

The weapons of Mass Distraction

Weapons of mass destruction (WMD) generally include nuclear, biological, chemical and, increasingly, radiological weapons. The term first appeared in 1937 in reference to the mass destruction of Guernica, Spain, by aerial bombardment. 70% of the city was destroyed.

On August 7, 1946, a B-29 named Enola Gay, fitted with Little Boy, an atomic bomb weighing 4 tons, departed for Hiroshima. Upon detonation the explosion was equivalent to 12.5 kilotons of TNT. 140,000 civilian citizens of Japan were killed. 300,000 survivors developed grotesque illnesses due to the high levels of radiation.

Now, eight nations possess this type of weapon, and two other nations, Iran and North Korea, are in hot pursuit to develop one.

Thus, the term "*weapons of mass destruction*" became a household word. Applying this term in another form illustrates the seriousness of our subject: "**weapons of mass distraction.**" Distraction has caused massive destruction throughout the history of the world.

Distraction is the art of misdirecting or to draw away a person's attention. The late Harry Houdini is one of the more well-known magicians in history. Many magicians use sleight of hand or misdirection to perform their tricks. Misdirection, which is the act of drawing the audience's attention to one location while, in another location, the magician performs a crucial manipulation undetected. For example, by drawing attention to one hand by snapping the fingers, tossing and catching a prop, or saying "watch this hand", the performer can force the audience to look, however briefly, in a certain direction, and use this as cover for what the other hand is doing. This art of distraction is also used by pickpockets. Usually a pick-pocket works in a crowd and with a simple touch or bump to divert the victim's attention, they can quickly steal their wallet.

Another obvious example of satanic weapons of mass distraction in their current forms are Triple X movies, printed forms of pornography, video pornography, forms of music that worship Satan and iPorn. In these forms of mass media a person is distracted from their moral foundation based on the Word of God and their relationships to their families.

This problem not only exists in the world, but also in the church community. During the late 1980's and early 1990's, several high profile ministers were caught practicing pornography and involved in fornication and adultery. How could this happen? Somewhere in their lifestyle they were distracted from the purpose of their ministry and faith by a weapon of mass distraction. It could have been on the internet, a magazine, a video, an attractive woman, or an appealing man. In recent times, there have been too many names added to the Hall of Shame.

The Tragedy of Distraction

"Now as they were traveling along, He entered a certain village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. And she had a sister called Mary, who moreover was listening to the Lord's word, seated at His feet. But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up {to Him,} and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me." But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but {only} a few things are necessary, really {only} one, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:38-42).

Bethany, deriving its name from the number of palm-trees which grew there (House of dates), was a village on the southeastern slope of the Mount of Olives, about 2 miles east of Jerusalem, on the road to Jericho. It was the residence of Lazarus and his sisters, Martha and Mary, and is frequently mentioned in connection with memorable incidents in the life of our Lord.

Not only did the residence of Lazarus present to Jesus a place to rest and relax from the pressures of Jerusalem, but also it provided welcomed fellowship with friends that truly loved him. It was a haven from the religious attacks of the Pharisees, Sadducees and the Herodians that were in Jerusalem, only two miles away.

There are certain homes of believers that have been important to me throughout the years of traveling in the ministry. Homes that are characterized with friendliness, love, faith-building, comfort and relaxation. What a ministry! There are so many who think that ministry is limited to the pulpit, or to preachers, but let me emphasize, ministry goes deep into the ranks of the saints. Lazarus, who never preached a sermon; Martha and Mary who never were connected with being apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors or teachers, were effective ministers in the home. Their home was a refuge for Jesus. I have so appreciated the homes of refuge over the many years of ministry. Places where you can let your guard down, discuss your problems without fear of being repeated, stretch out, kick back and allow the renewing process to take place in your body, soul and spirit.

Worship is the center of our Christian life, but that does not take away from our duties of being an ambassador, taking the gospel to the world and being good Samaritans in our communities. Before we can represent Jesus Christ to the world, we must spend time with Him, get intimately acquainted and know His heart.

Mary of Bethany is seen three times in the Gospel record, and on each occasion, she is in the same place: at the feet of Jesus. She sat at His feet and listened to His Word (Luke 10:39), fell at His feet and shared her woe (John 11:32), and came to His feet and poured out her worship (John 12:3). It is interesting to note that in each of these instances, there is some kind of fragrance: in Luke 10, it is food; in John 11, it is death (John 11:39); and in John 12, it is perfume. It appears that in whatever circumstance she was in, whether it was supper time or in the presence of death, she was not distracted from sitting at the feet of Jesus.

