

Theme: Walking with God requires us to give focused, sustained reflection to God, His Word, our lives, and the world in which we live. But we live in a world of constant distractions, making sustained, focused reflection and living very difficult.

I. Intro – Distractions

- A. Today I want to talk about - alarm goes off
- B. As I was saying, - text message beep
- C. Where was I - phone rings
- D. Many of us find our days like this - full of distractions
- E. What are we so distracted? What can be done about it?

II. The Call To Focus

A. The story of Mary and Martha

1. Two sisters - Martha and Mary
As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. ³⁹ She had a sister called Mary.... Luke 10:38–39
2. Both sisters have a relationship to Jesus
As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. ³⁹ She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. Luke 10:38–39
3. Key difference - Mary is focused, Martha distracted
She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you

care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" Luke 10:39–40

4. Important distractions - more important focus
But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" ⁴¹ "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, ⁴² but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." Luke 10:40–42

B. The importance of focus

1. It is important to focus on God without distraction
Be still, and know that I am God.... Psalms 46:10
2. Understanding God's Word takes focus
My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, ² turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, ³ and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, ⁴ and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, ⁵ then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. ⁶ For the Lord gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding... ⁹ Then you will understand what is right and just and fair — every good path. ¹⁰ For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul. Proverbs 2:1–6, 9–10
 - a. Much of the Bible is poetry - requires focused thought
 - b. A lot of Bible is proverbs - requires focused thought
 - c. Jesus taught a lot of parables - require focused thought

- d. Even much of the Epistles requires focused thought!
Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this. 2 Timothy 2:7
 - e. Without focus it is impossible to know & walk with God
3. Building friendships & community takes focused time
- a. Not just quantity time - focused time
 - b. Real friendships linger over a good meal - not suck down fast food while texting from the same location
 - c. Our families need focused time - lots of quantity time
- 4.
5. A distracted life is a shallow life, devoid of a depth of reality and relationship

III. The iWorld - A World of Distraction

- A. The problem - too many distractions to focus
But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. Luke 10:40
- B. The iWorld - distractions on steroids
 - 1. The world has always had distractions - Martha!
 - 2. But the iWorld has kicked them into high gear
- C. The distractions (and bad habits) of the iWorld
 - 1. Constant beeps and flashes
 - a. These began as ways to help us remember & focus
 - b. But they have become a constant - with no escape

- c. On our phone they now follow us - always interrupting
 - d. It is virtually impossible to ignore - we were wired to respond to such stimuli for our own protection
2. Multitasking - a new virtue - demands partial attention to many tasks
- a. No longer are we to work on one thing at a time
 - b. We are expected to read, email, talk on the phone - all at once
 - c. Entertainment - scores, headlines moving across the screen; now pushing onto iPad and other devices for 'richer' experience than just watching - which means a more distracted experience
 - d. The problem is we do not really multitask - we task switch - and do a poor job because of lack of focus!
 - e. When we turn to relationships, Scripture, worship, prayer - we find focus difficult
3. Speed - things must be done quickly, leaving no time for reflection
- a. The internet encourages skimming rather than reflective reading
 - b. Survival strategy in face of too much information - but also encouraged for business reasons
 - c. "Our goal is to get users in and out really quickly. All our design decisions are based on that strategy." - Irene Au, Google's User Experience Director
 - d. "The last thing the company wants to do is to encourage leisurely reading or slow, concentrated thought. Google is, quite literally, in the business of distraction." Nicolas Carr, The Shallows - What The Internet Is Doing To Our Brains

- e. And when we turn to the Bible - we have been trained to skim rather than meditate
- f. Relationships, Scripture, worship, prayer - it all seems so SLOW

- b. When our kids were at home - NO TV from Sunday bed - Friday after school - for any of us
- c. Some of us may need a fast - a day or week we simply unplug and turn off
- d. If you feel some panic at the thought - you definitely need to turn things off

IV. Applying the Word In the iWorld

A. Realize the problem of distraction

1. We are modern day Martha's - distracted by many things
2. Our world is like a magician - getting our attention elsewhere, distracting us
3. If you do not think distraction affects you - pay attention this week to see if it does
4. We can not solve the problem until we know it exists

B. Learn from the example of Jesus

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.³⁶ Simon and his companions went to look for him,³⁷ and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!" Mark 1:35-37

1. Jesus got up early, went away from crowds, to solitary place - He controlled distractions
2. Jesus then prayed - He practiced focusing on God

C. Controlling distraction & encouraging focus in the iWorld

1. Learn to turn off our technologies - they have an off switch!
 - a. Notice Jesus did not try to focus in the middle of the crowd - he went away from it - off switch

2. Do not use your technology (or other distraction) until you read the Word and pray first!

- a. Notice Jesus did this first thing - a great habit!
- b. Start your day with a time of focused intake of the Word and prayer

3. Focus on the things and people in front of you - not the many things trying to distract you

- a. When Jesus is with people - He is WITH them - not distracted
- b. Example of man in DuClaws - ignoring child to look at smartphone
- c. Steph - many of her friends do this when out for dinner
- d. This may seem hard at first - we are hooked to distractions like a drug
- e. Simply savor time with friends, family - and God

4. Find places or activities that are restorative to you

- a. Jesus often went away to solitary places [Luke 5:16]
- b. For some it is a place, for others an activity that allows time to breather and reflect - do it!!!

D. Prayer for focus in our distracted world

Focused In A Distracted World

Luke 10:38-42

September 22, 2013

Prayer

2 Thessalonians 3:16

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you. 2 Thess. 3:16

38 As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. 39 She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. 40 But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

41 "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, 42 but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." Luke 10:38-42