

7 Actions That Will Nurture Your Distracted Soul

Information overload: You've experienced it, I've experienced it, and we all know it isn't healthy.

Constant updates. 24/7 cable news. Alerts on our smartphones. Text messages that scream for immediate attention. Endless Pinterest boards. Scrolling through social media newsfeeds. And scrolling. And scrolling. And scrolling.

This mindless stimulation has developed our need for constant entertainment. We are unable to be at rest and have ever-shortening attention spans.

In a recent article for New York Magazine titled "[My Distraction Sickness](#)," Andrew Sullivan writes, "This new epidemic of distraction is our civilization's specific weakness."

We spend hours a day on our phones and tablets and computers, often "alone together" in our living rooms with spouses and parents and children all physically present, but mentally - and I would contend spiritually - somewhere else.

I know I'm late to the party, but it isn't good for us.

Much research has been done to discover what this new and growing state of distractedness is doing to our minds, but I'm much more concerned about what it's doing to our souls.

Distractedness is killing our souls. One day, without noticing, when we started prioritizing communication over connection, we stopped using our souls.

Souls feel. Souls empathize. Souls enjoy and savor and yearn. Souls mourn and celebrate. And our souls connect. They connect us at a deep level with other people. Our souls are the place where we love.

When we neglect our souls, we begin to lose the ability to connect as spiritual beings.

In Plato's parlance, real love, if it is to exist at all, must exist at a deep, almost

fundamental level that he describes as the “co-mingling of souls.”

But we don't comingle souls anymore. Instead, we Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat. And in our distractedness, we ignore our souls.

So now we're experiencing a sort of deep collective emptiness and hollowness - even, perhaps, a creeping inability to love - and it's scary.

As a pastor, I'm worried because our souls are the soil in which God lives. God might work in our minds and through our emotions, but our souls are the place where God resides - the home base out of which God works in us and in our world.

Jesus tells a parable in Matthew 13 of four different types of soil - a rocky path, shallow soil, thorny ground and deep, rich soil. Seed, he says, can only grow and thrive in one.

Distractedness robs our souls of the fertile ground needed for God's presence to grow in us.

Think of each distraction of modern life as an erosion of our common soil or a thorny vine reaching up to choke what God is working to grow in us.

In this sense, distractedness and all the things that cause it can be real evils in our lives.

So what do we do? What do we do when our collective soul is dying, when the ground on which our very being rests is bare and overgrown by thorns?

We need to begin giving our souls what they crave most. My soul craves human connection and music. It craves creative space, emotional renewal and mental rest. It craves time in nature and time with God. I bet yours does, too.

So here are seven actions we can all take:

1. Intentionally engage with other people. Join a Bible study group at church. Find a fitness class or an art class or a card game or a supper club. Volunteer at a hospital or school.
2. Listen to music. Find music that helps you relax and smile and remember and escape.

3. Pray. Be quiet with God.
4. Get outside. Stay connected to the natural world. Find an activity you enjoy that gets you outside as often as possible.
5. Read a book - one that is made of paper and that you can physically hold in your hands. Let your imagination get lost and run free.
6. Put the phones and tablets and laptops away. Intentionally decide to be fully present in the moments and spaces in which you find yourself.
7. Sit with your soul. Visualize it. What does the soil of your soul look like? Speak to it. Pray with it. Dig in it. Feel love rising up in it. And celebrate as your soul becomes more fertile and welcoming to the seeds God is planting in you.

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