Mary and Martha are often contrasted as one being a worshiper and the other a worker, and normally Martha is faulted because of being consumed with her desire to serve Jesus. This contrast usually leads a believer into a crisis of choice: am I going to be worshiper or a worker? Certainly our personalities and gifts are different, but that does not mean the Christian life is an either/or situation. The lesson in the story of Martha and Mary is not that we have to make a choice of being a worshiper or a worker, but the lesson is the problem of distraction, and it can happen to any believer.

It would be reasonable to conclude that Martha was the owner of the house and she took the responsibility as the hostess of Jesus and his disciples. Mary, her sister, was so fascinated with the teaching of Jesus; she dropped everything and sat at his feet so that she would not miss a word. Martha received Jesus into her home and then neglected him and began preparing an elaborate meal. Mary was oblivious to the sounds in the kitchen area, the subtle remarks and the irritated countenance of Martha. The plan of Martha, as the structure of the context suggests, was to give a full course meal to her special guests. Her elaborate preparations distracted her from hearing the words of Jesus, and her frustration with her sister, even caused her to interrupt the teachings of Jesus to state her complaint.

The story demonstrates the importance of balance and timing. There is a time to worship, but there is also a time to work, and in both worship and working there must be a balance. Blessed and fruitful are the balanced. When only one tire of an auto is out of balance, at certain speeds the entire auto shakes and bounces, causing the passengers to experience a rough ride. This commonly happens in families and churches.

Jesus knew that his time was short; hence when He and his disciples retreated from the angry religious crowd of Jerusalem, he was not interested in having a feast, but a quiet time to communicate his heart with his disciples. Martha misread the situation and the desire of her Lord, and stubbornly sought to have her way.

Martha was distracted and missed the best part—communicating with Jesus. It is not good to be busy and not be blessed.

According to John 12:1-2, Martha must have learned her lesson, for she prepared a feast for Jesus, the Twelve, and her brother and sister— that's fifteen people— and did not utter one word of complaint! She had God's peace in her heart because she had learned to sit at the feet of Jesus.

We are ambassadors, neighbors, and worshipers, these three; and the greatest of these is worshipers.

Distraction verses concentration

Distraction is the opposite of concentration. For many years our school system has allowed music in the classrooms. To me this would break my consecration and I would not learn very much, however many students can concentrate better with the music. In certain situations, such as music, breaks my concentration, but I have sat in a noisy restaurant and written articles for our newsletter. The many different sounds common to a public restaurant, plus loud talking and laughing, just blended together into a monotone that did not break my concentration. Concentration on our Lord is necessary, but anything that breaks that concentration is distraction.

In the operation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, concentration and focus is so necessary. There are so many forms of distraction that manifest themselves in church services that break the concentration of gifted ministers. It can be uninterested believers in conversation, or someone to come up behind the one being ministered to and then begin to pray loudly, or someone to scream, "Hallelujah." A person can develop techniques to improve concentration, each person being different, and avoid the penalties of distraction.

I remember many years ago in a fellowship meeting a special offering was taken up for Latena and me. After it was collected and presented to us, I put it in the outside pocket of my jacket. When I finished my message several came forward to be prayed for. As I was praying for a person, I felt a hand nudging my pocket. This distraction was breaking my concentration. I concluded this was Latena, and forced my focus away from the distraction and continued to minister. Later I checked my suit pocket and the money was missing.

Can you image that someone would steal money out of your pocket while you were laying hands on people and praying for them. If you think that the devil stays home from church, you are sadly mistaken.

The distraction did not permanently break my concentration in ministry, but I lost the money. Later, sharing this with a pastor, he said I will get to the bottom of the matter. He did. A young lady from his area did this unthinkable act. The money was returned, but it sure taught me a lesson.

One secret in maintaining concentration is illumination of what is valuable. Even though I had suffered the loss of an offering, because of the illumination of what was valuable, I was able to continue in ministry.

As a high school basketball player, I learned the importance of concentration. While I was warming up, going through the routine of lay ups, free throws, etc., I was very much aware of the people in the grandstand. But when tip off time arrived at middle court with the referee tossing up the ball between two opposing players; my mind turned off the crowd and focused on the game.

If I was fouled and a free throw was awarded, it was an opportunity for the opposition's supporters to attempt their tactics of distraction—shouting, waving, making noise— in order to distract me as I shot my free throw. I developed a way to keep my concentration and nullify the distraction.

In most of the basketball arenas there is a section behind the glass backboards where “masters of distraction” gather. As a basketball player shoots a free throw, people begin to wave snake-like balloons, screaming and yelling for the purpose to distract the shooter's concentration.

