

Distraction can be a very troubling thing. Have you ever gotten down the dictionary to look up a word and been sidetracked by another word that interested you? And when you broke away from that word to continue your original mission, another word grabbed your attention? I think that this is a fairly common experience. It takes a lot of work to get to the actual word that started your search.

Our spiritual lives can be very similar. We are continually distracted by life as we try to be a servant and worshipper of God. Our work, our relationships, our finances, even the activities of the church can cause us to shift our focus away from what God really wants. This is why some people try to isolate themselves totally from the concerns of life. Monks would choose to spend all of their time in a dank, dark, confining cell so that they would not be distracted from their worship. Others would stay on top of a high platform and haul up food so that they would not be tempted away from thoughts of God. People do similar things today as well. Is this what God wants? Is it not crystal clear that if we have no relationships with man, we can not have the relationship with God that he wants? God wants us out and doing, interacting with the world and other people.

We might think that full-time ministers have it made, for they can better keep their focus on Christ. But just because this is their job it doesn't mean that their faith is any stronger. I think in a way it might weaken them a little, because their ability to bounce back is not as well tested.

It has occurred to me that the distractions of life are what measure us as Christians. I have worried about the times that I have drifted away temporarily, but then I realized that the ability to spring back is the crux of our faith. If our dedication is strong, we are like a rubber band that keeps us bouncing back to the proper alignment. How strong is the rubber band that represents the bond of our faith?

Although this is not a great analogy, think about watching someone catch a football. Do we pay big bucks for a couple of guys to toss it back and forth. Not hardly. We pay to see them catch it in spite of all of the distractions which are part of the game: the crowd, the weather, the pain of injuries, and especially the defender. The excitement of the game comes from watching teams move the ball in spite of the efforts of the other team. Now, I am not saying that God enjoys seeing us in trouble and pain, but it is gratifying to Him to see that when troubles do come we are able to lean on His strength and get through it. We may look off for a moment, but we keep our heart directed towards the goal.

Some American Indian tribes used to make their captives run through a gauntlet, where they had to run along a line through the men of the tribe who tried whatever they could to knock them off. Life is a lot like that, and unless we keep plugging along we will be defeated. We have to deal with distractions on all sides, but we must keep bringing God back into focus. The victory that we will have when we have been faithful unto death will be beyond all our expectations and dreams.