Lasting Legacy

# A Mother’s Day Message

# (1 Corinthians 7:35)

Welcome to Christ’s Community Church. I’m so excited to be celebrating Mother’s Day with all of you because you need to know that you were created for significance. The world that we live in will try to distract you, detour you, and discourage you from living out your calling, but God has called each one of us to use our influence so that the next generation would be changed for the good. And yet, so many of us are distracted, we’re too busy, it’s often just so hard to focus, because there are so many things that are drawing our minds in different directions.

For example, for me personally, my mind is always drifting, and I can lose my train of thought in a split second. And so, when I’m up here talking, and I’m looking at all of you, and some of you are looking at your phone, maybe you’re talking to the person next to you, or there’s a few of you that are yawning and nodding off. But my mind takes a detour, and I’m wondering what’s so important, what’s he saying, what’s she texting, what’s so exciting, or why you’re so tired that you need to sleep right now; and so, it’s a fight for me to focus.

It’s kind of like driving a car when it needs a wheel alignment. Anybody know what I’m talking about? You know, when you’re driving and it’s a struggle to keep your car on the road, because the steering wheel is tugging to the right or to the left. And so, you don’t dare take both hands off the wheel because the car will be in the other lane or in the ditch. But do you realize that in a much more subtle way, that every power of hell is trying to distract you from living in such a way as to leave a godly legacy? Your spiritual enemy wants to twist, divide, disengage, and distract you from the things that matter most.

In fact, the passage I want to open up with today is found in first Corinthians chapter 7 where the apostle Paul is talking about relationships and marriage, but I want to look at it in a slightly different context and draw out the principle behind these words. And so, let’s begin reading in the Word of God, in verse 32 where the apostle says,

“I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs — how he can please the Lord. But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world — how he can please his wife— and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world — how she can please her husband” (1 Corinthians 7:32-34).

And then the big idea, the principle behind this passage, verse 35,

“I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord” (1 Corinthians 7:35).

In other words, I want you to do whatever will help you serve the Lord with as few distractions as possible, because every demon of hell wants to distract you from what matters most. The emphasis of this paragraph is on the word concern or concerned and it’s obvious because it’s used five times. This word literally means, “to be anxious, or to be pulled in different directions.”

And so, today as we’re sitting here almost 2000 years later, in the same way, some of you, you’re distracted, because your phone just dinged, you’ve got another notification, another email, or somebody just posted another picture on Facebook. And then of course, in the back of your mind, there’s the grocery shopping that needs to be done, the kids have to be at soccer, another has gymnastics, and then the phone’s going crazy again and so you’re distracted.

Today we want to look at how we can choose what’s best when every demonic force of hell wants to distract us from what’s best, what matters most, from that which is significant, so that we can leave a lasting legacy. I want to give you three thoughts as you let the Word of God speak to you in a way that will move your heart and pave the way for an effective and lasting legacy. And so, number one, you’ll want to distance yourself from distractions.

## 1. Distance Yourself from Distractions

Now, we just read from first Corinthians chapter 7 about distractions and so this isn’t really anything new. But what’s really interesting is that in the early centuries of the church, there were some who thought that if you wanted to be really spiritual, that you needed to isolate yourself from society. In fact, history tells us that there were many who gathered up their books and other essentials and went out to the desert. They went out into the wilderness, into the middle of nowhere, in search of a quiet place where they could devote their days to prayer, fasting, and meditation.

And I’ll tell you, sometimes this sounds awful tempting, to just get away from all the busyness of life, so that as Paul said, I “may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord” (1 Corinthians 7:35). You know, just peace and quiet, alone in the presence of God, just me and Jesus. And even though this idea is rather attractive, few of us really have the option of spending our days in solitude, but there is another option that many of us pursue.

And that’s where we live our lives in isolation, right here, right where we are, but we’re not like the hermits, those desert monks who would escape into the wilderness, but we’re more like Symeon the Stylite. He was a man who retreated to the desert for a life of solitude, but as word spread that he was a holy man, and that the power of God was with him, crowds of people began to flock out to the desert to see him. And so, he determined to escape from the crowd by moving right into their midst and he started living on top of a 9-foot-high pillar. And even though there were people all around him it was easy for him to ignore them and focus on God.

