Donâ€™t Get Caught in Distractions by K.P. Yohannan

The story was all over the news: A businessman, after withdrawing $100,000 at the bank, stopped at a store and placed his briefcase full of money beside him on the checkout counter. A man standing next to him engaged him for a few seconds in a conversation while another man walked up, grabbed the briefcase and disappeared. When the businessman turned around, his money was gone. He panicked. The crime was caught on the storeâ€™s surveillance camera and served as a warning that a few seconds of distraction is enough for you to lose your most valuable possessions.

One of our enemyâ€™s tactics is distractions. He tries to attract and divert our attention, confuse our mind, sidetrack our steps and draw us away from our God-given focus. So often we donâ€™t recognize whatâ€™s happening until much later when we find ourselves way off course.

Recognizing distractions is vital in serving God and fulfilling our calling as His witnesses.

Nehemiah had left his prestigious job as the kingâ€™s cupbearer, along with the comfort and luxury of life in the palace, to travel to Jerusalem to rebuild its destroyed walls. He rallied and inspired the returned exiles for the task, but soon he ran into opposition from the enemies of the Jews and their undercover collaborators. They requested an urgent meeting with him. They spread lies about his faithfulness to the king. They circulated rumors of threats on his life, and they even hired a prophet to deliver a false message to get him to stop the work and go into hiding.

Thankfully, Nehemiah recognized what all these things really were: distractions from completing the work God had asked him to do. He responded: â€œI am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you? â€œ Should such a man as I flee? And who is there such as I who would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go into the temple.â€ (Nehemiah 6:3, 11)

Jesus, too, immediately recognized that the enemy was trying to use his loving disciple to try to sidetrack Him from going to Jerusalem so He may die at the cross for our sins. Peter had said to Him, â€œFar be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!â€ (Matthew 16:22)

Jesus replied, â€œGet behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of menâ€” (Matthew 16:23).

What about us? Do we recognize distractions as being distractions, especially when they are very good things? For example, once I wanted to look up an event from early Christianity, so my son brought me an 800-page Church history book from the library. I could have gone to the index and straight to the page that answered my question, but I didnâ€™t. The book and the pictures were too intriguing to put down, and instead of spending 10 minutes, I found myself spending all afternoon reading about interesting things that had nothing to do with what I needed to know.

We are surrounded by hundreds of good causes, wholesome activities, wonderful opportunities, as well as a host of electronics and the world of internet, that all compete for our attention and the precious time we have to reach this world for Christ. If we donâ€™t recognize distractions, we become victims of good things.

Yes, as human beings we need times of rest, to unwind from our stressful work and have special family times and activities. However, we must be careful that the good things donâ€™t take over our focus and the time we once used to spend in prayer and in Godâ€™s Word.

Life moves very fast. We have only a short time before itâ€™s over. Let us not get caught in the web of seeking the things on earth.

What then must we do to keep our focus?

We must be aware that distractions, especially the ones that make us happy, entertain us and fill our days with excitement, are easy for us to accept, but saying no to temptations and yes to inconveniences and to the way of the cross is what we have to deliberately choose.
Therefore, we need to be alert and discerning and honestly judge our hearts to see where we are with our focus regarding the purpose of God for our life here on earth.

We also need to realize that we are not strong enough to finish this race on our own. We daily need to ask God for wisdom, discernment and grace to stay on course. Then at the end of our life, we will be able to say, along with the apostle Paul, “But none of these things move me,” (Acts 20:24) and “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7).