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*“The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest” (Luke 10:2)*

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## IDENTIFYING JESUS’ COMMANDMENTS (On Dealing with Distractions - Part I)

Every commandment Jesus gave serves a purpose--to shape us into children worthy of our Father, not by earning His love but by partaking of His very character and holiness. This commandment about dealing with distractions shows us a universal principle by example. Jesus demonstrated what it means to stay focused on the Father's business despite overwhelming external pressures. And to anyone watching carefully, His example might as well be a commandment: stay on purpose.

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Keep teaching. Don't let opposition distract you from what matters. Because keeping this commandment demonstrates love in action--not passive knowledge of Jesus, but active, deliberate following of His pattern even when distractions scream for our attention.

Before we examine this commandment, remember: some commandments Jesus spoke plainly, and some He showed us through example. But everything He said and everything He did was purposeful and meant for us--nothing was accidental.

Now consider these three questions: Are you distracted TO Jesus or FROM Jesus? If you fulfilled your distractions, what would you have left to do? Do you look for an escape in your distractions?

### **Jesus Stayed on Purpose**

*And He taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy Him, and could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear Him. (Luke 19:47-48)*

Think about what was happening here. This is the week before the crucifixion. Jesus knows exactly what's coming. The religious leaders are actively plotting to kill Him. Death is days away. The pressure is mounting. The opposition is fierce. Everything around Him is screaming "distraction"--danger, threats, conspiracies, political maneuvering.

And what does Jesus do? He teaches. Daily. In the temple. Right in the middle of the enemy camp. He stays absolutely focused on the Father's business.

That's the commandment shown by example: when distractions come--even legitimate ones, even dangerous ones--stay on purpose. Don't let them pull you away from what the Father has called you to do.

Jesus had been about the Father's business from the begin-

ning. Even as a twelve-year-old boy, when His parents found Him in the temple, He said:

*How is it that you sought me? wist you not that I must be about my Father's business? (Luke 2:49)*

From childhood to the cross, Jesus never wavered from His purpose. The distractions changed--sometimes it was family concerns, sometimes it was hungry crowds, sometimes it was political threats, sometimes it was physical danger. But Jesus stayed locked in on what the Father sent Him to do.

### **Understanding Distraction**

Let's be clear about what we're dealing with. Distraction is the process of diverting the attention of an individual or group from a desired area of focus and thereby blocking or diminishing the reception of desired information or the performing of a desired action.

It's caused by inability to pay attention, lack of interest in the object of attention, or the great intensity, novelty, or attractiveness of something other than the object of attention.

There are internal distractions--hunger, fatigue, illness, worrying, daydreaming. There are external distractions--visual triggers, social interactions, music, text messages, phone calls. Both internal and external distractions contribute to a loss of focus. And here's the thing: Satan knows this. He operates in a world of illusion.

*For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works. (2 Cor. 11:13-15)*

Satan doesn't always come as a roaring lion. Sometimes he comes dressed as something good, something necessary, something that looks righteous but pulls you off mission.

That's the danger of distraction--it often looks legitimate.

## **Our Business Without Distraction**

So what is our business? What are we supposed to be focused on?

*There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married cares for the things of the world, how she may please her husband. And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that you may attend upon the Lord without distraction. (1 Cor. 7:34-35)*

Paul uses a specific phrase here: "attend upon." In the Greek, it means sitting constantly by, devoted. It's the picture of someone who never leaves their post, who stays focused on their assignment, who refuses to be pulled away.

That's our business. Not just to know about the Lord. Not just to believe in the Lord. But to attend upon the Lord without distraction. To sit constantly by Him. To be devoted to Him. To keep our focus locked in on Him and His will.

And notice--Paul isn't saying marriage is bad. He's making a point about divided attention. The more cares we have, the more potential distractions we face. The more things competing for our focus, the harder it becomes to attend upon the Lord without distraction.

## **Satan's Strategy and Our Response**

Here's something sobering:

*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (Jas. 4:7)*

Notice what this verse assumes--we must have allowed Satan to be somewhere close to make him flee. Think about that. If we have to resist the devil, it means he's close enough to be a

threat. If we have to make him flee, it means he's close enough to distract us.

