



# The Christian Life Institute

Monday, April 27

Thank you for joining us today, as we continue our series, at the Christian Life Institute, presented through 15-minute encouraging messages three times per week, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 12:45 Central time, on practical ways to grow forward in Christ in uncertainty, unpredictability, and upheaval.

This message is entitled: The Dangers of Distractions

I was thinking of the many conversations I have with a diversity of people each day – some commenting that they feel as if the walls are closing in, and others remarking that they are finding peace and solace in this time. I thought about the diversity of the body from 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 and our message on Friday on how diverse we are and yet connected to one another as members so that we may care for one another reminding ourselves that “if one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” As I reflected on the uniqueness of our preferences, interests, giftedness I thought about how in times of uncertainty, unpredictability, and upheaval we often wrestle against change and seek distractions.

A. W. Tozer, an American Christian pastor, author, magazine editor, and spiritual mentor, known for many rich and meaningful works, has a chapter in *The Crucified Life*, in which he refers to difficulties and categorizes distractions as difficulties. I wonder, how you think about difficulties? Tozer, defines a distraction as something that knocks us off course, takes our focus off of God, and distracts us from our purpose before God. I wonder if during this season, as we are now, 4-6 weeks in, how you would describe this time? Would you describe it as a distraction? Has the uncertainty, unpredictability, and upheaval knocked you off course? Has it drawn you away from or closer to God?

In previous messages, we have been reminded that we will face trial, tribulation, and suffering. We know from Jeremiah 17:10 we will be tested as we read, “I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds.” We are tested

with choices every day. Many of these choices are between the important things of the Lord and the distractions of the world. Distractions are more tempting and we are more susceptible when we are discontent which provokes our flesh and causes us to find something to distract us, which draws us away from the Lord because we desire to fill a need, provide momentary relief, change the feelings, the environment – the externalities. The challenge with the need to seek a distraction is that as Tozer writes “we become so immersed in our difficulties that we see nothing else;” we forget our direction and then become lost in the distraction. Distraction literally means to draw apart; to pull in different directions, separate, and to throw into confusion.

God delights in our obedience and desires intimacy of relationship with us. In 1 Chronicles 29:17, we read “since I know, O my God, that You try the heart and delight in uprightness, I, in the integrity of my heart, have willingly offered all these things; so now with joy I have seen Your people, who are present here, make their offerings willingly to You.” He desires that we choose to step in and draw near rather than to move away. In James 4:8 we read, “draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.” Distractions produce a double mindedness. They pull us away and provide a false sense of fulfillment - a transient and temporary relief. Distractions can cause us to doubt our faith as they fulfill the desires of the flesh and not the Spirit. In Hebrews 10:22 we read, “let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” In Luke 16:13, “no servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.”

Distractions will attempt to master you and these distractions can then easily become bad habits. We must remember that we are very conditioned beings. We easily fall into rhythms, ways of doing, acting, thinking, and distractions when practiced regularly, will become more entrenched and the desire for them more intense. It is ever so important, in any season, to be mindful, intentional, purposeful, deliberate of one’s choices. Do I choose to dive deep into the depths of Christ or allow distractions to draw me into the momentary relief signaled by the flesh? Do I choose to standfast in the way which the Lord has paved for me, or do I turn into my own way? Distractions are not only external to us but very much originate from within us. Worry, fear, anxiety, and even control are used as distractions, as they cause us to take our eyes off of the Lord.

In Psalm 121 we are reminded “I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade on your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all evil; The Lord will keep your life. The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.”

God is our Refuge, our Guard, our Help. He will make your way and my way as we seek to follow Him. We must first remember to align ourselves vertically in the Truth and Hope, who is Christ. We then pause, breathe and remind ourselves that while we may be experiencing more, as a friend shared with me, chiseling – more refining – more testing (and remember God does not test us to condemn us (as He cannot condemn, that is the work of Satan, the world, our flesh, others – He, the Lord convicts), we are reminded of Psalm 66:10 where we read, “for you, O God, have tested us; you have tried us as silver is tried” but He does so to “see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting (Psalm 139:24).

We also have the precious gift, as we shared on Friday, of exhorting one another to grow in Christ. To provide necessary support, counsel, encouragement, and affirmation. To strengthen our connectedness and allow the Lord to continue His refining and transforming work in each of us. Distractions can separate and isolate us and draw us further into our self when in fact what we need most is to step out of the darkness of distraction and into His glorious Light. In Peter 2:9 we read, “but you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”

Let me be clear. Avoiding distractions does not mean we do not have fun, watch TV, play a video game. We all need, as I affectionately refer to it, our own personal ‘dumb downtime’ (assuming it is not destructive and damaging) without judgment or opinion; but we need to choose our relationship with God first and allow His desire to grow us needs to be our first priority. We all need balance in our lives. Exercise, time with friends (yes, virtual time is still time), whatever is in the course of your specific life; but these choices on how we choose to spend our time must be aligned with our prioritization – the supremacy of the Lord, Jesus Christ.

At the end of John Piper's book, *Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ*, we read "desiring God exists to spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ. The Christian Life Institute exists to spread a passion for growth in Christ and the cultivation of a deep, rich, and intimate relationship that stems from one's commitment to one's personal, spiritual formation. As we end this series of messages this week, as Friday, May 1 will be the last of our 15-minute encouraging messages on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, we invite you to pray about your support of the Christian Life Institute. There are numerous free resources on the website and many to come, Lord willing, as we are in our infancy. We pray that you would choose during disruption, discontent, upheaval, unpredictability – in every circumstance and season to live more consciously of placing God in His place of honor and of power and to have a confident expectation of His saving power and life-changing grace Let us choose to have our whole heart turned toward God and draw away from distractions which so easily entangle, corrupt, and become idols in our lives. Pray for intimacy with your Savior. Pray for His transforming work and growth in Him. Find community (even when virtual) so you can grow hand-in-hand with another, as "we are members of His body." Pray the Lord remove distractions from your life – pray you allow Him to remove them – and pray for the courage to step into the fullness of Him who loves you beyond all measure.

In this season, and life which is a journey of seasons, we as Christ-followers, have opportunities to, through His strength and His power reflect Him to a broken and hurting world – so, let us persevere and come together, even when technology weary. Let us agree together to:

"Walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7)

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Thank you for joining us for Live Streaming on YouTube. Please join us again on Wednesday, April 29th at 12:45 CST. Please check out our other videos on YouTube and please subscribe to us on YouTube as we need 100 subscribers for our own YouTube channel. Please visit our website at [www.christianlifeinstitute.com](http://www.christianlifeinstitute.com) and join our mailing list, consider contributing to support these resources, and please pray for us.