



# God's Word for Today

Sonja Hunt Ministries

Teaching Letter 46

## Distractions

*"I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved" (Psalm 16:8 NKJ).*

**D**istractions have multiplied at a phenomenal rate in recent decades. Though there have always been things that potentially can deter us from our goals and God-given assignments, more than ever we face a myriad of distractions to our accomplishing those things that are truly important.

Scripture provides some excellent examples of individuals who were both successful and unsuccessful at maintaining their focus on the goal or task before them. Let's begin with David, who at a very early age demonstrated the ability both to focus on the important and to ignore the distractions he faced. He wrote in our verse for this letter, "I have set the Lord always before me. . . ." Like each of us, David had a calling on his life from God. Unlike many of us, he learned at an early age that to diligently focus on the ability and faithfulness of the One who called was the means to fulfilling his calling.

**T**he story of David slaying the giant Goliath with a rock and a sling illustrates David's sense of focus, as well as his courage and faith. The story is found in 1 Samuel 17. His brothers laughed at him when he showed up at the scene of battle and began asking why no one was going out to fight Goliath. His brothers ridiculed him and told him to go home. David had never fought or killed anyone—only a lion and a bear which had attacked his father's sheep.

King Saul, who finally took him seriously, offered David his armor which did not fit him. David's plan, however, encompassed the skills and equipment he did have—not the ones he did not have—and he was not distracted by the negatives pointed out by others. His focus was on what God could do and what God would help him to do if he kept that focus. He set the Lord before him—always—and believed steadfastly that God Almighty was with Him in every fearful circumstance—even at his right hand.

**A**re you facing any fearful situation right now? Or is anxiety regarding the future attempting to take root in your emotions? God wants you and me ready and able to face every difficult or fearful thing without being shaken or distracted. We can do as David did and stand strong in the middle of every challenge.

Or we can do as Peter did . . . . (Don't we nearly always look at Peter to see how *not* to do something? At least in his earlier days.) I'm thinking of the night that Peter stepped out of his boat to walk to Jesus on the water. The story is found in Matthew 14.

**J**esus' disciples had been struggling to cross the Sea of Galilee in a great storm when they saw Jesus walking on the water. Jesus had remained behind to pray alone but now He showed up in the midst of the storm. Jesus spoke to them to calm their fears because they thought they were seeing a ghost. Peter then asked Jesus to prove who He was by commanding him to come to Him on the water. Jesus said, "Come." And Peter stepped out of the boat.

Peter did well for a few steps, because for those few steps he kept his eyes on Jesus. For a short time, Peter did just what David did. He set the Lord before him; and as long as he kept His eyes on Jesus, he was not moved [shaken by fear or distracted]. If you remember the story, you know that before long Peter turned his gaze to the huge waves and howling storm. That's when he began to sink. Peter called desperately to Jesus for rescue. Jesus caught him by the hand, and they both got into the boat.

**I** can't criticize Peter too severely; I would likely have sunk too. And to give him proper credit, Peter was the only disciple bold enough to venture onto the water at all. I think, however, Peter would have preferred to make

it all the way without sinking—to have remained undistracted and unshaken in the midst of the storm. That’s what I want. Don’t you?

Obviously, the answer is to do as David and not as Peter in times of fear or great challenge. Keep our eyes on Jesus. I believe the important difference between what happened in David’s fearful circumstances and what happened in Peter’s lies in David’s words: “I have set.” For while Jesus literally was in front of Peter, he had not yet “set” Jesus always before him. Thus, Peter became distracted and fearful and sank.

**T**o “set” something is to place it. Yet what David meant was a little stronger than simply placing. David meant he had *established* the Lord in front of him and he—David—would not be distracted. With the Lord’s help at his right hand, David would not be deterred from successfully completing his God’s given assignments. David at some point in his young life had intentionally made the Lord the all-encompassing stabilizing force of his life. Thus, he would not be distracted nor shaken.

Distractions! Try setting a goal to accomplish something you feel is important or something you believe God would have you do. Before long—maybe even before you get started—distractions pop up all over. Try praying for an hour and count how many distracting thoughts enter your mind. Every distraction is not a tactic of our enemy Satan. He, however, has employed distractions as one means to try to stop God’s people from finishing many good works. Some distractions—such as texting and driving—can even be the finish of us!

**I**n the Old Testament Book of Nehemiah, chapter 6, we read of several distractions Nehemiah faced as he attempted to complete the rebuilding of Jerusalem’s walls and gates. In this story, Nehemiah demonstrated an ability to discern what truly needed to be attended to and what did not. Some things that we find interrupting our work must legitimately be addressed. Wisdom is needed to recognize genuine needs and requests of others.

Though the people making requests of Nehemiah were intentionally trying to stop his work and even to cause him harm, in our lives people sometimes request things of us that are good and well-intentioned. For example, we might be asked to serve on a committee at church or to teach a class at the Community College or to join a bowling team. None of these activities in themselves are wrong. We must discern through prayer and wisdom whether they are God’s best for us *now*. And it’s okay to say *no* when saying *yes* would distract us from God’s present purpose.

**I**f we have heard Jesus’ say “Come” as Peter did. . . . or if we know that we know that we *know* that God has called us to a certain task, as David did when he faced Goliath and as Nehemiah did in rebuilding Jerusalem’s walls, then we must not let ourselves be distracted from our goal. However, setting the Lord always before us—and keeping Him there—is easier said than done. Believe me, I know! We need to pray for God’s help in this area.

Have you been distracted from something you believe God has called you to do? I believe it takes an inner work of the Lord in our lives to help us “set the Lord always before” us. The Apostle Peter failed at first and then later succeeded. So there is hope.

**I** pray that God would help us stay focused on Him, His calling in our lives and His agenda. I pray He would help us to set Him and His calling always before us. I believe God will and is answering that prayer.

Blessings! **SH**

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