



Links Players

Distractions

But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law? (Matthew 22:34-36, ESV)

I met my first and second-round playing partners on the first tee. I quickly assessed one was chattier and the other quieter. I'm quiet when playing tournament rounds. A little conversation is okay, but I have my limits. I knew it was going to be a challenging day by the second hole with the more vocal one riding in the cart with me.

The running commentary started on the first hole, and she didn't stop until the last putt dropped on eighteen. The Florida heat and my putting woes were enough to wear me out, but the added distraction left me exhausted.

Distractions are daily life obstacles. If left unattended, small or big distractions will eventually infect our spiritual lives, too.

While most distractions are negative in nature, some can be positive. For example, the woman with the issue of blood (Matthew 5:25-34) touched Jesus, and it made him stop. His disciples were offended by the distraction; Jesus not only healed her but was delighted to invite her back into the community.

Likewise, you're trying to get out the door and you answer a call that becomes an unexpected blessing. Or you choose to give your child (young or adult) attention and gain meaningful connection instead of getting one more thing done on your to-do list.

On the flip side, negative distractions can soil our attitudes, disrupt productivity, and can lead to unwanted behaviors and disconnection from God.

I'm guilty of choosing to do what is right in my own eyes when negative distractions come my way. I complain (mostly to myself). Feeling annoyed, frustration, or irritability leaks out of my mouth and body language. I am quick to justify my behavior regardless of the ripple effect on other people. Woe is me, and I will do what I want.

Jesus shows us a different way to handle distractions. He names the distraction for what it is. To the Pharisees, he said, "Why put me to the test... (Matthew 22:18)." Jesus welcomes the Sadducee's question but corrects them with truth (vs. 29-30). And when the Pharisees returned, Jesus exposed their hypocrisy by speaking plainly and countered with curious questions.

Might we learn from Jesus how to handle distractions? Slow down and make accurate assessments. Name the distraction – is it helpful or a hinderance? Give it the weight it requires - is it a small thing to let go, or does it need to be confronted? Be curious - is the distraction influencing our behaviors and attitudes in a positive or destructive way? We have a choice in the matter.

In the second round of the tournament, I made a simple request to ride with the quiet player and experienced a more pleasant round.

Prayer: Lord, help me today to have the eyes to see the distractions in my midst. May I embrace the good and beneficial ones and handle the negative ones with honesty and curiosity.

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