

First Things First...

Written by Ben Winslett

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We live in a society of distractions. There are technical terms for these distractions like "marketing" and "advertising." Realize it or not, millions of people are competing for your attention, the thoughts of your mind, at any given moment. Every where you turn, something is designed to specifically grab and keep your attention. Think about it...every few minutes of television or radio time there are commercials (TV and Radio doesn't exist simply to inform or entertain you, shows exist to sell advertising. The programming is the bait), on most websites there are advertisements, newspapers and magazines have ads on every page. You can't even drive down the road without seeing billboard advertisements. Suffice it to say, your attention is a desired commodity (can anyone say Facebook??).

Many of the distractions in our lives are self inflicted. Jesus said that *the light of the body is the eye*.

If our eye is single, the body will be full of light. If the eye is evil, the body will be full of darkness. One point I glean from this is that we are to be cautious about that on which we set our affections. In simple terms, what are you staring at? What are you letting into your mind?

I had this thought this morning over coffee. For those of us with strong political convictions, how many times is the word "Obama" spoken a day as compared to the word "Christ?" How many times is our favorite sports team brought up in conversations compared with the name of the Church you attend? Do we spend more time discussion the latest news (political or entertainment).

It's disappointing to know that many Americans can name for you the latest American Idol, the coaches of their favorite sports team, or the names of each race car driver respective to their car's numbers but can't identify or name the Vice President, Secretary of State, their representatives or Senators, or the Supreme Court Justices. What is even more disappointing is

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how few believers can name Bible characters, books of the Bible, and the doctrines contained therein. There's nothing wrong with knowing current events or with enjoying wholesome entertainment, but our "eye" is to be fixed on the Lord Jesus.

Take the word Sanctify, for example. The word means "set apart for Holy usage" and refers, in scripture, to things such as days, objects, and people. In reference to people, this concept can be broken down into categories or usages. We have been sanctified by the Father before the foundation of the world (Jude 1:1), sanctified by Christ on the cross (Heb 10:10), and sanctified by the Spirit in regeneration (1 Cor 6:11). We are also called upon to sanctify ourselves by obeying the truth (2 Tim 2:21). It is about the last usage of this term, perhaps best called "practical sanctification," that I desire to share some thoughts.

God has set us aside for Holy usage in a positional or vital sense, but we are called upon to SET OURSELVES apart for Holy usage as we live in this world. In short, "be ye separate." We are to be "ready to every good work." We are to be a Holy people, peculiar, a called out assembly, separate from the world around us and in every good way a counter culture. This is personal, practical sanctification.

Does this matter? Is this just the rant of a preacher doing what preachers do? No, this matters to the Lord. Consider one of the names of the Lord in the Bible, found in Exodus 34:14. That name is *Jealous*. The word Jealous means "*not bearing any rival*." This means that God will not stand any rival to His affection, glory, or attention in the minds of His children. He cares about us, provides for us, and desires that our hearts be fixed on Him. After all, He is our Husband. What Husband does not want to be the heart's desire of His bride?

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As the title of the entry say, let's put first things first. Let us render to our Lord our firstfruits. May His name be spoken above that of political figures, pop stars, sports teams, drivers, or movie stars. May we return to our first Love! He stands at the door and knocks. Listen, and open the door.