

The Distraction Dilemma

By Jim Elliff



I thought to myself, “I’ll take a brisk walk outside just for a few moments to enjoy the sunlight and to regain some energy and perspective.”

Well, on the way out of the house, I noticed that some cookie crumbs had been spilled on the floor, so I went to the closet, got the broom and the dust pan, and quickly swept up the crumbs and put them in the trash can. But the trash can was full and

overflowing, so I tied up the trash bag and took it out to the garage where we keep them until the garbage truck comes.

As I proceeded back in the house, passing through the kitchen, I noticed that the paper towel dispenser was empty, so I ran downstairs quickly to the basement to get another roll. But when I flipped the light switch the light did not come on, so I went up to the drawer in the kitchen, found the flashlight, and proceeded down again to the basement to find the roll of paper towels and a new lightbulb. I proceeded to put the lightbulb in the socket, but not without first finding the step-stool to complete the job.

After returning the step-stool, I picked up the paper towels and the old bulb and went back upstairs to finish that job. I was a bit thirsty, so I opened the cabinet for a cup but, to my surprise, the cup shelf was empty. So, I opened the dishwasher to get another, which I proceeded to hand wash. Then I took a needed drink of water before my walk. Unfortunately my cell phone rang at this very moment. It was my mother who had lots to tell me about her day.

Half an hour later I made it to the front door again, but decided to go to the bathroom before leaving. As I was passing down the hallway to the bathroom, my husband stepped out of his office with a big smile, asking “What have you been doing this afternoon?”

“Not going on a walk,” I said.

Familiar?

I’ll bet my fictional story about a distracted woman does not seem fictional at all to some of you.

The truth is, distractions, whatever the shape, are a way of life for most people, so much so that thinking deeply about anything is all but impossible. They may come constantly from that ever present cell phone, that demanding preschooler, or even too much insistence on the pursuit of excellence.

The Soils

Jesus had this in mind when he told perhaps his most important parable, which shows up in all four gospel accounts — the parable of the soils (Mt 13).

In that story, the seed of the gospel is sown on four types of soil, each representing the heart of the one hearing it. One of these soils is the thorn-infested soil. When the seed falls into this kind of soil which is found in much of Israel in that day as well as this day, the potential for a thorny vine to wrap around the emerging plant is almost certain. Jesus’ listeners knew exactly what this was like.

Jesus explained that the thorny vine represented “the deceitfulness of riches and the worries of life.” He means that the great truths of God can actually be choked by distractions in those who heard and were at first interested in Christ, killing all the further interest.

Does that soil type look like you? You may find this kind of distraction in children and youth and hard working men and women in so many ways we could not begin to count them.

Is There Hope For You?

There is. But you must think more deeply, ask questions, weigh choices, and count the cost of becoming a true follower of Christ. It’s not a small decision. Your life depends on your careful consideration. Distractions can take that opportunity away.

Ponder this thought in the midst of the whirlwind around you. What will you say when you stand before God. Will you say, “Father, I did not have any spare time to give for thinking about you. I had way too much to do.”

This is the ultimate sadness of giving in to distractions — such people never get around to serious consideration and commitment to Christ.

Many in hell will have that eternal regret. I hope you are not one of them.

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