we could live. Imagine a life that is so focused that we are straining towards what is ahead. Imagine the quality and productiveness of your life as you press on towards the goal.

Distraction is the enemy of focus. Imagine your life with God's power to say no to distractions. Imagine pushing, pressing and persistently moving forward towards the goals of your life. I think Jesus provides this kind of focus giving us a sense of devotion that impacts our daily life. Jesus is committed to our integrity and prosperity.

It's ok to know you've been easily distracted but today you can make a change. Like the Apostle Paul, “Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”