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magazine  
July '19

*Approaching  
The  
Almighty*

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# I CAN'T *Handle Everything* AND NEITHER *Can You*

By: Nate Pyle

“God won’t give you more than you can handle.”

That’s one of the most common axioms we are handed in the midst of intense grief. Well intentioned, sure. Everyone needs to be encouraged, and what better way than by letting someone know they must be strong enough to face whatever circumstance lies before them because the Divine has deemed them able. But for all its well-meaning consolation, it’s about as scriptural as “God helps those who help themselves,” and “Cleanliness is next to godliness.” Which is to say, it’s not. You can make the argument for these sentiments using the Bible, but you have to be a trained contortionist to make everything bend the right way.

The support for “God won’t give you more than you can handle” comes from 1 Corinthians 10:13, where Paul writes, “God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear”. Notice that the verse is about temptation. It’s not about being overwhelmed by life. This verse wasn’t intended to be a comfort to someone reeling from the loss of a child. Paul wasn’t meaning for someone to rely on their own strength while fighting cancer. God didn’t take away your job so you could see how strong you are.

Far too often, interpretations of Scripture that make sense when life is generally comfortable are taken as true. But if the interpretation only works in the suburbs, where our lawns are trimmed and our pretenses are secured like vinyl siding, then it’s probably safe to assume that the interpretation doesn’t work. Apply the idea that God won’t give you more than you can handle to other situations, and it’s blatantly obvious that this idea only works in relatively benign situations.





To a survivor of Auschwitz say, “God won’t give you more than you can handle.”

To a young girl sold into prostitution say, “God won’t give you more than you can handle.”

To a Christian in Iraq whose world has been destroyed by ISIS say, “God won’t give you more than you can handle.”  
To a mother who lost her daughter to a Palestinian bomber say, “God won’t give you more than you can handle.”

To a father from the poverty-stricken countryside of Cambodia who was injured while hunting for food and can no longer work and provide for his family say, “God won’t give you more than you handle.”

Seems cold, even heartless, no? A tone-deaf response imploring good ole “pull yourself up by your bootstraps” theology to situations involving people understandably overwhelmed by a brutal world. It doesn’t offer help but merely provides the speaker an opportunity to not get involved—to distance themselves from any responsibility. There’s no need to help because they should be able to handle it. And to the one suffering, this phrase says, Please don’t ask for help because you should be able to handle whatever it is you’re going through, because God in his divine omniscience gave it to you.

One can’t help but wonder if the phrase isn’t more for the person who offers it as misguided comfort. Seeing others suffer shakes our confidence in human durability and embarrasses us. A kind of survivor’s guilt washes over us as we thank the Lord for our well-being when confronted with another’s adversity. We feel that we should help them, while at the same time we feel guilty because of our packed schedules. Overwhelmed by the suffering in front of us, we distance ourselves from it in order to relieve our discomfort.

Coming into contact with the ill and broken reminds us of our own helplessness and susceptibility to suffering. We could lose our jobs. Our spouse could cheat on us. The hope we have for our kids’ future could be erased by heroin. And we wonder, If that happens, can I handle it? So we spout the phrase to those who are actually walking through life’s valleys, hoping that if they can handle it, we might be able to handle it too.

Truth is, none of us can really handle life. There's too much joy, too much sorrow, too much beauty, too much pain. Life—with its baby giggles, courageous cancer survivors, immense poverty, brutal trafficking of young girls, and redemptive stories of justice—is paralyzingly large. Those who say they can manage real life aren't paying attention to the fathomless ocean of human emotion.

Implying that we can handle whatever storm threatens our house is not biblical. If anything, it is the exact opposite. Look at what Paul writes in **2 Corinthians 1:8–9**:

*“We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia.*

*We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead” (emphasis mine).*

Paul—the one who was shipwrecked for the sake of the gospel, whose faith was so strong that people were healed when they touched rags he used to wipe his brow, who converted guards while in jail, who brazenly stood before rulers and confessed Jesus as Lord—said he despaired of life. He didn't just have a bad day. You don't despair of life after the flu or getting cut off in traffic or when your kids talk back to you. No, this pillar of faith thought life was too much. The pain was too great. He wanted to give up. He considered abandoning everything because it no longer seemed worth the struggle. He probably felt like a failure.

