

Pro Tip: How to Keep the Enemy From Robbing You Blind

The best lesson I've learned about distractions happened one sunny December day in New York City. My friend Eva Marie Everson and I were in town to do on-location-research for one of our *Potluck Club* novels, and so we were ready for a day of exploring. I'd come prepared with my huge blue tote bag which I'd slung over my shoulder after stuffing it with everything I might need; an umbrella, my coat, snacks, bottles of water, all piled high on top of my wallet.

Eva and I caught the subway from our hotel so we could walk down Canal Street to take in the sights. We browsed through the faux designer purses, fingered the bright wool scarves and smirked at the fake Rolexes on display. As we strolled, we were caught in a throng of tourists who flowed down the street like a slow-moving river.

As I walked along gawking at the sights around me, a pretty, young woman appeared beside me. She turned to face me and with her arms opened wide, she side-skipped to my steps as if she were trying to block me from turning right and walking past her. *What in the world is she doing?* I wondered. I craned my neck for a better look and she seemed to disappear. *Where'd she go?*

Suddenly I snapped my head to the left, and there she was, her arm rammed deep into my tote bag as her fingers groped for my pocket book.

I instinctively jerked my tote away from her, and instantly, she disappeared into the crowd.

It seemed I'd been preyed upon, unsuccessfully, by a New York City pickpocket. But what struck me about the experience was the pickpocket's maneuver to distract me—to cause me to not

only take my attention away from my tote, but to place my focus in the opposite direction so she would be free to snatch my wallet, something I'd wanted to hang onto throughout my New York adventure.

As I thought about it, I could see that distraction is exactly how the enemy tries to steal from me in an effort to keep me from my very important work; and I'm not talking about my writing. I'm talking about living my life with joy, peace and the presence of God.

However, distractions abound, like fiery arrows the enemy zings at me when I lose my grip on my shield. The arrows sting, and I'm suddenly distracted from my peace with worries, stresses, offenses and frustrations, not to mention a deadline or two breathing its hot breath down my neck.

That's when I turn into a red-eyed zombie trying desperately to write about prayer and God's love. In times like this, I have nothing worthwhile to say, at least nothing worth reading. (Though it's all good for the recycle bin.)

I find the real work of living distraction free involves guarding my heart, letting go of offenses and opening my soul to more of God's peace.

When I can do that— that ol' red-eyed zombie-girl with the coffee breath has to scam. And I am left with peace: peace to follow the joy of the Lord and peace to finish my writing projects.

If you're ready to bypass the distractions that will keep the enemy from robbing you blind and focus on what's really important, try praying the following:

Dear Lord,

Shine your light of truth over my distractions; my worries, stresses, offenses and frustrations as I yield them all to

you. I choose to forgive anyone I've blame for these distractions, including myself. The truth is, I am to blame for lowering my shield so I could stare at all the arrows flying my way. You'd think I'd have noticed that every time I peek from behind my shield, I get zapped with even more worry, stress, offense and frustration.

Give me the strength to bypass the temptation to peek at my adversary instead of focusing on you. Heal me from the pain my distractions have caused me. Now that I've chosen to focus on you, I yield to your peace and joy. I declare that my trust is in you, despite whatever battle is raging around me. And I make an agreement with Psalm 119:114, "You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in Your word.

Thank you that I can trust in you, my hiding place, shield and hope.

In Jesus' name,

Amen

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