A manifestation of a demon through a person in a public service can be a distraction in what the Holy Spirit wants to accomplish.

Gordon Lindsay, a close minister friend of Thomas Welch, met William Branham in Oakland, California in 1947. As Gordon watched the Holy Spirit work through William Branham, he was reminded of a prophecy given to him and Welch when they first started into ministry concerning the fact that God would restore the gift of healing if they would remain faithful. He called Welch, who was living in Portland, Oregon and asked him to rent the largest auditorium in the city.

Thomas Welch rented the Civic Stadium that seated around 10,000 people. Welch proceeded to advertise the meeting in this fashion in a full page of the Oregonian newspaper. In large letters it read: “He is coming!” He did this for three weeks, and on the final week, he changed the advertisement to read, “Branham is coming!” The curiosity factor filled the auditorium with people.

During the week's meeting and while William Branham was speaking, a known demoniac started down the center aisle threatening Branham. Welch told me that he knew the history of this man and that he had destroyed the property of several churches in Portland. Welch, who was on the platform, decided to take the matter into his own hands because Branham was a small frail man. Standing up, he came along side Branham. Branham merely moved Welch away with a brush of his hand and said, “I will take care of this.” When the demoniac had approached the final row of seats, Branham pointed a finger at him and the man fell down on the floor in a heap. Branham continued on with his message to the people ignoring the fallen man. While Branham was speaking, Welch told me that the man regained his feet and silently made his way out of the auditorium.

If Branham would have stopped and dealt with the demon at the point of his intrusion, the people would have been distracted. Branham kept control of the meeting and refused to allow the people to be distracted.

I have personally watched this “distraction” technique used by the devil many times, and sadly to say, most of the time it worked. There must be sensitivity to the workings of the Holy Spirit by the Leadership to determine if activities are coming from the Lord or meant to be a distraction. Distraction will divert one from keeping the “Main thing, the main thing!”

Distracted Drivers

“Distracted drivers” is a term that I have been hearing quite a bit lately. Mostly, they are talking about cell phone use in autos. But there are a few other things that are also considered a distraction like putting on makeup, reading a map, shaving, eating, tuning your radio, lighting a cigarette, electronic navigation systems, or anything else that takes your mind (or eyes) off the road.

Distracted drivers cause at least 4000 and it could be as high as 8000 accidents per day! CarAccident.com says that 26% of all traffic fatalities are caused by distracted drivers using cell phones. Recently while driving home, I saw a pickup towing a trailer cross the highway in front of me and turn into the lane of traffic going in the opposite direction that I was traveling. In doing so he pulled in front of a fast moving semi-truck. The truck swerved and braked hard, and while I was watching the scene unfold in front of me, I did not immediately see a car in front of me abruptly brake, and because of the distraction, it almost caused me to wreck. Sometimes we are distracted by things unfolding some distance ahead of us, and do not see what is happening up close.

The myth of the Trojan Horse

The Trojan Horse is part of the myth of the Trojan War, as told in Virgil's Latin epic poem, “The Aeneid.” When the Greeks had lain siege to Troy for ten years, without results, they pretended to retreat in their ships, but they left behind on the beach a huge wooden horse, in which a number of Greek heroes, among whom Odysseus, had hidden themselves. The spy Sinon, who remained behind, convinced the Trojans, despite the warnings of Laocoon, to move the horse inside the city as a war trophy.

The Trojans enthusiastically celebrated the end of the siege, so that, when the Greeks emerged from the horse late at night, the city was in a drunken stupor. The Greek warriors opened the city gates to allow the rest of the army to enter, and the city was pillaged ruthlessly—all the men were killed, and all the women and children were taken into slavery.

The Trojans had gallantly defended their city for ten years, but in the end allowed a weird wooden image of a horse standing on an empty beach to distract them from their vigil to protect their city. The distraction caused them to be plundered, murdered and be made slaves.

A weapon of mass distraction: the beauty of Bathsheba

“Then it happened in the spring, at the time when kings go out {to battle,} that David sent Joab and his servants with him and all Israel, and they destroyed the sons of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David stayed at Jerusalem. Now when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king's house, and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance. So David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" And David sent messengers and took her, and when she came to him, he lay with her; and when she had purified herself from her uncleanness, she returned to her house” (2 Sam 11:1-4).

It was the spring of the year, and it was the time that kings go out to war. David, the king, sent out his General but he stayed behind.