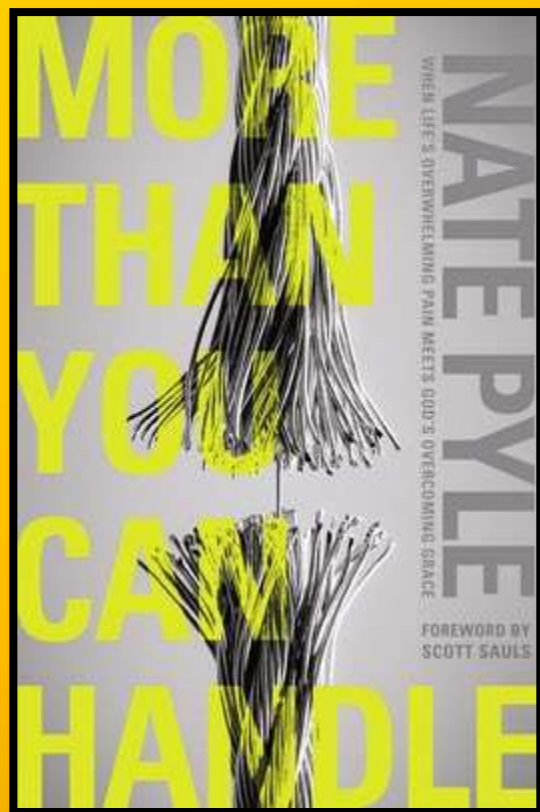
But later in the same letter, Paul would write, “When I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12:10). It is when we are at our frailest that Christ's power can rest on us (see verse 9). In other words, when we can no longer keep going. When we're fed up. When we're empty. Confused. Exhausted. In over our heads. When life is too much to handle. In those moments, the strength of Christ's resurrection will be seen in us. This is gospel news. This is good news.



But it is also bad news. The unfortunate thing about resurrection is that it can only be experienced after death. Until we die, we think we can do something to bring life to our weary bodies. But we need the God of death and resurrection to come into our broken lives, dead dreams, and hopeless situations. That's what Good Friday and Easter are about. Jesus enters our death so that, with him, we might be given new life. If we want to experience this resurrection, then we must stop trying to perform CPR on our lives. As C. S. Lewis said at the very end of his classic book *Mere Christianity*, "Nothing in you that has not died will ever be raised from the dead."

Death teaches this cruel fact: I can't handle everything. Neither can you.

But that's okay. Because that's where God will meet us.



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# Approaching THE Almighty

By: Andrew Roebert

God is available to us. We are encouraged to come to Him in scripture. This is usually through prayer. But it is also through the desire of our hearts. God has invited us into His presence. In His presence we will find ALL we need. What do you need today? We all need His presence more than anything else.

## THE SWEETEST INVITATION OF ALL

Here is the sweetest invitation of all.

*Hebrews 4:16 So let us  
come boldly to the  
very throne of God  
and stay there to  
receive His mercy and  
to find grace to help us  
in our times of need.*

This is a wonderful invitation. God is inviting you today to approach Him.

WE HAVE A WONDERFUL  
RECOURSE – ‘the very throne of  
Grace’

What is recourse? It is a place or person to whom we can turn to for assistance and aid. God wants to be this for us. ‘The very throne of God’ is our recourse. As we draw near to God in this way, we approach Him as King. We can ask for big things and we can have a big expectancy. In Kingdoms the throne represents the highest power and authority.



It also represents the place where the presence of the King can be found. God is inviting us into this place of authority and into this place of His presence. The throne of grace is a place where God receives requests and gives favours.

HERE IS A LOVING ENCOURAGEMENT  
– ‘so let us come’

We are being encouraged to come to God. This encouragement comes from Paul, a man like you and me who knew God. The encouragement also comes from the Holy Spirit. He is inviting us to come. He never pushes or forces us – He always encourages us to do what we should. Don’t miss this! I want to say to you: “... So let us come....” Join me as we press into God’s presence.

HOW SHOULD WE APPROACH GOD?

We should approach God boldly.

*Hebrews 4:16 ‘So let us  
come boldly’*

Not with pride or presumption or a tone of demand. Because it is still a throne that we are approaching. We can come without reservations or concerns. We can come with all sorts of requests. We can come freely, with simple words. We can approach God with hope. We can come to God with confidence that we will be heard.



