

## Fatal Distraction

Sunday September 20, 2020

### In a Split Second

***How many of you have ever been distracted from something important at a critical time?***

Sometimes it's really difficult for us, as humans, to keep our focus on the things that we should be focusing on:

*When Charlotte and I were dating, we were youth leaders at Bradford Baptist Church. We helped out with the programming, but we would also drive kids to and from youth group at the church – a glorified taxi cab.*

*One Wednesday night we were driving home a couple youth from the program and I decided that the drive would go a lot better with a little bit of music. So, as I'm driving, I reach over to the glove box to grab my MxPx cassette to pop into my tape player. I wanted to impress the kids with quality punk rock.*

*Unfortunately, as I was doing this, there was a slight left curve in the road. My passenger side tires dipped off the pavement onto the shoulder. I looked up and we were heading towards the ditch so I yanked the steering wheel to the left, which, when you're half on gravel made things worse. The car did a 180 and we skidded across the road and slammed into the ditch on the other side backwards.*

*As a result, my car blew all 4 tires off the rims and there was a nasty dent in the passenger rocker panel. Thank God, everyone was fine. I don't think we were ever asked to drive youth again, however. It could have ended so much worse. One split second distraction could have been disastrous.*

We've all seen what can happen what can happen when you're distracted at a critical moment.

- 21% of fatal accidents in Ontario are attributed to distracted driving.

The world offers limitless distractions

- I've been distracted from tasks by Facebook.
- I've been distracted from my family by my phone.
- I've been distracted from my mission in life by circumstance.
- I've been distracted from purposeful things by things much less urgent.

Not all distractions are going to kill you, but some of them may take your life and your faith off course and diminish your impact. Some distractions might seem innocuous, some might even seem good.

***The Enemy of the Best is often the Good.***

As many of you know, I'm a big fan of Spurgeon. Charles Haddon Spurgeon was considered the prince of preachers of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

The guy spat truth at every opportunity and often said it with such blunt eloquence that it sank down deep. Here's a quote for today:

*"When Satan cannot catch us with a big sin, he will try a little one. It does not matter to him as long as he catches his fish, what bait he uses. Beware of the beginning of evil, for men, who wanted to go right, have turned aside and perished amongst the dark mountains in the wide field of sin."*

### Our Focus (Heb. 12:1-2)

It's much more difficult to be distracted when you know what you should be focusing on. I would never have even attempted to dig around in my glovebox if I was conscious of how important it was to keep my eyes on the road.

It's much easier to get distracted when you have no purpose. The days I have nothing on the schedule are never nearly as productive as the ones that are busy and packed with appointments/obligations.

Hebrews 12:1, *"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up.*

*And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. <sup>2</sup> We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame."*

Our focus, as believers in Jesus, is to keep our eyes on Jesus and to imitate His way of living and His faith. Verse 3, *"Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."*

Even in the face of opposition and oppression from enemies, we keep our focus on our purpose.

*There's been a number of times that I've had to drive home from work in white-out conditions. The conditions actually made me increase my focus as a driver, they didn't diminish it. Stereo off, both hands on the wheel. I am more focused on driving during a white-out than I am when the weather is good.*

- The same should be true in the face of other times of difficulty.
- Times of trouble should increase our focus on Jesus, not diminish it.

Keeping our focus on Jesus means that:

- Make studying Jesus a priority of our lives so we can understand His way.
- We make big deals about what Jesus made big deals about.
- We minimize things that didn't seem to matter to Jesus.
- Our calling is to love, serve, and forgive people as Jesus did.
- Like Jesus, we speak and model truth and beauty.
- And like Jesus, we make it our aim to please God by obeying His Word.

If the claims of Jesus are true (and I believe that they are), then imitating Jesus should be our primary and pre-eminent focus. His influence should be the first and largest influence in our lives.

- Our Jesus obsession should trump all the other obsessions.
- The Jesus card should dictate how all of life's other cards are played.

### **A Christ First Approach** (Col. 1:15-20)

Jesus becomes the lens through which we see our lives and the world we live in. The Apostle Paul writes to the Church at Colosse:

*<sup>15</sup> Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, <sup>16</sup> for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth.*

*He made the things we can see and the things we can't see— such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him.*

*<sup>17</sup> He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together. <sup>18</sup> Christ is also the head of the church, which is his body. He is the beginning, supreme over all who rise from the dead. [Because of this] JESUS is first in everything.*

*<sup>19</sup> For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, <sup>20</sup> and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross.*

Because Jesus is FIRST in everything that means Jesus gets to dictate to His followers how life is to be lived. Jesus gets to tell us how to focus our lives:

- Jesus dictates how we direct our time, money, and attention.
- Jesus dictates how we treat our family and relationships.
- Jesus dictates how we treat our enemies and opponents.
- Jesus dictates how we respond to government.
- Jesus dictates how we respond to adversity and hardship.

Jesus is first in everything. He is the lens through which we interpret our circumstance and discern the times. He tells us how to live in and respond to the world we exist in.

### **Your Source of Life & Salvation** (1 Jn. 2:15-17; Jn. 10:10)

But too often we substitute the wisdom of Jesus on how to approach life with our own distractions. In 1 John, the Apostle John gives a dire warning to Christians about how much hope they put into the world and worldly systems.

1 John 2:15-17, *"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."*

John is trying to teach his readers that we shouldn't see the world and its systems as our source of life and hope. He gives the reason we shouldn't do this in the next verse:

*<sup>16</sup> 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.*

- The world offers us a craving, but it will never satisfy us.
- John then gives the reason that it can't satisfy in verse 17

*<sup>17</sup> And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever."*

- Have you ever noticed? Cravings don't last.
- I used to crave for an iPhone 4. Does anyone even still use one?
- Everything here is temporary. It goes out of style, it breaks, it fades.

It's still really easy to get distracted by the things of the world. We can easily become distracted from our source of life and salvation by all sorts of things. Things that often seem good. Lately, I've seen more Christians falling for distractions. Substitutes for life in Christ:

- Some are distracted by their careers, money and the financial markets – thinking that financial security is where they will find life and salvation.
- Some look to others: family, friends and belonging for life and salvation – while community and belonging are good, they aren't going to save you.
- Some are distracted by politics – thinking that a political figure or policy is going to save them and give them a good life.
- Some are distracted by the media/bad news and living in fear – thinking that being cautious will save them and preserve their lives.
- We need to focus our time and attention on the things that won't fade.
- The things that are able to bring us real and eternal life.
- The things that can save us and bring us a true, unfading hope.

If, as Christians, we put our focus anywhere other than Jesus, our lives can quickly get out of shape and get taken off course.

- Jesus is to be the lens through which we see the issues of life.
- Jesus is your salvation and peace – not politics or social reform or relationships or pleasure or money. Jesus.

Jesus is even so bold as to make a promise in John 10:10, *"I have come so that they might have life and have it abundantly."*

- Our cravings for life and meaning and hope and peace are found in Jesus.
- Jesus models & teaches us how to have life/hope: We don't have to guess.
- Let's invest our energy and attention on the only thing that truly gives us life and peace – anything else is a distraction that could prove fatal.