Boredom is obvious in this passage. Having awakened from the traditional afternoon nap, he walked around on the roof of his house, looking on the scene below in hopes of something that would take his interest. David should have been on the campaign with Joab, his general, completing the task of doing what King Saul had failed to do—eliminate the Amalikites. David, bored, set himself up for mass distraction.

Bathsheba seemed to have been a celebrated beauty in the city, whose renown had already reached the ears of David. Hearing the tales of her beauty, could it have been that the bored king was purposely looking for that rooftop at the right time when Bathsheba would be taking a bath.

The residence of the king had the height advantage over most others in the city. Just because you have height advantage does not give you the license to transgress the laws of God. No matter your position in the kingdom of God, you come under the same laws of the kingdom. David felt like he could invoke the privileges of the king and become his own law. The church community has too many people in authority who are being overcome by distractions of the flesh.

It is just like the devil to set up a scene of a bathing beauty just below your roof top. He had two options and those options are still available today. He could continue to watch the woman or turn his head. Those two options are constantly before the Christian today. Satan will attempt to distract you with bill boards, covers on magazines, beautiful women passing by, or handsome men saying flattering words.

One distracting scene below caused David to commit adultery, lie and murder. This weapon of mass distraction caused immeasurable damage to his kingdom.

A weapon of mass distraction: the desire to please others.

“Moreover, the king made a great throne of ivory and overlaid it with refined gold. There {were} six steps to the throne and a round top to the throne at its rear, and arms on each side of the seat, and two lions standing beside the arms. And twelve lions were standing there on the six steps on the one side and on the other; nothing like {it} was made for any other kingdom” (1 King 10:18-20).

From an unlikely heir to the throne of David, Solomon, being blessed by God with wisdom and wealth, ascended upon his special constructed throne. Can you image the splendor of his palace, and the feeling it must have been to sit on the most elaborate and expensive throne in the world.

King Solomon had established himself securely over the kingdom of Israel and God was with him and greatly exalted him.

In the beginning Solomon went to seek the Lord in Gibeon where the original bronze altar still remained. He offered one thousand sacrifices unto the Lord. That night God appeared to Solomon in a dream and said to him, “Ask what I shall give you.” Solomon replied, “Give me wisdom and knowledge” to govern this nation. At that point Solomon recognized his need for the Lord and demonstrated humility. However, the path from humility to pride can be only a short distance.

During his reign, Solomon was distracted by his love for many foreign women. Probably, at first he justified his actions by reasoning they were for diplomatic purposes. But in so doing, he ignored and violated the word of God.

“Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Amonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the sons of Israel, “You shall not associate with them, neither shall they associate with you, (for) they will surely turn your heart away after their gods.” Solomon held fast to these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away. For it came about when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and

his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father {had been.} For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and after Milcom the detestable idol of the Ammonites. And Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not follow the LORD fully, as David his father {had done.} Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable idol of Moab, on the mountain which is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon. Thus also he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods” (1 King 11:1-8).

Solomon loved these women and ignored the warning, “They will surely turn your heart away after their gods.” He, in spite of his wisdom and knowledge and personal relationship with the Lord, allowed “mass distraction” to destroy his faith in the Lord.

His departure from the Lord took him to this unimaginable immoral depth– allowing the construction of the god of Molech outside of Jerusalem. This bronze idol was hollow and fires could be built inside its base and heat up the metal to a high temperature. At night the idol would glow in the darkness. The idol was constructed with two hollow outstretched arms and upon these arms the babies to be sacrificed would be placed. When the babies were placed on the glowing metal of the outstretched arms, they would scream momentarily, but shortly the stifling heat would reduce their flesh to a blacken mass. While this was going on the nearby drummers would beat loudly, attempting to drown out the screams of the dying babies and the wailing of the grieving mothers. The weapon of mass distraction reduced the most learned and wise king in history into a cruel and heartless ruler sitting on a gold plated ivory throne.

A weapon of mass distraction: an alluring world.

“For Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens {has gone} to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia” (2 Tim 4:10). In another passage of Scripture, Demas was called a fellow worker. Philemon 1:23-24.

Demas, a young team member of Paul, deserted Paul while awaiting trial in Rome. The reason given was simply, “Having loved this present world.” The mass distraction of the world kept Demas from experiencing his finest hour. He could have stood up in support of Paul in his trial before Nero, the infamous Caesar of Rome. Instead he cut and ran. He deserted the cause. He left Paul during his gravest crisis. His purpose driven life was cut short because of mass distraction– the glitter of a better life. Demas, because of his association with the team of Paul, daily faced increased threats to his life. Each day was uncertain. No one knew what was going to happen to Paul and what the outcome would mean to those associated with him. Increased pressures greeted him each morning and did not lessen throughout the day. Not only did this team face the uncertainty of the court of Nero, but many Judeo- Christians came against them as well. Their view was that Christianity was better off with Paul in prison, and that truly he was an undesirable criminal of both church and state.

