

Distracted

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Speaker: **Mark Stroud**

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Mark Stroud: People think that in order to really worship the Lord, “I’ve got to do something.” But you can do something for somebody and never know them.

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(Music Playing: 00:00:22 - 00:00:50)

And now for 6516, “Distracted.”

Mark Stroud: Thank you joining us for Brothers of the Word, because brother, you need the word. Hallelujah.

Tonight, the Lord brings us this one word and I want to tell it to you. This word is, “Distracted.” Distracted. God said, “Don’t allow yourself to be distracted in this hour.” Distracted. When someone is distracted, that means their retention has lost focus. They were focused on one thing, but now their mind has been taken somewhere else. Their thoughts have been taken to another place. Distracted. And when you are distracted at the wrong time, lives can be lost.

Many of teenagers unfortunately have been in terrible accidents because they were distracted at the wheel with texting. Just one moment, just a few seconds may have cause someone their lives. And unfortunately, I personally known someone who’s had a terrible tragedy in their lives because the delivery person, driving down the road, he testified or told the police that his eyes left the road just for a moment because he dropped his phone, and he reached down just for a moment to pick it up. But in that moment, his delivery van rammed into the back of a small minivan carrying a small child and a great tragedy happened that day because he was distracted. God says, “In this day, in this hour, don’t allow yourself to be distracted.”

Now, there are four areas that I want to give you tonight. There are four areas that the Lord has dealt me about this year that I have been heralding, I’ve been telling this and just telling anybody that would listen. There are four areas that God gave me and he asked me this question. He said, “How are you plowing? How are you plowing?” And the word “PLOW” has a

meaning. The first is Pray. How are you praying? Check up on your prayers. The L is love. How are you loving? How are you fellowshipping? The O is obedience. How are you obeying or observing the word of God? And the W is worship. How are you worshipping?

And with that, the Lord gave me a vision. I saw a man sitting in a restaurant and he was sitting at a small table. I can see very clearly now, a small table, a round table, sitting there with a single red rose on the table and a very skinny vase there. And he asked the waiter for a steak. He said, "I want a nice juicy T-bone steak." And the waiter goes away and the waiter comes back and he hands him a slice of baloney and he puts it on the table in front of him with a smile and says, "Enjoy your meal, sir."

Well, the waiter goes away, but the man that is sitting at the table simply said, "That's not what I ordered. That's not what I asked for." And he waited the waiter to come back and try to explain it to him. "That's not what I asked for." And it is with this picture that the Lord really dealt with me and those four areas because he said, "I've been asking for one thing, but I've been getting something else." In prayer, he's saying in the -- P in PLOW, prayer, "How are my people praying? Specifically, how is the congregation praying?" The Bible says that, we ought to pray one for another. Pray one for another. But how can the church truly say they're praying for one another when they don't know another's names?

There is something about knowing someone else's name. When you know their name, name implies identity. Name implies authority. Name implies intimacy. When I take the time to know your name and then pray for you by name, I'm beginning to fulfil that commission. So, how can you truly pray for someone, pray without ceasing when you don't even know my name? And the Lord has called us to pray one for another. Pray one for another.

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Love, He's called us to love and there are two types, really, I want to talk about just briefly. The first type, He told us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. But then, He specifically told the body to love one another the way He has loved us.

Here's another case where we're giving Him baloney instead of a steak. Look at your brother and sister and we can look around

the room, in the local fellowship, and can we say that we love that person beside us? Can we say we love that person in front of us, number one, if we don't even know their name? Secondly, are we loving them the way Jesus has loved us or are we loving them with a neighborly type of love? A neighborly type of love says, "Hello? How are you doing? But I'm really not interested in anything else."

In many, when they ask you how you're doing, they don't really want to respond. We just want to -- "Okay, you go on now." To be honest, "How are you doing?" "Okay, I don't really want to know. I'm just being pleasant, just being nice." That's a neighborly type of love. "How are you doing? Have a great day." But that's not what He asked for. That's baloney.

When the Lord told us in the fellowship, we told the body to love one another the way He has loved us. That's a self-sacrificing love. That means that I will love you unto to death if necessary. Are you hearing me? I'm willing to die for you. That's the type of love that He spoke about. Are you willing to die for them? Are we giving Jesus baloney and not rendering steak for Him?

How are you praying? How are you loving? How are we observing the word? I want to look at that in just a moment. How are we observing the word? Are we obedient to the word of God? Now, this is one thing that really gets to my goal(ph) and we say statistically, I've been in ministry now for about 30 years. Praise Jesus. And I've heard the stats that people in church, you got to keep the message down to 20 to 30 minutes because the people's retention span. They really don't have a lot of focus, so you got to keep it short so that people will stay interested. You don't want them to zone out.

I've heard the stats. I've seen the stats. But then, there's something that doesn't compute when you get a large group of people to sit in front of a movie screen for a couple of hours and many of them have to use the bathroom and they will hold it. They will hold it and not move from that seat until it's over. It's over. The door is open and they run. They kept their attention. When it comes time for hearing the word of life, hearing from the great God, the author and finisher of our faith, the one who died for us, the one who created us, the one who gave us life, "I got to go pastor. How long is this going to take?"