## THERE IS A KEY

There is a very important key that we must not miss. It is found in the same verse.

*Hebrews 4:16 ‘...and STAY there...’*

We need to stay in His presence. We need to live in this state. Many times we approach God and then just rush on with our lives. We don't need to rush with God. We just need to linger in His presence.

## WHY SHOULD WE APPROACH GOD?

We can come to God when we need mercy. We can come to God when we need grace or when we have only a little grace. We can come to God when we are in times of need. Our relationship with God as His children, gives us great freedom. God has already given us His son, Jesus. Why should He withhold anything else?

*Hebrews 4:16 So let us come boldly to the very throne of God and stay there to receive His mercy and to find grace to help us in our times of need.*



THE INVITATION IS TO COME

*Hebrews 4:16 So let us come boldly to the very throne of God and stay there to receive His mercy and to find grace to help us in our times of need.*

We can come to the throne when we are sinful or have done wrong and we can find mercy. We can come to the throne when we are weak, to find help. We can come to the throne when we are tempted, to find grace. We are free to come to God. We are welcome to come to God. There is an order, first mercy then grace. We have relied on ourselves long enough. COME!

# RAISE *Your Children* TO BE *Generous!* 3 IMPORTANT TIPS

By: Seedtime.com

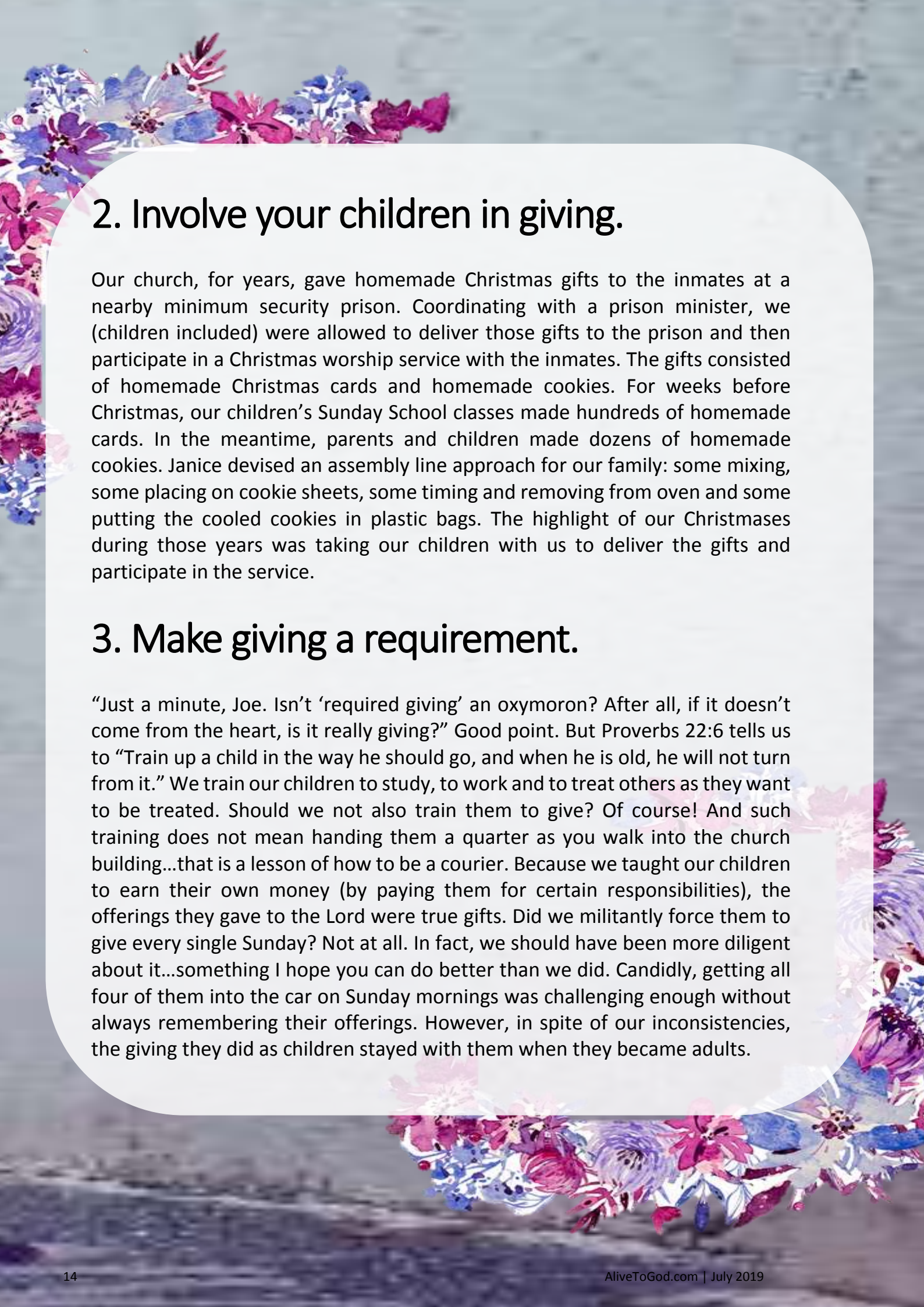
On a Spring day in 1998, I reluctantly notified our mission chairman that I wouldn't be able to make the Mexico Mission trip. My reason? I did not have the \$500 deposit and didn't have time to raise the money. However, that same day, my daughter called, "Dad, I know that you really, really want to take this trip, and it just so happens that I have an extra \$500. I want you to use it for your deposit."