A weapon of mass distraction: popularity

Demas means popular. The desire to be popular will distract a person from pursuing the will of God. Popularity has to do with lifting up of oneself above others. Being a team member of a growing unpopular movement (Christians) in Rome, Demas, possibly threatened by the situation, began to search for a safer and more comfortable and acceptable lifestyle. A lifestyle where he could enjoy the pleasures of the world and be accepted by others. He deserted and went back home.

Another example of popularity, a weapon of mass distraction, can be found in the life of King Saul. The story is found in 1 Samuel 15.

Saul had taken a loosely knit nation, Israel, and through some divine victories over their surrounding

enemies, had built an impressive army. Prophet Samuel had receive a word from the Lord and told it to King Saul. The message was that God wanted to fulfill his promise that He made to Moses concerning the nation of the Amalekites. "I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he set himself against him on the way while he was coming up from Egypt." Samuel instructed Saul to utterly destroy Amalek and all that he possessed— men, women, children, oxen, sheep, camel and donkey.

Saul defeated the Amalekites, captured Agag their king, utterly destroyed the people, but because of the pressure of the people, he saved the best of the animals. He then went to Mt. Carmel and set up a monument for himself and then continued on to Gilgal. When Samuel approached the army of King Saul he heard the bleating of the sheep. Samuel said, "Why then did you not obey the voice of the Lord," and Saul in exasperation replied, "I did obey the voice of the Lord...brought back Agag the king of Amalek and has utterly destroyed the Amalekites...but the people took some of the spoil...to sacrifice to the Lord..." Samuel declared that obedience was better than sacrifice and that insubordination was worse than iniquity and idolatry. Saul immediately acknowledged his sin, "I have sinned; I have indeed transgressed the command of the Lord and your words, because I feared the people and listened to their voice." He was distracted by His desire to be popular with the people.

The weapon of the desire to be popular with people has caused mass destruction over and over again. It has destroyed the morals of young and old alike. Seeking the honor of men more than the honor of God is a path that leads to destruction.

The desire of Ananias and Sapphira to be popular among the leaders of the new movement lied about their gift when they placed it at the feet of the apostles. Not long after the applause faded, Peter confronted them, and both of them died. The desire to be popular compromised their morals, diverted their attention away from Jesus, and consequently, their lives were abruptly cut short.

To escape the trap of public acclaim, a church advertised as follows:

Our worship is not an entertainment.
Our congregation is not an audience.
Our music is not a concert performance.
Our preaching is not a trivial comfort.
Our theology is not a marketing strategy.
Our counseling is not a promise of prosperity.
Our church is not a business enterprise.
Our ministry is not a cult of personality.
Our community is not a gathering of sheep.
Our success is not a membership statistic.

In fact, it is probably better to be disliked, offensive, and scandalous. Even booing is preferable to mass applause. For no vision is worthwhile without the risk of rebuke. Every truth is born out of painful criticism. Love, itself, is crucifying.

"Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men. What we are plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience" (2 Cor. 5:11) Paul was more concerned with seeking the honor of God than to seek it in the world. Desire to seek the honor that is from above. (John 5:44).

The story is told about the Popularity of the D-Con box. Craig Brian Larson, author of the book Leadership, tells the story of a man who lived in a forested area and found his home overrun with mice— too many to exterminate with traps. The man bought a few boxes of D-Con and distributed

them around the house, including one under his bed. That night he couldn't believe his ears; below him was a feeding frenzy. In the morning he checked the box and found it licked clean. Just to make sure the plan worked; he bought and placed another box. Again, the mice went for the flavored poison like piranhas. But the tasty and popular nighttime snack did its deadly work. In the days that followed, all was quiet. Just because something is popular doesn't mean it's good for us. On the contrary, something may be very popular and at the same time very deadly.

Certainly God is not pleased when we fall into the popularity trap and devote ourselves to aimlessly trying to please everyone. Like the rodents who scurry from house to house, we sink our little teeth into the poison of believing that pleasing man over God is somehow better. The truth is, however, we can't please everyone. Even when we do follow others, there will always be times when our status as being "popular" will be provoked. The people we once knew and trusted will become just another face in the crowd.

Hiking down God's road in life is a narrow journey—very few ever journey down its path. Jesus said, "Broad is the way that leads to destruction." The popular road is not always the right road. That's why we must examine our motives as we communicate with other people: Are we trying to get favors from man or serve the living God? Where do you stand?

