

This Seemingly Harmless Detour Can Hinder Your Calling

Our attitudes often make us vulnerable to failure. But you don't have to become a casualty in spiritual warfare.

So many things in life can take our attention away from what God wants for us—busy schedules, difficult people, financial problems, the threat of terrorism and war, and let's not forget our personal drama of the week! But it's life's internal distractions—envy, loneliness, anger, bitterness, fear and rejection, among others—that can destroy us, if we allow them to.

It all boils down to this disturbing reality: Our fatal distractions come from within ourselves. It may very well be that the main distraction holding you back is you.

The apostle Paul described this problem when he wrote: "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" (Rom. 7:22-25, The Living Bible).

Self-destructive behaviors and habits can make you your own worst enemy. So can focusing so much on the lives of other people that you have no time to develop your own life.

This is like sitting in the bleachers instead of getting out on the field with the team. In the process, your life will waste away.

Paul issued this indictment against people who focused too much on what other people were doing: "For we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding" (2 Cor. 10:12, NASB). That means we are dumb!

Paul certainly seemed to understand human nature. He was saying that when we compare ourselves with others and think we're better than someone else, we are "without understanding."

Not only do we need to get over other people, but we also need to get over ourselves. We need to stop worrying about others and get a life!

God made this clear. He tells us: "Choose life" (Deut. 30:19).

This means we have a decision to make. It is entirely up to us.

My grandmother, "Big Mama," would often say that we won't get to heaven by accident—we have to purpose to live right so we can get there. We all need to get a life, and we can choose a life that is free from the distractions that hinder our destiny.

CHOOSING OBEDIENCE Often when people buy a puppy, they send it to obedience school so it can learn how to obey its new master. In much the same way, God sends us to His "school of obedience" (see Heb. 5:7-9). Even Jesus learned about obedience in this school.

Though we understand what a school is, we may have trouble with the definition of obedience. To obey means to "follow the commands or guidance of; to conform to or comply with; to behave obediently."

The school where we learn obedience is not a natural school

but a spiritual one. God determines when you go to this school and what classes you take when He sends you there. This is the school where the diploma you get is a real testimony, and the degree you earn is an in-depth experience with God.

In God's school of obedience, He "prunes your branches." You learn to put away your mind-set, your ideas and your way, and you learn to truthfully say, "Lord, what would You have me do?"

When we are going through the school of obedience, one of the promises we can stand on is Jeremiah 33:3, "'Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know'" (NKJV).

You have a need for instruction, and God is ready, willing and able to give it to you. When you say you want God to speak to you, He will. But if you demand that He speak a certain way, you may not hear what He has to say.

God may be speaking to you through your pastor on Sunday morning or when you're at Bible study on Wednesday night. God may use a conference speaker or your teenage son. He may even speak to you through the lives and examples of fellow believers.

If you are going to learn to deal effectively with the internal issues of self, you are going to have to pass through this school of obedience.

PROBLEM-SOLVING BY THE SPIRIT No matter how serious your problems are, the most important thing is the way you handle them. There are ways in which we deal with problems that can actually make matters worse. For example, when Jesus was confronted in the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter responded in an inappropriate way by using his sword to cut off a soldier's ear (see Matt. 26:51).

Jesus told Peter, “‘Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword’” (v. 52). Peter dealt with the problem the only way he knew how—in the flesh.

One of the reasons Peter may have been ill-equipped to deal with the problem was that he had not yet received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, he resorted to using a physical, carnal weapon against those who were opposing Jesus.

Many of us today have an advantage in that we have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. However, if we are not controlled by the Spirit, we will resort to using carnal weapons as well.

In 2 Corinthians 10:3-4, Paul declared: “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds.”

Whatever problems you are facing, you can rejoice because the spiritual weapons of your warfare are mighty. And when you learn to put aside the internal distractions, you can use those powerful weapons more effectively for the kingdom of God.

Begin today to grow in the knowledge of God and who you are in Him. Like the caterpillar that emerges as a beautiful butterfly, let God work a divine metamorphosis in you.

When this happens inside you, you will no longer be your own worst enemy. And the attributes that God desires to manifest in your life will come to fruition.

How does this metamorphosis take place in our lives today? It happens as we behold the glory of the Lord! Consider the words of Paul: “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18).

We are being transformed into God's image. His divine metamorphosis changes us. It drives out all the undesirable elements of our personalities and replaces them with the attributes of God.

No one can spend quality time in the presence of God and not be changed. We can't experience genuine fellowship in His presence and then immediately turn around and lie to one another or speak harsh, ungodly words to one another (see James 3:10-12).

Our time with Him will be reflected in our becoming more like Him. When we experience a divine metamorphosis, we will experience change on the inside.

External change is like rearranging furniture in a room. You may get new drapes or change the color of the carpet, but it's still the same room.

Make sure your personal metamorphosis is internal, where it really matters, where it really counts. Look at your internal distractions realistically. Don't sugarcoat anything the Holy Spirit reveals to you.

Let this be a defining moment in your life—a moment in time when something profound, earth-shattering, even life-changing occurs. You will never be the same again.

NO TIME FOR DIVERSIONS We are living in the last days of God's timetable for the world. We have no time to waste on any distractions, fatal or otherwise.

Women have too vital a part to play in God's plan of salvation. We have too great a part to play in the deliverance of our families. We have too vital a role to play in ministry to other women and to the entire body of Christ.

The apostle Peter proclaimed on the Day of Pentecost, "But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'And it shall

come to pass in the last days,' says God, 'That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy'" (Acts 2:16-17).

Women can't afford to be delayed, detoured or distracted from fulfilling their destinies. Even a short delay can be fatal to those following us, as well as to the generations at risk that will be impacted by our ministries.

The world declares, "Knowledge is power." That is true in the spiritual realm as well.

Satan wants to keep his subtle devices hidden. But the apostle Paul wrote, "We are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Cor. 2:11).

Sometimes the enemy's devices are external, but these are not usually fatal to us. It is not our failing marriages or the heartbreak of being unequally yoked that will deter us from our destinies. Nor is it being unloved or in an abusive relationship.

It is not our work, our health or our commitment to elderly parents that can stress us to the point of missing God's purpose for our lives. No, the distractions that truly circumvent our futures come from within ourselves.

If you are facing any of the fatal internal distractions I mentioned, come before God in prayer right now, while the waters of your spirit are troubled. Call out the names of your distractions. Release them and align your life with the future God has promised you in Jeremiah 29:11.

In the name of Jesus, I pray that every distraction will be canceled by the power of the Holy Spirit. I declare healing and wholeness for your life.

You will be a person of purpose. You will retain your godly focus and operate in the gifts and callings the Lord has

placed on your life. The Spirit of God will stir up the gifts that He has given you, and you will go forth in the great army of women doing God's will and God's work for the kingdom.

Make your confession that you will not be distracted. See yourself with a glorious future, full of purpose and power.

You are a woman of destiny and an ambassador for Christ. You need not be distracted anymore!

Read a companion devotional.

Joyce L. Rodgers is an evangelist, conference speaker and the author of *Fatal Distractions* (Charisma House), from which this article is adapted.