Now, tradition tells us that he eventually moved to a taller pillar where he was perched 50 feet above the ground. And he lived this way for 37 years with a daily routine of spiritual disciplines, prayer and worship. And so, even though the people could see him, they couldn’t bother him, and so he lived in total isolation, surrounded by people, just like many people do today.

In fact, in recent years, with the increase of technology and social media, researchers from the Kaiser Family Foundation, in partnership with The Economist, conducted a survey of adults in the United States who reported feeling lonely, left out, or isolated. What they found was that 22% of adults say that they feel isolated from others, that they are lacking companionship, and that it has had a negative impact on their lives.

I believe that this is a direct result from being distracted by our technology. I don’t know if you’ve ever casually glanced around when you’ve been eating dinner in a restaurant and noticed how many are busy on their electronic devices? It’s amazing how many people are sitting there having dinner together, but they’re not talking, because they’re all on their phones. But it’s not just others, for many of us today we have panic attacks if we’re separated from our phone for more than 10 minutes.

And yet, 22% of adults wonder why they’re lonely and disconnected. But is it any wonder why our relationships aren’t as intimate as they could be or why we’re not as close to God as we’d like to be? When hour by hour we are constantly interrupted by notifications, vibrations, or ringing on our mobile device. And it makes me wonder if we were to realize the brevity of life and the significance of our calling if we all wouldn’t determine to distance ourselves from distractions?

You know, maybe not quite as drastic as Symeon the Stylite, but maybe leaving the phone on mute, turning off the TV, or whatever it is that you need to do so that you can be intimately involved with the people that are directly in front of you. You see, God created us for significance and your life is too valuable not to make the effort to diminish the distractions, distancing yourself from those things that would ding, vibrate, or whatever, so that you can focus. And then the second thing you’re going to do, is ask God to give you the power to focus on what is important.

## 2. Focus on What Is Important

You see, most of us have people around us, but we just don’t give them the attention they deserve. Now if we were to determine to focus on what’s important, drawing near to the people in our lives that matter, I believe that we’d find ourselves spiritually and socially in a much better place. In fact, Solomon said this in Proverbs chapter 4, verse 25,

“Let your eyes look straight ahead, fix your gaze directly before you…” (Proverbs 4:25).

In other words, the Bible tells us to acknowledge those that are before us, to be aware of our surroundings, and to live lives that are connected with others. And so, it’s looking straight ahead, your gaze directly before you, your eyes fixed on Jesus as the Bible says in Hebrews chapter 12,

“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2).

And so, it’s having a fixed purpose, a fixed focus, and walking a straight path. This is what we saw Peter learning when he saw Jesus walking on the water. Now, of course, Peter being the impulsive kind of guy that he was said,

"Lord, if it's you, tell me to come to you on the water." Jesus said, "Come…" (Matthew 14:25-30).

And that’s what Peter did, he got out of the boat, he’s walking on the water, he’s looking at Jesus, he’s got a fixed focus, his eyes are fixed on Jesus, and he walks step after step, with his eyes on Jesus, but the moment he looks away and looks at the wind and the waves he began to sink.

We’ve been talking about leaving a lasting legacy, and yet some of you feel like you’re sinking, you feel like you’re always behind, and you’re feeling overwhelmed. Could it be that you’ve lost your focus, that you’re looking at the wind and the waves? You’re looking at this, you’re looking at that, instead of walking with your eyes focused on Jesus.

I can’t help but think of a young man named Timothy. The apostle Paul attributes much of his upbringing to two faithful women. And he makes mention of them in the Word of God, saying in his second letter to Timothy,

“I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also” (2 Timothy 1:5).

And so, these women were given credit for bringing up one of the most influential pastors in the New Testament. Obviously, Paul thought very highly of Timothy’s upbringing and biblical training in his youth because he stated in second Timothy,

“How from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures…” (2 Timothy 3:15).

And this knowledge of the Scriptures can only be attributed to his mother and grandmother.