God's way is not the most popular way but it leads to life, not death.

A weapon of mass distraction: Circumstances.

"But the boat was already many stadia away from the land, battered by the waves; for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were frightened, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid." And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." And He said, "Come!" And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But seeing the wind, he became afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they got into the boat, the wind stopped" (Matt 14:24-32). My definition of circumstances: surrounded by situations. No matter which way you look, a situation, good or bad, is there.

Peter and his companions had struggled to make progress against the strong wind for most of the night. Surely, he was exhausted and frustrated, and then he saw Jesus walking across the sea toward the boat. When he heard, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid," he requested that he meet Jesus on the water. Jesus told him to "come". When Matthew wrote Peter's request "Bid me to come," he used a Greek word that means "the command of a king." Peter knew that Jesus Christ was King over all nature, including the wind and the waves. His word is law and the elements must obey.

It appeared that Jesus stopped and was waiting for him. Try and imagine the situation: the wind was blowing severely; therefore the height of the waves was significant. Obviously, neither Jesus nor Peter was surfing on top of the waves, which means, both were subject to the rise and fall of the waves.

There is not a way to tell how many waves were in between Jesus and Peter, but there must have been more than one. Peter got out of the boat and began to walk toward the waiting Jesus. As he was descending the first wave, Jesus was less visible and the wave was more visible. Momentarily, Jesus could have gone out of sight, but regardless, the boisterous waves grabbed his attention. When they did, Peter felt himself begin to sink and cried out for help. Jesus reprimanded Peter, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

What caused Peter to sink? His faith began to waver because he took his eyes off the Lord and began to look at the circumstances around him. "Why did you doubt?" Jesus asked him (Matt 14:31). This word translated doubt carries the meaning of "standing uncertainly at two ways." Peter started out with great faith but ended up with little faith because he saw two ways instead of one.

The circumstance of the waves and wind was a weapon of mass distraction to Peter.

If you allow circumstances to become your compass, directing you here and there, loss and destruction will follow.

If Noah would have followed the compass of his circumstances, he would never have built the ark. It had never rained or flooded. There was not enough water available to float this massive wooden craft. The beauty of the story is that Noah took the word of God and elevated it above all the negative circumstances, and behold; he saved himself and his family.

When God told Moses to go back to Egypt and lead Israel out of its slavery into a land flowing with milk and honey, he was eighty years old, Egypt was the superpower of the world and they would not think kindly of such a notion. Circumstances must have shouted loudly to Moses, "This is impossible! Just look at the odds! You must be crazy! You have become senile listening to the whispering flames out of a burning bush! Surely, you will die!" The natural mind has a tendency to look at the circumstances and not at the word of God.

Circumstances, a weapon of mass distraction, was the constant enemy of Moses for forty years, but in the end, circumstances gave way to the demonstration of God's power through Joshua, the great general who led Israel to victory.

Circumstances will say to you: "You are not able! You don't have enough money! You can't go there! You are a failure! God don't love you! You might as well quit church, quit your family, quit your job, and quit trying!"

The word of God commands, "Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong" (1 Cor. 16:13). Don't allow circumstances to be the master of your life, but stand up and be strong by placing your feet on the word of God and not on the slippery surface of circumstances.

A weapon of mass distraction: Worries of the world

"And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, and the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful" (Mark 4:18-19).

Living in this world will often bring hardships and difficulties. The pressures of life can sometimes seem insurmountable and cause one to be in a troubled state of mind. Problems in the workplace, problems in the home, problems in the church, and problems at school can weigh heavily on the mind. Questions such as, "How will I be able to do this or that?" or "What will happen if I do or don't do this or that?" can distress and vex the soul. Choices to make, people to deal with, bills to pay, health to sustain, children and grandchildren to raise, relationships to maintain, and things to settle, repair, or do can cause distress and anxiety.

Generally speaking, these emotions can be summarized by one word—worry. The word "worry" is derived from an old English term, which has reference to being choked or strangled.

Worrying about things that you have little control over, mostly in the future, will strangle and choke

you from the promises of God in His word. Worry takes your eyes off Jesus and erodes your faith. Worry is the opposite of faith. Faith will cause you to ascend above your problems and find rest in the shelter of God's wings. Worry will take you into the forbidden pit of fear, and in fear there is not any faith or relief.