How did that happen? How did we let him get that close? Usually through the very distractions we're talking about. Through letting our guard down. Through allowing things into our lives that seem harmless but create openings for spiritual attack.

Some of the biggest distractions today are TV and social media and the new/news.

*For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.* (Acts 17:21)

Does that sound familiar? People spending all their time consuming new information, chasing the latest update, never satisfied, always looking for the next thing. They weren't doing anything productive. They weren't building anything lasting. They were just consuming novelty. That's a distraction.

## **Knowing and Staying Focused on Purpose**

Jesus knew His purpose from the beginning:

*He that commits sin is of the devil; for the devil sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.*  
(1 John 3:8)

And He called Paul with a specific purpose:

*But rise, and stand upon your feet: for I have appeared unto you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of these things which you have seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto you...* (Acts 26:16)

Do you know your purpose? Can you state it clearly? Because if you don't know what you're supposed to be doing, any distraction will feel as important as your actual mission. But if you know your purpose--if you're clear on what God has called

you to do--then you can evaluate every potential distraction against that purpose and ask: "Does this help me fulfill what God called me to do, or does it pull me away from it?"

In the next issue, we will discuss practical steps for dealing with distractions and what we as Christians should do to make sure that we are distracted in the right ways.

BILL PRINCE, JR.  
(Oxford, AL)

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## SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. How old was Joshua when he died?
2. Which king helped Solomon with his building projects?
3. How were the family warned that someone wanted to kill the baby Jesus?
4. What was Timothy advised to take to help with his illnesses?
5. According to James, what should we do after “confessing our faults to one another”?

...ANSWERS NEXT MONTH

And remember last month's questions?

1. Which tribe of Israel looked after the religious aspects of life? LEVI (Num. 18:20-24)
2. What did Samson find in the carcass of the animal he had killed at a later time? BEES AND HONEY (Jdg. 14:8)

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3. In the parable of the grain of mustard seed, when it becomes a tree birds come and do what?  
BUILD NESTS (Mat. 13:32)
4. When Jesus told his disciples to beware of the “leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees”, to what was he referring?  
THE DOCTRINES OF THE PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES (Mat. 16:12)
5. According to Thessalonians, what will happen to the believers alive at the return of Christ? THEY WILL BE CAUGHT UP TOGETHER IN THE CLOUDS (1 Thes. 4:17)

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## “TURN YOUR EYES UPON JESUS” Lyrics

O soul are you weary and troubled?  
No light in the darkness you see?  
There's light for a look at the Savior,  
And life more abundant and free!

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,  
Look full in his wonderful face,  
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,  
In the light of his glory and grace.

Thro' death into life everlasting.  
He passed, and we follow Him there;  
O'er us sin no more hath dominion—  
For more than conqu'rors we are!

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,  
Look full in his wonderful face,  
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,  
In the light of his glory and grace.

By: Helen Howarth Lemmel  
Hymn Published in 1922

## GOSPEL MEETINGS

DATES	TIME	PLACE	SPEAKER
Jan. 30 - Feb. 1	7pm Fri. & Sat., 10am & 2:30pm Sun.	Taylor's Cross Roads Roanoke, AL	Andrew Smith & Kyle Vinson

### “BE THOU MY VISION” Lyrics

Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;  
Naught be all else to me save that Thou art.  
Thou my best thought by day or by night;  
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

Be Thou my wisdom, be Thou my true Word;  
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord.  
Thou my great Father, and I Thy true son;  
Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.

Be Thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;  
Be Thou my armor, be Thou my true might.  
Be Thou my soul's shelter, be Thou my strong tower;  
Raise Thou me heavenward, great power of my power.

Riches I heed not, nor vain, empty praise;  
Thou mine inheritance, now and always.  
Thou and Thou only, the first in my heart,  
High King of Heaven, my treasure Thou art.

High King of Heaven, Thou heaven's bright sun,  
Grant me its joys after victory is won.  
Heart of my heart, whatever befall,  
Still be my vision, Oh Ruler of all



(Youtube A Cappella)

Old Irish Hymn  
Translator: Mary E. Byrne 1905  
Versifier: Eleanor H. Hull 1919