Today, if you have a godly mom that brought you into the world surrounded by faith in Jesus, stories from the Bible, and songs of faith, then praise God and thank her. You see, each of us need someone to point us to Jesus so that we can focus on what is important. And to fill a child’s heart with the love and hope of Jesus, to encourage them to fix their eyes on Jesus and trust him is the greatest gift you can give.

Those of you who are mothers and grandmothers, your influence is greater and broader than you realize. You see, no one ever wandered into righteousness. You’re never going to stumble into effective ministry. It’s not like you’re ever going to accidentally bring glory to God. But when you direct someone, pointing them to Jesus, encouraging them to focus on Jesus, so that they’re not distracted by things of this world, that is such an incredible blessing.

And so, what kind of influence and legacy are you leaving in the lives of your children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, children at church, and the next generation? You see, it’s not accidental, it’s intentional, because every demon of hell is trying to distract us. Maybe it’s that quiet but persistent ding, ding on your phone, that little vibration, but like Martha we get distracted, and Jesus said,

“You’re worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed…” (Luke 10:41-42)

One thing, and so we need to focus on what’s important. And what I love about the Bible is that the stories of each woman who made an impact is different. In other words, there isn’t one perfect candidate for being a great woman, you don’t have to have it all figured out, and so you don’t have to be a stay-at-home mom, a working mom, a married mom, a divorced mom, or even a mom at all in order for God to use you in a big way. You see, he can do anything with anyone who’s fully consecrated to him. Those who are focused on what’s important, distanced from distractions, and number three, listening for the voice of God.

## 3. Listen for The Voice of God

Just consider some of the great women of the Bible who listened for the voice of God. There was Moses’ mother, Jochebed, who believed in her son and was courageous enough to take hide him and protect him so that he could live (Exodus 2:3).

And Deborah, in the book of Judges, who helped lead the entire nation of Israel to victory (Judges 4:4). Or Naomi, who helped Ruth find the one true God becoming part of the lineage of Christ (Ruth 4:18–22). Consider Esther who saved her people. Or Hannah, who pleaded with God for a child and her son Samuel played a significant role in some of Israel’s greatest moments (I Samuel 1:9–18). And certainly, Mary, the mother of Jesus, exemplified the great faith she had to bear the Son of God as a young virgin, subjecting herself the ridicule, mockery, and persecution, but believing that it was through this child that God would save Israel (Luke 1:26–27).

And today, it’s almost as if God were whispering to some of you right now, because you may not recognize your God-given worth, but God has created you for significance, each of you for influence. It’s almost as if he’s saying you can do that, you can be that one, and I love the imagery recorded in Isaiah chapter 30, where God says,

“Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, “This is the way; walk in it” (Isaiah 30:21).

Today, when you seek God first, distancing yourself from distractions, focusing on what’s important, and listening for the voice of God you’ll hear him, because he’s a God who speaks. In fact, you may remember in the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, he did it by speaking, because he’s a God who speaks. And maybe you’ve never heard from God, but I’d encourage you to open up his Word, because you may not have heard his audible voice, but he always speaks through his Word. And he’ll speak to you through the voice of his Spirit if you have ears to hear. You’ll hear a voice behind you saying walk this way, be a blessing, give something, stop what you’re doing, listen and pray.

You see, you can make a difference, and if you’ve been distracted from God’s plan of influence and legacy you can get back on track today. No matter whether you turn to the right or to the left, you commit yourself to follow him, and you listen for the voice of God. Today I want to encourage you because your calling is too great and our God is too good to be distracted by things that don’t last. Listen to his voice so that he can show you the way to walk.

Consider Corrie ten Boom, a single woman who was responsible for hiding many Jews and keeping them from annihilation during the Nazi Holocaust. Or Elisabeth Elliot who stayed on the mission field as a single mom, raising her daughter, and reaching out to the very tribe that killed her husband. Or Amy Carmichael, a missionary in India who started an orphanage for sexually trafficked girls. She was single woman and yet they call her “Amma” which means mother, and so whatever your position in life is today, God’s desire is that you would use your influence wherever he’s placed you. You’ve been called to leave a lasting legacy and you’re calling is too great to be distracted by things that don’t last.

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