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” (Phil 4:6). “Anxious” is distracting care. “Casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you” (1 Pet 5:7). The Lord's nearness should sooth any anxieties you may have and give you comfort, even though the world is hostile to you. Remember “the peace of God... shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ” (Phil. 4:7). Peace is the opposite of worry. It is trusting God's love and ability to take care of you. Jesus said he was sending “The Comforter,” and then He said, “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled (or worried), nor let it be fearful” (St. Jn. 14:26, 27).

Worry clouds your thinking and harms your physical and mental health. In the church, there is far too many who are strangling themselves with the cares of the world. Worry has dominated their lives and kept them from maintaining a proper emotional balance. But it does not have to be this way, because God has provided a relief mechanism and strategy for dealing with worry. It is the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. He comes along side and carries whatever load you cannot.

To eliminate worry, a weapon of mass distraction, is to pray right, think right and to live right. We must make our requests known to God. We must pray in such a way as to build ourselves up in the Holy Spirit. Effective prayer is a two way communication. We pray and then we must listen. Thinking on things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praiseworthy will rid us of the negatives that are a detriment to our peace. Some worry about the past, which cannot be changed. Some worry about things over which we have no control; some about things that will never happen. Worry is the result of stinking thinking.

Peace comes when one life according to God's will. Not only will God be on our side, but we will eliminate the ramifications and consequences of sinful behavior. The sluggard worries about his next meal. The thief worries about prison. The fornicator worries about sexually transmitted diseases, etc. All sinners worry about death and hell. When the child of God lives right, all things will work together for good (Rom. 8:28). God's Word will direct our steps, and we will learn to focus our hearts and minds on what is really important.

Praying, thinking, and living right will enable us to eliminate worry and possess peace. God's methods for dealing with the mental battles of life are effective and fool-proof. His Word will produce mental stability and spiritual soundness. It will keep us from strangling ourselves with the cares of this world.

A weapon of mass distraction: Deceitfulness of riches

“Wealth is like a viper, which is harmless if a man knows how to take hold of it; but if he does not, it will twine round his hand and bite him.” —St. Clement

“And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful” (Mark 4:19).

All too many times the phrase “the deceitfulness of riches” is interpreted to mean “riches are deceitful,” and so it has been widely taught that we should avoid riches. Now, there is a clear warning for us in this verse, to be sure. Jesus warns us that the very prosperity God desires for us can open us to the potential for deception. As it says in Proverbs, “The prosperity of fools shall destroy them” (Prov. 1:32).

But this is a gross misunderstanding of the truth Jesus is presenting here.

Throughout the Word, we see that God wants us to experience abundance. In fact, you can't be effective at what God has called you to do unless you prosper and increase in the kingdom of God. So the key to not being destroyed by prosperity is to not be a fool!

It is vital that you understand how the deception of "riches" might manifest. If you are forewarned, then Satan can't draw you down that path. So I want to show you three different ways Satan tries to deceive people with money, depending on their economic condition.

The desire to be rich is the first deception. This desire usually goes to work on those who don't have enough or who perhaps are barely making ends meet. First Timothy 6:9-10 describes this deception: But those who want (crave) to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang" (1 Tim 6:9-10).

The sense of this passage is to give yourself to the pursuit of money or the things money can buy that open your heart to every form of evil.

Once that happens, you have strayed from the faith, or become deceived, and you will ultimately "pierce yourself through with many sorrows." The passage goes on to talk about "those who desire to be rich." The potential deception is in developing a hunger for money in the belief that if you just had enough of it, you would be happy, fulfilled and content.

What drives a hunger for money and deceives people into pursuing what money can buy is the belief that more money will bring relief from their present circumstances.

This is a lie from Satan. He wants you to think that everything would be all right if you just had a little more money. Money is morally neutral. It is neither good nor evil. The Bible merely says that the love of money is a root of all evil, not money itself.

The second kind of deception associated with riches comes into play as you begin to prosper. As increase begins in your life, you must be on guard against being satisfied by riches instead of by God. We find a relevant warning about the deception that can come with having riches in Deut. 8:6-10.

Don't ever let anyone tell you that God doesn't want you wealthy. If He didn't want you to have wealth, then He wouldn't have given you the power to acquire it: "But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as {it is} this day" (Deut. 8:18).

"Then it shall be, when you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance, and you possess it and live in it, that you shall take some of the first of all the produce of the ground which you shall bring in from your land that the LORD your God gives you, and you shall put {it} in a basket and go to the place where the LORD your God chooses to establish His name" (Deut. 26:1-2). God is telling you to take your first fruits, or in other words, your tithe, to the local church to which He has assigned you. The tithe is to be your supernatural point of remembrance of all that God has done in your life so you don't begin to take credit for the increase that comes.

