

Talk It Over

Travel Light (Week 2) Letting Go Of Distractions

SMALL TALK

1. Be honest. Who feels distracted right now? What is it that has your attention?

VIEWPOINT

2. **READ Luke 10:38-42.** Do you more easily relate to Mary or Martha? Why?
3. What do you think Jesus means when he says that really “only one” thing is needed? What is very bold about this claim? What is he claiming? What can we do with a claim like this?
4. **READ Proverbs 4:5, 25-27.** Which phrases seem to be about attentiveness versus distraction even though those words are not used? Which phrases strike you? Why?
5. **READ Psalm 19:1-2 and Romans 1:20.** Distractions are thoughts or ACTIONS that take us off track. We are inundated with so many actions, transactions, satisfactions, dissatisfactions, interactions, and reactions that we tend to excuse our inattentiveness to God. Does this excuse work? Why or why not?

GETTING PERSONAL

6. How do you feel about your time spent with screens? Why do you feel that way?
7. How does taking time to dive deeper help those of us who are chronically distracted? What does this kind of focus and attentiveness do for us?
8. What distractions do you want to limit? Which do you want to eliminate? How will you accomplish this?

MAKING PROGRESS

9. How can we love God more whole heartedly? What are the relationship principles that apply when it comes to distractions, attractions, attentiveness and inattentiveness? Describe your current journey from wherever you are to where God wants you by using these terms.

December 8, 2019

TRAVEL LIGHT

Week 2- LETTING GO OF DISTRACTIONS

In a busy holiday season, it's common for people to feel weighed down. Sometimes we carry weight that God never intended that we carry. His solution is simple: Let go of the baggage and travel light.

Today we are focused on Letting Go of Distractions. Let's jump right into this important topic this way.

I. Have A MARY Christmas

Please notice that I did not spell it M-E-R-R-Y, the way we usually spell Merry Christmas. I spelled it like the Name. The person I have in mind here is a different Mary—not Mary the Mother of Jesus, but Mary the Sister of Martha. I know, there are lots of Mary's in the Bible. It can get confusing.

So when I say have a Mary Christmas, I'm saying Have a "Mary" Christmas as opposed to a "Martha" Christmas. If you have not heard of Mary and Martha, this will make sense in a moment. Let's read.

***Luke 10:38-42 (NIV)** 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 few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."*

Christmas is a prime season to be DISTRACTED as Martha was. It is common to be distracted by all the preparations, and trappings of the season. But CHRIST is what Christmas was all about. And all of Martha's preparations were supposed to be all about honoring the guest of honor. But she is all bent out of shape. Why? Mary isn't helping to honor the guest of honor. And yet, Jesus was honored by Mary's undivided attentiveness. For Mary, the party was all about Jesus. Mary had it right. Jesus was kind and helpful to Martha when he told her that Mary was the one who was on the better track. **Distractions are actions that take us away from the better track.**

*Luke 10:40 (NIV) But Martha was **distracted** (περισπάω) by all the preparations that had to be made.*

The word Luke used here is perispao (περισπάω) lit., “to draw around” (peri),

perispao (περισπάω) Literally, “to be drawn around” something, hence “to be drawn away, distracted.” It means to be overoccupied by the thing you are drawn around.

Martha was being “drawn around” the wrong thing. She became personally active in the distraction herself and now she is actively “drawing around and around” the wrong thing. She is over-occupied with the wrong center. Her fixation is causing her fits.

Mary on the other hand has chosen the right center to draw around. She is drawn to Jesus. She is preoccupied with the right center. Jesus is the one and only thing needed as a central thing to draw your life around. He's the one fixation that actually fixes making us whole. Every other fixation is something we draw around and around but it will not fix and make us whole.

So have a Mary Christmas. The party is all about Jesus, so let's put our undivided attention on the guest of honor, shall we? Let's draw around him.

REFLECT

Often the most difficult choices aren't between good and bad but between good and best.

When you aren't feeling attraction toward God, a good question to ask yourself is, "What good thing have I made central while neglecting the best thing?"

Jesus claims to be a better way of life than that! He offers us the full measure of His joy. The gift of life to the full. To experience that, we need to become occupied with him as the center.

II. The devil doesn't need to DESTROY you if he can DISTRACT you.

Principles For Intimate Relationships

- Attraction is strengthened by attentiveness.
- Distraction is inattentiveness.
- Distraction weakens attraction.

Principles For An Intimate Relationship With God

Proverbs 4:5 (NIV) Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or turn away from them.

It doesn't seem like this is talking about an out and out rejection of God or his wisdom, but a turning away due to inattentiveness, or distraction, which weakens the attraction with forgetfulness.

Proverbs 4:25-27 (NIV) Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you.. {26} Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways. {27} Do

not turn to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.

Repeat after me: *“Fix your gaze”... “Give careful thought”...
“Do not turn.”*

Ignore the distractions. Do not turn to them.