Recalling that conversation still makes me misty eyed, not because I was able to take the trip, but because our daughter made such a generous offer. Knowing that Jaime, a struggling cosmetologist, did not have ANY extra money punctuated the bigheartedness of our girl, and being the recipient made me realize that my wife and I had raised a remarkable young woman. Lest I shortchange our other three children, allow me to state that all four of our children, now in their thirties, are generous with their hearts, their time and their money. I wish I could pinpoint the exact strategy my wife and I used to raise generous children, but I must confess that such a strategy never existed. However, we did a few things right, so I will share three tips, some of which we did pretty well and some of which we could have done better.



## 1. Walk the walk.

Children learn by watching their parents. Period. Jesus was teaching this principle when he said that students cannot be greater than their teachers (Mat 10:24). Our children learned generosity as they watched my wife taking hot soup to sick neighbors, baking holiday treats to give away at Christmastime and simply giving of herself any time any of us have had needs. Myself? Although I have been doing better in recent years, generosity has never come easy for me. Still, in spite of my self-centered nature, I was acutely aware of the fact that my children were watching how I treated the restaurant server and how I responded to red poppy collections at stop signs. Such awareness, I am sure, prompted my own generosity and (I hope) encouraged our children to do likewise.



## 2. Involve your children in giving.

Our church, for years, gave homemade Christmas gifts to the inmates at a nearby minimum security prison. Coordinating with a prison minister, we (children included) were allowed to deliver those gifts to the prison and then participate in a Christmas worship service with the inmates. The gifts consisted of homemade Christmas cards and homemade cookies. For weeks before Christmas, our children's Sunday School classes made hundreds of homemade cards. In the meantime, parents and children made dozens of homemade cookies. Janice devised an assembly line approach for our family: some mixing, some placing on cookie sheets, some timing and removing from oven and some putting the cooled cookies in plastic bags. The highlight of our Christmases during those years was taking our children with us to deliver the gifts and participate in the service.

## 3. Make giving a requirement.

"Just a minute, Joe. Isn't 'required giving' an oxymoron? After all, if it doesn't come from the heart, is it really giving?" Good point. But Proverbs 22:6 tells us to "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not turn from it." We train our children to study, to work and to treat others as they want to be treated. Should we not also train them to give? Of course! And such training does not mean handing them a quarter as you walk into the church building...that is a lesson of how to be a courier. Because we taught our children to earn their own money (by paying them for certain responsibilities), the offerings they gave to the Lord were true gifts. Did we militantly force them to give every single Sunday? Not at all. In fact, we should have been more diligent about it...something I hope you can do better than we did. Candidly, getting all four of them into the car on Sunday mornings was challenging enough without always remembering their offerings. However, in spite of our inconsistencies, the giving they did as children stayed with them when they became adults.



## It is more than money.

I want to close by emphasizing that true giving, while it is a discipline, is much more profound than a simple transfer of goods. When you train your children to be givers, you are molding their hearts; hearts which will develop into generous spirits as they enter adulthood. When our oldest son Josh was a high school senior, he saved his pizza delivery money for months so he could spend it on vacation. But, when we encountered a needy family while en route, he gave it all to them.

