

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR *Real Life*

57. 9 Ways to Stay Focused and Less Distracted

You are listening to episode 57 of the Encouragement for Real Life Podcast, titled, 9 Ways to Stay Focused and Less Distracted. We live in a distraction-filled world, don't we? If it's not our devices, it's our thoughts wandering. If it's not the troubling headlines, it's the circumstances we just can't find a way through. There are so many distractions! I'm glad we're in this together, because I know from experience, I'm not alone in this fight against living distracted. So, hang with me here this short while and together we'll find some help and hope and a whole lot of encouragement in this episode as we face living less distracted head on. Let's get to it!

I arrived to my destination, but I couldn't completely remember every part of driving there.

I went into a room to get something, but when I got there, I couldn't remember what I was going to get.

Last week I left home and miles down the road, I couldn't remember if I had turned off the stove burner after making my morning tea.

Working at my laptop, attempting to get everything crossed off my list for the day, a notification on my phone dinged. Before I realized it, I had wasted a half-hour on my phone that I could have spent more wisely working.

Can you relate to any of these?

Life is full of distractions.

We live in a distraction-filled world. Maybe now more than ever, wouldn't you agree? I mean we have more things vying for our attention than I can ever recall. Our devices, social media, internet, t.v., news headlines, other people, our packed schedules and to-do lists, the day-to-day circumstances we find ourselves in. And these are just some of the external distractions we face. Not to mention our worries and cares, our wandering minds, internal stress, past regrets, shame and guilt, striving for the future, our fears, health issues, and negative thinking. These internal distractions can be just as confounding, if not more, as external ones.

Ugh! We need help!

Is this our lives now? Is this how we are determined to live for the rest of our lives? Because if it is, this can't be good. Living distracted like this is not healthy for us. Living distracted is not living an encouraged life, and it's certainly not God's best for us. I don't believe God ever intended for us to live so distracted.

Why? Well, He tells us so in His Word.

He desires for us to stay focused and less distracted.

Do not be anxious *or* worried about anything, but in everything [every circumstance and situation] by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, continue to make your [specific] requests known to God.
Philippians 4:6 AMP

And in Romans, Paul urges us to live differently than the rest of the world lives by renewing our minds, hence living less distracted.

So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you. Romans 12:1-2 MSG

Did you catch that?

Paul says to "fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out."

So, that's where we begin. We fix our attention on God. Keeping our thoughts and focus on Him. We seek Him and spend time in His Word. We pray and ask for His help to stay focused and less distracted. To live the lives He has for us in all fullness and abundance. And we will trust He will equip us to do so, one moment at a time.

Sounds great, doesn't it? Sounds easy, right?

Until we commit to doing this. Until the rubber meets the road, so to speak. What's hard is the carrying out of Paul's words. "Fix your attention on God." Can we even do that? Will we even try?

Maybe it'll help to write those five words on a number of sticky notes and place them wherever you see them. On your mirror, on the fridge, in your car, on your computer, by your bed. Or maybe if we repeat it enough times in our heads it will become a habit for us. I say let's give both a try.

And as we do, we can also choose to make a few adjustments to our days and apply some tangible ways to stay focused and less distracted.

Here are 9 ways to stay focused and less distracted.

1 - Pray.

As I mentioned just a minute ago, prayer is key to our fight against distractions. We can't do this on our own. Believe me, I've tried. We aren't strong enough to fight the distractions ourselves. To stay focused and less distracted, inviting God in and asking for His help is a must. It can begin with something as simple as, "Lord, help me fix my attention on You."

2 - Start simple.

Let's start with the simple things, like finding a quiet space and turning your phone to silent if at all possible. Or putting it away entirely. If you're working on your computer, close out all unnecessary tabs. If you're in a room that has a door, close it, and if it's acceptable, put a note on the outside of it saying

you're needing some focused time to work. (That never worked for me while working at home when my kids were young, however.) These are simple ways to help yourself stay focused and less distracted.

3 - Set a timer.

A friend of mine does this and it works great for her. Set a timer for 25 minutes and focus on what you need to do, then take a break for 5 minutes. Repeat this four times then take a bigger break to reward yourself. You'll be surprised at what you can accomplish using this timer method!

4 - Drink water.

This may seem strange but staying hydrated helps us stay focused and less distracted! Hydration is key for clarity of mind and our mental focus. So, start right away in the morning, straight out of bed by drinking 8-12 ounces of water. Then continue drinking water throughout the day. Take a water bottle with you wherever you go.

5 - Fuel your body.

Same goes for the food we eat. This affects our mental focus and clarity as well. The healthier we eat, the less distracted we will likely be. Add in healthy proteins, complex carbs, fruits, vegetables. Stay away from seed oils and sugar because we all know what happens when we crash from a sugar high. Add in some great brain foods like leafy green vegetables, berries, nuts, and green tea.

6 - Get enough rest.

We all know we can't focus when we're tired. How much sleep do you get on average? I read a statistic this week that said one out of three Americans are chronically sleep deprived. I used to be one of them, and lately I'm finding myself going back to those old sleep-deprived habits. Some ways to up your sleep are to cut out caffeine after lunchtime, turn off electronic devices an hour before bedtime, stretch and relax before calling it a day, keeping your bedroom cool, and refrain from drinking alcohol two hours before bed.

7 - Stay present.

Easier said than done, I know. But staying present is a key to helping you stay focused and less distracted. It's keeping our thoughts on what we're doing and where we are. It's maintaining a "here and now" mentality, not letting your mind wander or move on to the next thing. Staying present and in the moment takes practice, but like anything else, the more you and I do this, the easier it will become.

8 - Work from a task list.

If you're a list maker, you're going to love this one. Yes, working from a to-do list or a task list helps us stay focused and less distracted, because we see in black and white what we need to accomplish. It helps us keep on task and stops us from moving to other distractions. Choose the top two or three items on your list and tackle those when you're freshest and most alert. Then continue to work down the list in matter of importance. It feels good to check those items off, doesn't it?

9 - Refrain from multitasking.

Some of us were taught we would be more productive and effective if we multitasked or did two tasks at the same time. Switching from one task to another or doing two or more tasks in quick succession is

also considered multitasking. But studies now show multitasking hinders us, our effectiveness, our productivity, and our brains. We are not meant to be multitaskers, and we lose our focus when we do.

Which one (or ones) did you need to hear today? Is there one specifically you know you're going to implement right away, one that maybe God is nudging you to pay attention to? For me, it's getting enough rest.

It's good to know as we trust God to help us stay focused and less distracted, we can partner with Him in this! We can do what He calls us to do to make any changes necessary to keep our attention focused on where is best, namely on Him. The result is a more peaceful and fulfilled life.

I'm so glad we're not in this alone, aren't you?

Join us over in the Encouragement for Real Life Community where this week we're discussing these 9 ways to stay focused and less distracted. It would be a joy to have you join us over there. The link to this encouraging and fun group is in the show notes.

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In closing, you and I don't have to live so distracted, and frankly, God wants to free us of this burden. Let's trust Him with this today and do what we can do to live a more peaceful and fulfilled life. Thank you for being here. God bless you!

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