

# 3 Spirit-Powered Ways to Help You Avoid Distraction and Listen Well

The other day, I was cleaning my fridge. Knowing that Steve and I would be traveling soon, I wanted to dispose of all the outdated stuff and wipe down the shelves. Halfway through my project, I couldn't find my sponge. I looked on the counter, in the sink and even in the garbage. I kept thinking, "Wow, that's strange. I just had it!" I opened the fridge and ... bingo! It was on the very shelf I had been cleaning. Am I losing my memory? Nope. I was distracted—thinking about emails I had to catch up on, clothes that needed to be packed, phone calls waiting to be answered, deadlines piling up. You get the picture. Ever distracted? I'm guessing you are.

The problem is when we're distracted, we lose our ability to be fully present to people.

Jesus told an interesting story about a farmer who went out to sow seeds (Luke 8:5-8). Some of his seeds fell on a path and ended up being trampled on and the birds swooped in and ate them. Some fell on rocky soil and, because there was no water, they died. Some fell among thorns and when they started to sprout, the weeds choked them out. Some fell on good soil and brought forth crops—a hundred times more than what was sown. After Jesus tells His story, He says, "Therefore consider carefully how you listen" (Luke 8:18a, NIV). What does the Parable of the Soil have to do with our relationships and how well we listen? Everything. Let me explain.

We were designed for community. In our relationships, we are to carry the presence of Christ to others. When we listen to others with the ears of Christ, they experience His comfort, healing and love. We want to listen. We want to sow good seeds

into our relationships. But often our minds are preoccupied with stress, worries, deadlines and problems. The clutter in our minds prevents us from being able to fully focus on another. Instead of offering those we love our full presence, we are preoccupied. As a result, we miss the opportunity to be the incarnational presence of Jesus to others.

**How do we plow and prepare the soil of our minds so that we can sow the seeds of love, intimacy and empathy into our relationships?**

**Develop the two-step practice of pouring out your heart to God and then praising Him.** Our lives are filled with worries and concerns. Develop the practice of pouring out to God and then praising Him. You can't ignore worry. I've tried. You can't simply will yourself to not worry. It doesn't just disappear. You need to put all your worries in a wheelbarrow and then dump them at the feet of Jesus. Before another takes root, you need to fill that space with praise. As you praise God, you'll be able to shift your focus to the concerns of another, trusting that God is taking care of your concerns.

**Turn off your media at least once a day.** Our smart phones are wonderful, but they distract us. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter all swoop in like the birds in Jesus' story. They rob us of our ability to fully be present to another person. Turn it off and tune in. Begin with small steps. Put your phone away during driving in silence and ask the Lord to help you to be fully present to the person you are going to meet. Pray through the appointments on your calendar. Ask that the Lord will allow you to be fully attentive in those meetings.

**Tune in to the voice of the Holy Spirit.** Practice inviting the Holy Spirit into every conversation. He wants you to reflect the heart of Christ in how you listen. If you don't know how to listen to His voice you won't be attentive to others. You might pray something like this, *Holy one, my mind is often so distracted. Fill me with Your Spirit. Show me how to tune in*

to Your voice so that I can tune in to others. Help me to be fully attentive today. Pour through my life the love of Christ. Help me to listen like Jesus today so that those who are important to me feel loved, valued and heard. {eoa}

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*This article originally appeared at .*

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