

WHY GOD ALLOWS US TO BE DISTRACTED IN PRAYER

Technology is certainly one of the culprits that is rewiring our brains, making it difficult to be still and focus on God in prayer. But this is no new problem. 17th century pastor Stephen Charnock talks about distractions in his classic book, *The Existence and Attributes of God*:

We bear in our bosoms a nest of turbulent thoughts, which, like busy gnats, will be buzzing about us while we are in our most inward and spiritual converses.

These, Charnock says, come from our flesh, from Satan and from the world around us, but we also need to remember that God may be allowing them, even choosing not to deliver us from them for the following reasons:

1. Distractions protect us from spiritual pride when we've had a good time of prayer.
2. Distractions remind us of our feeble desires for God and love for other things. When they spur us to cry out for help, God purifies our hearts in a deeper way.
3. Distractions let us know how much Satan hates it when we pray.
4. Distractions makes us more grateful for the grace we've received as we take joy in knowing that God welcomes even our meager attempts to pray.
5. Distractions make us rely on Jesus, our mediator to make our prayers acceptable to God, warts (distractions) and all.

Charnock admonishes us not to be discouraged by distractions, noting that if they bother us, this is a sign that God is working in our hearts, and if we work at overcoming them, this is proof that Jesus is interceding on our behalf!

While distractions can be frustrating, we can use them to our spiritual advantage by not giving up. Here are a few other things we can do to overcome them:

THINGS TO DO WHEN YOU ARE DISTRACTED

1. Pray for greater grace as you thank God for your need of Him.
2. Determine ahead of time to be patient with your weaknesses, accepting the frailty you will daily face.
3. When you begin to pray and as you are distracted throughout, breathe deeply, and as you exhale, express focused words of praise or thanksgiving.
4. Keep a piece of paper nearby to jot down "to-do's"
5. Gently turn our hearts back to the indwelling Christ when our mind wanders.
6. Envision distractions fleeing as the Holy Spirit carries them away.