Who knows? Maybe your son will do the same. Or maybe your daughter will someday offer to pay your deposit on a short-term mission trip. I hope so.



# AVOIDING *Distractions*

By: Andrew Roebert

Life is full of distractions. There are many things that came to demand our attention. Some are important things and others are urgent. BUT, anything that distracts us from our pursuit of God must be dealt with ruthlessly. We should desire that nothing get in the way of going for God. Sometimes good and important things are the very things that cause us to turn aside. When this happens, these good and important things are wrong. We do not want to be distracted from experiencing God.

## THE TRAPS

There are many things in life that are really traps. Things that we think will give us great freedom, but actually ensnare us. These things hold us in a restrictive way.

*Psalm 119:110 'The wicked have set their traps for me along Your path, but I will not turn aside.'*

Along the Christian path are many traps. We must be able to recognise them and stay clear of them. There also needs to be a determination within us that we will not turn aside from our chosen path of pursuing God.



## STAYING AWAY FROM DISTRACTIONS IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS

*Deuteronomy 5:32-33 So be careful to do what the LORD your God has commanded you; do not turn aside to the right or to the left. Walk in all the way that the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess.*

Note the following:

1. So be careful.
2. Do not turn aside
3. Walk in the way the Lord has said.
4. The result is we will live, prosper and possess.

It all depends if we will be alert to distractions and avoid their enticement.

## STAY ON THE MAIN ROAD

I once heard someone say: 'Keep the main thing the main thing.' This is very true and we should be determined in this way. The main thing for us as Christians is that we need to seek God, because we are promised that we will find Him. If this is the main thing, it must stay that way. Distractions will want to take us off into other directions.

*Deuteronomy 2:27 We will stay on the main road; we will not turn aside to the right or to the left.*

I want to stay on the main road. I want to stay focused and live in fixed determination that I want more of God and nothing less.

## WHAT ARE DISTRACTIONS

Anything that draws us away from pursuing God. The meaning of the word distraction is to be 'drawn apart'. Anything that draws you apart from God has for you can be considered a distraction. A distraction is something that can draw your attention in different directions at the same time. The result is confused or conflicting emotions or motives. A distraction has the ability to turn us from one course or use to another. We need to determine that we will not deviate from the course we have set – to follow Christ.

# DECEIVED HEARTS

Distractions can deceive our hearts.

*Deuteronomy 11:16-17 Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them, “lest the LORD’s anger be aroused against you, and He shut up the heavens so that there be no rain, and the land yield no produce, and you perish quickly from the good land which the LORD is giving you.*

We distractions take root and our hearts are deceived we step into another realm. Here we can find many curses:

1. Heavens that closed – ‘He shut up the heavens’
2. No blessing – ‘there be no rain’
3. No provision – ‘the land yield no produce’
4. Dead on the inside – ‘you perish quickly’

For this reason distractions need to be dealt with ruthlessly.

## WE CAN ASK GOD TO HELP US

It is not always easy. Distractions have a powerful influence. But I believe that God wants to help us.

*Psalm 119:37 ‘Turn me away from wanting any other plan than Yours. Revive my heart toward You.’*

The secret is in the condition of our hearts. If our hearts are open and wanting more of God, it is the greatest asset we can have. We can ask God to help us stay focussed and to revive our hearts towards Him so that we can stay focussed.





## WE ARE ENCOURAGED TO AVOID DISTRACTIONS

*Deuteronomy 28:14 Do not turn aside from any of the commands I give you today, to the right or to the left, following other gods and serving them.*

Things that distract us from going for God are gods in themselves. For they will rule us and control our lives.

*Proverbs 5:7 Now then, my sons, listen to me; do not turn aside from what I say.*

*1 Corinthians 7:35 I want you to do whatever will help you serve the Lord best, with as few other things as possible to distract your attention from Him.*

## THE BLESSING

If we can find it in our hearts to stay focussed on God and our pursuit of Him, there is a blessing.

*Psalms 40:4 Blessed is the man who makes the LORD his trust, who does not look to the proud, to those who turn aside to false gods.*

It does not matter what those around are doing. It does not matter if everyone is doing it. We must determine to stay on course.

*2 Corinthians 7:1 Dear friends, let us turn away from everything wrong.*

Let this be a time of quality decisions for us.

*Psalms 16:8 I have set the LORD always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved.*

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