

How Not to Lose Your Focus

While it's easy to list the many external diversions, our most fatal distraction lives within.

A frustrated New York attorney sits across from the “other woman,” pleading for peace. He attempts to make restitution, to justify his one-night stand, to say something—anything—that will get this obsessed woman to leave him, his possessions and his family alone. But with cool deliberation, she simply replies, “I will not be ignored.”

Though secular, this scene from a 1987 film contains spiritual significance. The woman, obsessed in the pursuit of someone else's husband, is completely focused on her immoral mission.

How much more focused should we be in pursuing our divine destinies? For this character, only death was able to stop her. What is stopping you? While this woman had a fatal attraction, many Christians today suffer from fatal distractions.

Fatal distractions detour us from growing spiritually and fulfilling our purpose in life. And while it is easy to list the many external diversions that cause us to lose focus—busy schedules, difficult church people, lack of money, anthrax and bioterrorism—the disturbing reality is simply this: Our most fatal distraction lives within.

It's the person you see as you brush your teeth, the one who stares at you in the mirrored glass of corporate America, and the one who goes with you to pick the kids up after school. It's even the person who accompanies you to the office to prepare weekly sermons, and the one who intercedes in times of intense warfare.

As the 1950s political cartoon character Pogo stated: “We have met the enemy, and it is us.”

The apostle Paul expressed the same sentiment as he closed Romans 7, lamenting: "I love to do God's will so far as my new nature is concerned; but there is something else deep within me, in my lower nature, that is at war with my mind and wins the fight and makes me a slave to the sin that is still within will free me from my slavery to this deadly lower nature? Thank God! It has been done by Jesus Christ our Lord. He has set me free" (vv. 22-25, The Living Bible, emphasis added).

Often our fatal distractions are rooted in our minds. What else would explain King Saul's fatal distraction, the jealousy of his armor bearer, David? When the two returned from battling Goliath, women praised the war effort in song, saying, "'Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands'" (1 Sam. 18:7, NKJV).

It was at that moment that Saul allowed the seed of distraction to awaken in his mind. "Then Saul was very angry, and the saying displeased him; and he said, 'They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed only thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom? So Saul [jealously] eyed David from that day forward" (1 Sam. 18:8-9).

Like so many of us, Saul's fatal distraction did not come from external forces. It wasn't the women, David or even the lyrics of the song. Saul's jealousy was his fatal distraction, and it caused him to disqualify himself from serving as king.

Saul is the only one who could have changed this negative thought process, and the same is true of us. If we do not truly believe what God has said about us, fatal distractions will come to weed out our faith.

What is distracting you from seeing yourself in the reflection and image of Christ? Is it doubt, a poor self-concept or lack of intimacy with Christ?

What do you really believe about yourself? What do you believe

about your potential? Beyond your scripted, pat, religious response to friends or family, what do you truly believe about your service? As Proverbs 23:7 declares, “For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.”

If you’ve been fatally distracted, there is hope. God wants you to regain your focus and pursue His original plan for your life. To do that, you must stay faithful to the things of God and obey His Word. Stay committed to the call of God on your life, be unshaken in your faith and remain steadfast in your Christian walk.

Like the woman with the fatal attraction, doggedly pursue your destiny. Instead of being fatally distracted, stay eternally focused on fulfilling His will.

Joyce Rodgers is founder of Primary Purpose Ministries in Denton, Texas. She is the youth department chairwoman for the Church of God in Christ.