“Checking in, let me –.” “I got you. Yeah, yeah.” “What was said?” “I don’t know. Something was said that day.” I asked the young man this question. I asked him, “If you had an opportunity --”, and this is a story. Let me give you the story. There was a man. Now, he had an opportunity to be on one of the large gameshows. I’m not sure which one it was, but there was a contest and he would be on some type of panel with two or three other contestants and he would have to answer questions about geography. And if he was successful at winning the contest, he would win, I think it was \$15 million, was the grand prize and he had six months to prepare.

You know what that young man did? He ate and slept geography. He had flashcards. He had maps up over the room. He had it all. He told his friends to drill him. He practiced and he studied for 18 hours a day, every day, every day, as often as he could. He ate, slept and drank geography waiting for that day and that day finally came and you know what? He did win. But I wouldn’t love to say the story without a happy ending because once he got the money, he knew he won the money, but his relatives did too and his other friends did too and people that knew him way back yonder knew he won it too. The man didn’t have any peace. The man didn’t have any peace, ended up broke and threatened suicide. He wasn’t ready for that large influx of cash and it almost destroyed him. But look at that, he studied diligently for the filthy looker for the money.

“But you know, pastor, I would study the word, but I just don’t have time. I just don’t have time.” So, what does that mean? I have time to study for money, but I don’t have time for God’s word. In this, we see distracted. Distracted. Our attention is not focused primarily on God. There are so many other things in our culture, in our society that are pulling on us, that are jacking for our time, that are jacking for our money that are just pulling on us day and night, day and night, telemarketer calls, “Oh God, deliver us from telemarketer calls.”

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People calling you all the time, everybody wants you. We’re so distracted. We’re not focused and remember, it’s the word of God that is able to save our souls. And if the enemy can keep us distracted and not focused with the word, then we can’t be

changed, our families can't be changed, our culture can't be changed because change happens in the word. Glory to God.

So, he said, "How are you observing the word?" That's the O. And the W, how are you worshipping? How are you worshipping? Oh, this is a big one too. How are we worshipping? Because many people think that worship is, "I worshipped that day. That was a good song and I worshipped. I worshipped." But we know that worship is service. Worship means to serve, but, really, the word "worship" in itself means to bow down with one's head on the floor, to bow down with one's head on the floor, lying prostrate before the Lord. And doing that, we're saying, "Lord, you are the superior one." And even in other cultures or overseas, the lower you bow, the more respect you're giving the person in front of you. You bowing.

And so, bow before the Lord means of course, to worship. You are declaring that you -- God, you are greater. But that's just not what the position of the body or with lip service, it's life service. Because every time you say no to the devil, you are worshipping. Every time you decide, "I'm going to turn that off and I'm going to get in my Bible and praise the Lord. I'm going to get in that and I'm going to study His word", you're worshipping. Every time you say, "I'm going to listen to pastor's message. I'm going to make sure I get that in me", you are worshipping. Every time a husband goes out and he provides for his family, you are worshipping. Every time a mother decides, "I'm going to cook for my children", you are worshipping. It's a lifestyle. It's a lifestyle.

Well, what do we have today? We have people that are not completely sold out to the Lord, have a lot of half-hearted service. I've heard the stories. You have heard the stories where they think that worship is coming in and putting your time in and I'm sure somewhere there's a timer clock in the back of the church, somewhere. It's not here, I'm sure. I got to put my time in this week. And then, I feel better that I have worshipped. I feel better that I have worshipped. I feel better. I have obeyed my time commitment. That's not worship. And people think that in order to really worship the Lord, I've got to do something, but you can do something for somebody and never know them.

True worship is giving your whole life, whole self in devotion to Him. True worship means, "Lord, I surrender all to you. I give you all of me, all of me." True worship says, "Lord, I want you to

go into my heart, go deep into me and if you find anything in me that is displeasing to you, I give you permission to take it out, God, to deal with me. I want to go fully committed to you.” True worship is obeying the spirit and not the dictates of the flesh. Hallelujah to the lamb of God. True worship where you’re giving your whole self to God. Hallelujah.

And the true purpose and meaning of the church is to produce those that look like, sound like, talk like, move like Jesus. The church is meant to produce little Jesuses as we go out in the marketplace, little Jesuses. We go out looking like Him and talking like Him and smelling like Him and changing our community. But what’s been happening, we haven’t been plowing correctly, and so the world has been getting a lot of knockoff brands, a lot of knockoffs. A lot of those that may have a talk, but no power backing it up. We’re meant to infect the community in a good way.

