

The Spiritual Cost Of Distraction

I have wrestled with distraction my whole life. It has taken a number of different forms over the years and has been spurred on by a wide variety of catalysts.

Sometimes we can't help but become distracted by significant events or relationships in our lives, but more often distraction seems to be a choice. We choose to fill our waking hours with more commitments, hobbies, adventures, and chores than a human being is capable of managing while maintaining any significant amount of focus.

Our modern era of digital connectivity has only made things worse by putting a huge number of available distractions in the palms of our hands. I am still quite often stunned by the realization that many of us are [missing the world around us](#), because we are either living in a virtual reality or viewing real life through screens and devices.

Just this last weekend, my wife and I had the privilege of joining some friends on a short vacation to Disneyland in California. I was honestly amazed by the number of people who walked around with their eyes glued to their phones. I even caught myself doing it a couple of times, as I hurried to take pictures of what I was experiencing, rather than focusing on the experience itself.

If you are a regular reader then you know that I have been struggling for some time with the current culture of distraction. I have written previously about my concerns over

[the addictiveness of Social Media](#), and [my own struggle](#) to maintain a balance in ministry and my family is partly due to this unwritten expectation that we should always be available to the requests and needs of others.

I have made some attempts to meter my connectivity in the past, and have argued [why I think this is important](#), especially for Christians. But I have struggled to find the balance that I desire. The distractions, especially of Social Media, seem to always creep back in over time.

Everything is Spiritual

What I have come to believe more earnestly than ever, is that distraction is really a spiritual issue, as well as an issue of productivity or focus. When we constantly seek the small hit of dopamine we get from apps that are engineered to distract us with likes and comments, it shows that we are trying (at some level) to fill a hole inside.

We show that we are uncomfortable with the silence and boredom and grittiness of the real lives we are called to live in the real world.

I am increasingly weary of being connected all of the time. And I've been doing some reading that talks about simplicity, the importance of [Deep Work](#), and what it means to make space for God to take up residence in our lives.

And the more I think on these things, the more I desire to live an unhurried life; one in which I set clear boundaries and practice the fine art of saying "no", even to good opportunities. Not out of laziness, but because I truly

believe that we cannot hear God speak to us clearly, when we live distracted lives.

One of the greatest spiritual challenges Christians in America face today is becoming present enough and silent enough that we can experience the abundant life that God has promised us, by experiencing God himself.

If we are constantly distracting ourselves by created things when we are awake, then how can we ever learn to focus enough to hear the still, small voice of our Creator?

Quitting is hard, but it may be necessary

The fact that I have Googled “quitting social media” and similar queries dozens of times in the last three years should tell you how hard it is to actually pull the trigger on making changes, especially to online connectivity. I’ve had a bit more success with saying no to real-world commitments recently, but I still struggle with letting go of online distractions completely.

I still haven’t figured out how to do what I know is best, which is to completely detach myself from those things I find most distracting like Social Media, email, entertainment, and the like. But until I do, I believe I will continue to struggle with not only physical, mental, and emotional distractions, but also spiritual ones.

The question I keep asking myself is this. What is the cost of waiting to make a change?

Do you find yourself in a frequently distracted state? Have

you thought about the spiritual costs? What are you doing to address this in your life? Leave a comment and let me know.