

## **Distraction: The Death You Never See Coming**

“Fighting Temptation” Spring Youth Conference, 23-24 Apr 2021  
Covenant Presbyterian Church, Vandalia, OH  
Pastor Jeremiah Montgomery

### **Introduction**

- How would you define “distraction”?
- What are some of the major sources of distraction in our lives today?
- What if distraction is not a spiritually neutral matter?
- How does the world/flesh/devil (“WFD”) use distraction to lead us into temptation?

### ***The Screwtape Letters* (C.S. Lewis, 1942)**

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### **Distraction of the Senses**

“I once had a patient, a sound atheist, who used to read in the British Museum. One day, as he sat reading, I saw a train of thought in his mind beginning to go the wrong way. The Enemy, of course, was at his elbow in a moment. Before I knew where I was I saw my twenty years’ work beginning to totter. If I had lost my head and begun to attempt a defence by argument I should have been undone. But I was not such a fool. I struck instantly at the part of the man which I had best under my control and suggested that it was just about time he had some lunch. The Enemy presumably made the counter-suggestion (you know how one can never quite overhear what He says to them?) that this was more important than lunch. At least I think that must have been His line for when I said ‘Quite. In fact much too important to tackle at the end of a morning,’ the patient brightened up considerably; and by the time I had added ‘Much better come back after lunch and go into it with a fresh mind,’ he was already half way to the door. Once he was in the street the battle was won. I showed him a newsboy shouting the midday paper, and a No. 73 bus going past... He is now safe in Our Father’s house.” (#1)

- Reflection:
  - How did distraction work in this man’s destruction?
  - What is the most haunting aspect of this story?
  - Have things like this happened in the Bible? (Gen. 3.6, 2 Sam. 11.2-3)
- Sum: The world, the flesh, and the devil attempt to distract us via our \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Distraction of Noise**

“Music and silence—how I detest them both! How thankful we should be that ever since Our Father entered Hell... no square inch of infernal space and no moment of infernal time has been surrendered to either of those abominable forces, but all has been occupied by Noise... We will make the whole universe a noise in the end. We have already made great strides in this direction as regards the Earth.” (#22)

- Reflection:
  - Can even music, improperly used, become a type of “Noise”?
  - What does Scripture say about the value of silence? (Ps. 16.7, 46.10, 63.5-6)
- Sum:
  - Just like a mirror or a pond under the starlight, our hearts reflect best when \_\_\_\_\_.
  - WFD fill our lives with noise in order to empty them of true, God-centered \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Distraction of Just Wasting Time**

“You can make him waste his time not only in conversation he enjoys with people whom he likes, but in conversations with those he cares nothing about on subjects that bore him. You can make him do nothing at all for long periods. You can keep him up late at night, not roistering, but staring at a dead fire in a cold room.” (#12)

- Reflection:
  - What are some of the major time-wasters in our society?
  - What effect does “meme culture” have on us?
    - “Every serious subject is discussed in a manner which implies that they have already found a ridiculous side to it. If prolonged, the habit of Flippancy builds up around a man the finest armour-plating against the Enemy that I know.” (#11)
  - Nobody on their deathbed ever wishes they had spent more time \_\_\_\_\_.
  - The WFD want us to waste our best years on things that aren’t ultimately \_\_\_\_\_:
    - “Nothing is very strong: strong enough to steal away a man’s best years not in sweet sins but in a dreary flickering of the mind over it knows not what and knows not why, in the gratification of curiosities so feeble that the man is only half aware of them, in drumming of fingers and kicking of heels, in whistling tunes that he does not like, or in the long, dim labyrinth of reveries that have not even lust or ambition to give them a relish, but which, once chance association has started them, the creature is too weak and fuddled to shake off.” (#12)

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### **Discussion Questions**

1. How does the world, flesh, and devil attack us through the physical senses today?
2. What are the major sources of Noise in our life today? How can even good things become Noise?
3. What are ways in which we are tempted to waste time? How many hours a day do we waste?
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