Our purpose here at VVCC is to help you take steps from wherever you are...to where God wants you to be.

All of you are wherever you are. Right? So for progress in the right direction, what is it going to take? Look straight ahead. Fix your gaze directly before you at where God wants you to be. That takes some instruction. It is different than where YOU might want to be at any given moment. Even Jesus as the representative human being prayed NOT my will, but your will.

God’s desire for us sometimes is bigger and better than our own desires. Some of our own immediate desires can be counter productive distractions. How do we let these distractions go? We let our eyes look straight ahead. We put our eyes on Jesus, our ears to his instruction, our heart close to his heart. We look, we listen, we hold on to what he says. It’s not all about me. Its all about you. You gave yourself for me, I’m going to live for you.

Now, if you don’t believe this yet, I’m glad you are here. What can you do? What if you don’t trust Jesus yet to that degree. What if you are not convinced Jesus really is the way to a better life, and the giver of LIFE to the full? Just because you don’t believe it now, doesn’t mean there is nothing you can do. You can’t make yourself believe something you don’t believe, but in relationships, believing is trusting. You may not trust Jesus yet; you may not even believe God exists. You might not yet believe God is a personal God. But if he is, as I believe he has revealed himself to be a relational, personal God, then even when you don’t know him, or trust him, or believe him yet, there is still something you can do.

You can move from the “I don’t know him yet” place that you are, and see if he is in fact a reality. A personal being you can get to know. You can move from I don’t know him, I don’t believe in him, to he’s an acquaintance I am trying to get to know. I’m testing to see if there is a reality there. Moving through stages of getting to know a person doesn’t happen all at once. It is the same with a God who is a personal being. You can test to see if what he says stands the test of reality. So there is something you can do even if you don’t yet believe in him. Just like there is something you can do with stranger you have just met that you don’t trust yet. You can have interactions to see if you want a relationship to deepen through the stages, from stranger, to acquaintance, to friend, to trusted intimate deep and meaningful relationship.

Although this is true, even when you believe in him, there is a very important principle we need to acknowledge. **Moving from wherever you are to where God wants you to be does not work while being distracted.**

BLINK

Have you ever played “Blink”? Stare at each other to see who blinks or looks away first. Although it has been a while, I’ve played this game with some of my grandchildren. They are quite good at it when they are trying to play the game. Their focused attention lasts longer than I expected. Kids can focus.

Speaking of attention spans...

How many of you think that generally speaking older movies tend to be longer than newer movies?

How many of you think that generally speaking older movies tend to be slower than newer movies?

How many of you prefer watching newer movies rather than older movies? I want things to move faster and keep my attention. Our culture is moving faster. That affects us.

Doesn't it seem like the attention span of people in our culture is dropping? As a culture we used to read. Then as a culture we went through the we read Reader's Digest condensed versions of everything. Then we stopped reading Reader's Digest and opted for sound bites, and video clips. What is happening to us?

We are like Minnows

I don't know about you, but sometimes I have the attention span of a minnow. I am so easily distracted. We are all now swimming in a totally distracted culture. We are exposed to so much printed input and video feed every day. Inbox full. Ongoing Social media feeds. We are either already on data overload or so close to overload that we are numb. So we act like minnows. We take a quick look and dart away! Does that sound about right? There is one major problem with this.

We take only a passing Godward glance then like a minnow we dart away into the shadows.

We are so distracted we don't even notice our inattentiveness...but God notices.

III. Choose what is BETTER

Jesus said to distracted Martha,

Luke 10:42 (NIV) "...Mary has chosen what is better..."

1. Focus on the important.

In a distracted, outraged, shallow culture, people hunger for something rare: the focused, "whole", and caring person. When people meet someone like that they are drawn to that person. They are regarded as a rare, kind, and caring person who lives at a deeper level than the surface.

The movie that just came out, "A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood" with Mr. Rogers played by Tom Hanks. The movie is all about how Mr Rogers was this kind of rare person.

The movie is worth seeing even if you were never into the Mr. Rogers Neighborhood TV show as a kid.

When I try to live like this on my own, I cannot sustain it. I'm too distracted. When I focus on Jesus as my center, it comes though more authentically. I'd say more naturally, but it isn't natural at all, it is supernatural. When you taste this, you want to go back for more.

2. Go Deeper.

Because we are chronically distracted by shallow things, we crave depth. How do we get deeper? Take time to dive deeper. Why? Because deeper attraction is the answer to shallow distractions!

How might you do that this week?

Suggestions:

- Listen to Jesus.
- Make Jesus your center.
- Listen attentively to His text messages.
- When you are close and quiet you will also hear Him whisper.
- Then let going deep get simple. Do what he says.

God, You are worthy of our praise and our undivided attention. Help us to focus our eyes on You. Holy Spirit, show us where we are distracted and give us Your power to let go of anything that's holding us back. Jesus, may we be centered on, and compelled by Your love. Amen!