

# Distractions

One of my family's all-time favorite movies is *Planes, Trains, And Automobiles*. Other than a few expletives it was a hilarious movie. It was about a fellow trying to get home to his family for Thanksgiving. If you are a fan, no doubt you will remember the scene when Steve Martin and John Candy are in the cheap motel in Wichita, in the last vacant room, that only had one bed. As Neal Page (Martin) is trying to go to sleep, Del Griffith (Candy) makes these horrid noises with his sinuses, keeping his traveling companion awake. It is a hilarious point in the movie, but the noises and distractions ultimately lead to a very harsh exchange between the characters.

Life is much this way, as there are so many things that take our minds from what we are seeking to do. Sometimes it comes from the person at the desk next to you clicking his pen while you are trying to listen to a teacher's instruction. Or, it could come by way of continuous phone calls while you are trying to do household chores. Sometimes there are non-human distractions as well, like running out of gas on the way to work, or getting stuck at that incessant red light on the way to an appointment.

Paul wrote about distractions when he said, ". . . but one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus," Philippians 3:13b,14. No one can doubt that Paul in his life was focused, determining to never allow things to distract him.

Yet, distractions would come, sometime even during worship. Do you remember the time he was preaching at Troas, and a brother fell asleep during his sermon? The Bible says Eutychus was falling into a deep sleep, Acts 20:9. Imagine that . . . someone sleeping during a sermon! Anyway, he fell from the third story window. That was certainly an attention getter! Undoubtedly, Eutychus would have been embarrassed that he had caused such a distraction to everyone's worship that evening.

Eutychus was not the first, and most assuredly not the last person to distract people while they were trying to worship. Even though nurseries and cry rooms are built, and sound baffles are hung on walls, it is hard to get away from the occasional distraction in worship. People talking, cracking their knuckles, clipping and biting their nails, clearing their throats, getting up and down, and moving in and out of the assembly to go to the bathroom. Distractions come in so many different ways.

I remember one time when I had preached a most challenging lesson. I had extended the invitation. Everyone was standing and singing. People would have been thinking deeply about their personal relationship with God in a challenging way. At the end of the first stanza of the invitation song, the song leader stopped the singing. He said, "We are dragging this song, we need to pep it up a little in the next stanza!" Now, there is certainly nothing wrong with stopping a song to encourage the crowd to sing faster, but the invitation was not the time to do so. It was a distraction. Someone thinking about their soul would have certainly lost their focus when being interrupted by a well-meaning song leader.

It is one thing to have distractions around; they are always going to be there. However, do not allow yourself and your actions to become the distraction. Jesus said, "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea," Mark 9:42. If you knew that by going in and out of worship during an invitation song someone who needed to respond was distracted by your action, you would feel terrible about it. Be considerate, your distraction could determine the faithfulness of a weak Christian.

J.M. Boice told a story involving Yogi Berra, the well-known catcher for the New York Yankees, and Hank Aaron, who at that time was the chief power hitter for the Milwaukee Braves. The teams were playing in the World Series, and as usual Yogi was keeping up his ceaseless chatter, intended to pep up his teammates on the one hand, and distract the Milwaukee batters on the other. As Aaron came to the plate, Yogi tried to distract him by saying, "Henry, you're holding the bat wrong. You're supposed to hold it so you can read the trademark." Aaron didn't say anything, but when the next pitch came he hit it into the left-field bleachers. After rounding the bases and tagging up at home plate, Aaron looked at Yogi Berra and said, "I didn't come up here to read."

Keep focused in life. Do not allow distractions to take you from your goals. But more importantly, do not be a distraction to anyone, especially to those who are focusing on worship and Christian living.

-Scott