Make your tithe a consistent, personal reminder that God, not your own cleverness or strength, is the source of your blessings. Being satisfied by wealth, and the attitude that it came because of your ability is a weapon of mass distraction against the power of God to bring increase.

The third form of the deception of riches is to place your trust in them. “Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy” (1 Tim 6:17).

The first thing you need to be watchful for if you fall into this category of having more than you need is arrogance and pride. Success can change your attitude and cause you to look down on others as subpar. Before you conclude I am not in the category of trusting in my wealth, because I am not that rich let me define the word rich in this verse. In the Greek, it simply means "having an excess beyond need," with no particular amount of excess specified.

Whether it is a million dollars or one dollar, if you have discretionary income– which is anything beyond your need– the Bible defines you as rich. The deception you need to resist when you are rich in this world is trusting in money more than in God. Ordinarily people don't like to admit they are trusting in money more than their heavenly Father.

That is why this deception is so easy to slip into. Beware of the tendency to stop trusting God to meet your needs when you have excess.

The remedy for being high-minded and placing your trust in uncertain riches is to be generous to the point of giving all if necessary. Just realize that God doesn't measure generosity by the amount you give but rather by the percentage you give.

Jesus said the poor widow with the two mites gave more than the rest because she gave all that she had (Matt. 12:41-44). You may not have much to give right now, but that is all right. Just be generous with what you do have.

According to this perspective, you are not working for a living; you are working for a giving. You are not to labor merely so you can retire early, buy a big house on the lake and lie around in a hammock. And in fact, God isn't necessarily against those things. In fact, He wants you to have them. But your motive for working is not to be only the acquisition of things.

Your greatest happiness, your greatest blessings, and your greatest fulfillment will come when you do what you do with the intent to be a blessing to others. You are to labor in this life so that, after you pay your tithe and meet your family's needs, you will have something left over that God can use to meet someone else's need.

Since mankind's most basic need is to be reconciled to God, the main focus of your life's effort needs to be to get Jesus preached to the unsaved and the Word of God to other believers so they can mature in it. When you have this mind-set– that all of your resources belong to God and you will do with them as He directs you– then Satan will no longer be able to deceive you with riches.

A weapon of mass distraction: Desires of other things

Worries of this world, deceitfulness of riches, and whatever other desire that exists, are weapons of mass distraction that divert attention away from the Lord Jesus. Distraction from Jesus will ultimately lead to mass destruction.

The bible encourages us to “seek the Lord and His strength; seek His face continually” (1 Chr. 16:10). King David exhorted his son, Solomon, to “serve (God) with a whole heart and a willing mind” and “If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever” (1 Chr. 28:9). When a person is consumed with “desires of other things” there cannot be a continual seeking the face of God and serving Him with a whole heart.

And if a nation would humble itself and pray, and seek His face and turn from its wicked ways, then God would hear from heaven, forgive its sin and heal its land. The nation of America has been consumed with other desires, distracted from the foundation of its fathers and now it is lost in the labyrinth of its division.

The promise of the word of God as recorded by David: “The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they who seek the LORD shall not be in want of any good thing” (Ps 34:10).

Conclusion

I have discussed only a few weapons of mass distraction: The tragedy of mass distraction in relationship to Martha desiring to serve Jesus rather than listening to Him, demonic activities in church services, beauty of women, the desire to please others to the point of ignoring the Word of God, an alluring world, the desire to be popular, circumstances, worries of the world, deceitfulness of riches and the desire of other things.

Remember, anything that takes your focus off the Lord Jesus and commands your attention is a weapon of mass distraction, and it will eventually cause mass destruction in your life and purpose. While living in the Garden of Eden, Eve encountered a glistening serpent that struck up a conversation with a prying question, “You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?” The dialogue that followed and the manner that Eve responded to it, changed the course of the world. Satan, manifesting himself through the serpent, skillfully enticed Eve to take a look at the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil. “When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a de- light to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make {one} wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate” (Gen 3:6). It was the first use of the weapon of mass distraction by Satan. It worked so well that he has been using it the last 6,000 years. Apostle John, interpreting the episode of Satan and Eve in the Garden of Eden, wrote the following: “Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away, and {also} its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever” (1 John 2:15-17).

The world glistens with promise and pleasure, but underneath the veneer of desirability, there is poison, corruptness, loss and destruction. Distraction is everywhere and if you fall prey to it, you are a collision path with destruction.

Eve was distracted and then deceived. If you keep your concentration on the tree of life, the voices of the world will be drowned in the ocean of God’s love and mercy.

Leon Willis