Everywhere we go, we’re meant to carry the presence of God. We’re meant to carry heaven with us, the atmosphere of heaven, everywhere we go. As you walk in the room, heaven comes with you. I often look at it like the Verizon commercial. Remember the one way back a few years ago? The guy said, “I’ve got the network with me. I’ve got all the angels with me. I’ve got the power and presence of God with me. What do you need?” In the early communities, when they wanted deliverance, they wanted a prayer, they would say, “Hey, let’s go find ourselves a Christian. Let’s go find ourselves someone that knows Christ. I need a miracle. Is there a Christian in the house? I need a word from God. If there are Christian in the house? Is there a Jesus in the house?”

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But unfortunately, there’s not a lot of true worship and we’ll find a lot of sexual sins, immoralities and a lot of excuses as to why I can’t do -- “Pastor, I got needs. I know what the word says, but you understand, God understands, I got needs.” “What about your needs?” And just a little while, Jesus is coming again for His church. In just a little while, He’s going to crack the sky. In just a little while, just a little while, He’s coming and I don’t want to be one that would give Him excuses as to why I could not or did not allow the spirit of God to deal with me about my flesh. We better get some scripture.

I won't think even short change tonight. Galatians, the third chapter. Again, how are you plowing? How are you praying? How are you loving? How are we obeying the word? What honor are we giving to the word of God? What honor are we giving to the word of God and how are we really worshipping Him? Are you giving him what He asked for, steak or you're giving Him baloney? How are you serving Him? Give him what He asked for.

Galatians the third chapter, I wanted to say this. It says, "Oh foolish Galatians." Galatians 3 verses 1, 2 and 3. It says, "Oh foolish Galatians, who had bewitched you that you should not obey the truth? Before whose eyes Jesus Christ had been evidently set forth crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, receive you the spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish having been gone in the spirit, are ye now made perfect in the flesh?" Who had bewitched you?"

Bewitching simply means who have you granted the power or control of your thinking? Bewitching is all about control. What have you been listening to? What have you been watching? Who has persuaded you? Who has influenced you to think another way? You did think with the mind of Christ. But now the mind or mentality or the world system has gotten in and now the main theme is not true devotion as early church was devoted to the apostle's doctrine. They were devoted to prayer. They were devoted to communion, devoted to the Lord. They were devoted to meeting one with another.

But then, there comes another type of doctrine of compromise when we say, "Well, maybe He didn't really mean that. Maybe you don't really have to do that. Maybe you can sort of put your toe in just a little bit without getting a full commitment." And some would say, "You're reading your Bible too much, you're going to go crazy. You're praying too much. He doesn't take all of that." But I say, "It takes all of that and a whole lot more. And whole lot more." Praying in the spirit and praying with the spirit.

Again, there ought to be a time when you step forth in the room and I've experienced this and I'm praying for more. I'm praying for more. When I stepped into a place and the atmosphere changes, how do I know? Not because I'm thinking about all of me, but later on, people tell me that I've been there. Something happened when you stepped into the room. Something happened

when I've gone places, when I just not even thinking about it, I just touch someone and say, "How are you doing?" And later they tell me, "My arm, it was hurting but when you touched it, the pain instantly went away."

And there was this other young lady there in the 60s and she was sitting in our food bank a couple of weeks ago, and she was just in tears, just sobbing, sobbing, sobbing. Her older sister came over to me and said, "Pastor, could you pray with her?" I said, "What's going on?" She said, "She's in a lot of pain and apparently her hip had been bothering her. She was due for hip surgery, but couldn't have a hip surgery because she was well overweight. So, she had to lose weight and so they had her on some heavy medication, but if you keep taking that stuff, it begins to lose its effectiveness." And so, she was sitting there in terrible pain, weeping, the type of pain where you're rocking back and forth. Sitting there, she was hungry. She was desperate that's why she came to the food bank to get some food for her family. She just wanted to. She will rather stay at home in pain in the bed, but she had to come because of her family.

"Pastor, would you pray for her? Christian, would you pray for her?" Yes, I'd go over and I lay hands on. I get down actually on my knees and I pray right there. Who cares who's watching? We're too concerned about folks. I get down on my knees and I began to pray. I lay hands upon on her and I command that the spirit of pain, I command that thing to get out of her in the name of Jesus and I command every bone, and every ligament, every joint to get in its proper place.

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And in just a few moments, she stopped crying and I said, "How do you feel?" She said, "It's gone. I feel better. I feel better. I feel better." And just a few moments, the pain was completely taken out of her body. Hallelujah to the lamb of God.

Well, that didn't happen because I'm a pastor, and that won't happen because of whatever title you have, because God is looking for His people to do the works of Jesus. And Jesus said, "The works that I do, shall you do also and greater works than these shall you do", because He's calling(ph) to the father. He's called you to do greater works, but you cannot be distracted.

This is a day of miracles, signs and wonders, but don't allow this world to distract you. Don't be bewitched. Don't lose focus. Get in the word and constantly stay before God. Ask Him to tune you up on the inside. Ask Him to take out anything that is displeasing and I'm telling you, you're going to see it happen in your life. Continue to get before Him and you're going to see the power of God revealed in your life like never before because the world needs it now.

I want to thank you all for joining us for Brothers of the Word, because brother, you need the word. Amen.

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