

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR *Real Life*

93. The Distraction of Others Says, "Notice Me Now"

You are listening to episode 93 of the Encouragement for Real Life Podcast titled, The Distraction of Others Says, "Notice Me Now." I'm so glad you're here today. Thank you for joining me. We continue to discuss the varying distractions that plague us on any given day, and today we're peering into the distraction of others. Yes, people can be both big distractions and big blessings in our lives, can't they? And it's wise to keep this truth in perspective. The distraction of others is a big one for many of us, and the thing is, some of us may not even realize it. So, hang with me here for this next short while and together we'll learn, we'll find encouragement, and we'll cling to hope for our real lives right now. Let's get to it.

You're focused on a task at work, and someone disrupts your work flow.

You're reading something important and one of your children bounds in the room, and in a high-pitched squeal yells, "Mom!"

Or you're driving down the road and someone on the sidewalk catches your attention because she looks like your long-lost friend from high school.

The distraction of others may affect us more than we realize.

A couple more examples:

You're making dinner and a friend texts you and asks, "Do you have time for a phone call now?"

Or you just got settled in for the night and you hear a knock on your door.

This distraction of others is what I consider an external distraction. It's a distraction that originates outside of ourselves. And it's a unique distraction, because we can't just block people out of our lives or turn them off, like can with other external distractions like our phones or the t.v. So, this distraction takes a bit more discernment, care, and yes, love than dealing with other external distractions.

But I could spend all day listing example after example of how other people distract us. Don't get me wrong here. This isn't always a bad thing. It's just the way it is. Because we do life with other people. We live with other people. We work with other people. And we are thankful for the blessings of these people in our lives. (At least for the most part we are, right?)

The thing is people need us.

Whether they are our family, our co-workers, our neighbors, our friends. And it's good to be needed, isn't it? Being needed makes us feel important and that we have value. And it's a good thing to help and be available to others. But sometimes we're needed at inconvenient times. Or we're needed in a moment when we're not available. Or we're needed in a time when someone thinks their emergency should be ours, too.

People distract us, and they may not mean to.

But that's just the way it is. I mean, they often don't realize they are distracting us by pulling us away from the moment we're in. Which is what distractions do.

And as I prepared this episode, I got to wondering how am I a distraction to others? It made me look at my own tendencies to be a distraction to those around me. Like interrupting my husband when he's in the middle of a sentence. Or asking him a question when I see he's immersed in reading something.

Because when someone distracts us, they want our attention now. They want us in that very moment. Because if they didn't, the distraction would not have occurred.

The distraction of others says, "Notice me now."

And many of us do. I know I do. But do we always need to? Is there a way we could delay the "notice me now" to "I'll notice you in a moment?" This is where the tool of discernment comes in. This is when it would be wise to pause for a split second and ask ourselves a couple of questions. Such as, *Is this something that must be handled right now? Is this an emergency? Can this wait until I'm done with what I'm doing?* And the absolutely best thing to do when faced with this distraction is to seek God. *God, what do I do here? Do I keep focused or do I give this person my attention right now?*

Which reminds me of the story of Nehemiah rebuilding the Jerusalem wall and some enemies asked for him to meet them. He responded in Nehemiah 6:3 (NLT), "so I replied by sending this message to them: 'I am engaged in a great work, so I can't come. Why should I stop working to come and meet with you?'"

Now I know this might be a different situation than you and I face because it's unlikely our enemies are asking to meet with us and to draw us away from our important work. Or are they?? But the enemy of our soul can use nearly anything to draw us from the moment and from what we're doing, including others. Now, also please hear me when I say not every distraction of another person is from this enemy. That's not what I'm saying. But what I'm saying is that this enemy can be creative to throw us off course and to stop important work we're doing. Especially if we're doing something God calls us to do.

So, it's wise to pause and invite God into the situation.

He sees what we cannot. And even if a cup of coffee sounds fantastic with the friend that just invited you out, if you have a deadline to meet, it's wise to seek God in direction and discernment. And wouldn't you know, that just happened as I was working on this episode. I had to politely say no, because this episode needed to be finished first. We set another date for coffee at a time both of our schedules would allow.

And I think that's the key. When we do need to say no, or not right now, we can do it with politeness and graciousness and schedule it for another time that will work better.

The bottom line is this: if someone needs our attention and if God directs us to give it to him or her, then we do it. Because we must remember, people are more important than projects. But when the projects need to be done, this is where the lines get blurred. It's wise to see God first.

Yet, just like Nehemiah said no, we can say no, as well. We don't have to always be available or always allow ourselves to be distracted by others. And if we notice we continue to get distracted by others, that's not going to change until we do something about it.

With any external distraction, we can't always control them, but we can be prepared for them. And there may be a few things we can do to help alleviate them before they happen. In a kind and loving way.

Ways to overcome the distraction of others:

1 - Pray first. If you've been around here for any length of time, you know that's always first on my list. After all, 1 Thessalonians 5:17 (NLT) says, "Never stop praying." We can even pray for things such as this. When we invite God into the situation, well, He'll come to equip us and help us and may give us ideas we've not thought of before in overcoming this distraction. Who knows? He may even stop the distractions from happening in the first place. He's good like that.

2 - Be in a quiet space. I'm inviting distractions if I work at my dining room table, but there's much less distraction of others in my office because I'm usually the only one in it. Our environment matters when we're attempting to stay undistracted.

3 - Go elsewhere or wear headphones. If we can't be in a quiet space, let's go elsewhere or wear headphones. Where else can we go to get done what we need to get done that's less distracting? Headphones or earplugs work wonders, because people will less likely interrupt us when we're wearing them.

4 - Create a "Do Not Disturb" space. It's okay to make a sign that says something like, "Do not disturb, work in progress" in your area. I remember doing this at times when our children were younger when my husband with our kids upstairs. When they saw the sign, they knew not to disturb me unless there was blood or bones (which was an emergency).

5 - Explain in advance. When we tell those around us what we're working on and explain in advance how we need dedicated time to finish it, this helps curtail the distraction. Offering something like this can help, "I need one hour to finish this, then you'll have my undivided attention." When our children were younger, I set a timer for my work time. When they heard the timer go off, they knew Mommy would be available to play for a few minutes before setting the timer again.

These ways not only help us, but they help foster positive relationships with others.

And that's always a good thing.

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In closing, the distraction of others doesn't have to be a relationship breaker if we handle it right and seek God first. But just like any other distraction, this matters. I pray for God to give you and me His wisdom and discernment in this area. Thanks for being here today. I'm cheering you on. God bless you!

Links in this episode:

[Nehemiah 6:3 NLT](#)

[1 Thessalonians 5:17 NLT](#)

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